

THE STEPS OF Salvation

*An Overview of
the Gospel of Sonship*

PART I

VICTOR HALL

with Peter Hay & David Baker

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

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PART 1

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Contents

PREFACE	5
The gospel of sonship has been lost	6
An orientation toward our subject	8
The parable of the sower	10
Wayside ground	10
Stony ground	11
Thorny ground	12
The church is a ministering and evangelistic community	12
 CHAPTER 1	
The creation, fall and redemption of man	15
Introduction	15
The Everlasting Covenant	16
The covenant of the Holy Spirit	17
The covenant of the Father	17
The covenant of the Son	18
The creation of man	18
The fall of man	19
Ransom and redemption	22
The ransom price	22
The work of atonement – reconciliation	25
The work of atonement – true substitution	27
Judgement at the end of the age	28
 CHAPTER 2	
Overview of the steps of salvation	31
Introduction	31
A messenger of Christ	34
Grace and supplication	35
Conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement	36
Bankrupt in spirit	37
Mourning	38
Righteousness and faith are imputed	39
Receiving the Holy Spirit	39
Confessing Christ as Lord	40
Disciples of Christ	41
The new birth	42
Born to see – regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit	42
Born of water – a new creation by the Father’s seed	43

Born of the Spirit – receiving the Spirit of the Son	44
Baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ	45
Hidden with Christ in God	46
Baptised in the Holy Spirit	47
Fellowship in the offering and suffering of Christ	47
Communion	48
Walking according to the Spirit	48
Firstfruits believers	49
 CHAPTER 3	
The Everlasting Covenant	51
The image of God	53
The love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit	55
The grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit	56
The dialogue of the covenant	57
The cutting of the covenant	58
The Father laid down the seed	60
The Son emptied Himself and poured out His life	60
Begotten as the Son of the Father	62
Conclusion - two seeds	63
 CHAPTER 4	
The nature of mankind	65
The spirit of man	66
In darkness	66
The eye of the body	67
The law of my mind	68
The other law	69
Our physical body	69
The law of sin	70
Competing laws	70
Redemption	71
The law of the Spirit of life	72
 CHAPTER 5	
The covenant in Christ's blood	73
Introduction	73
Members of His body, sharing His life	74
The sufferings of Christ	75
Dying with Christ	76
Christ purges our conscience	77
Disciples of Christ	77
Ambassadors for Christ	78

CHAPTER 6

The body and God's covenant purpose	81
The earthly body	82
The heavenly body	82
The body of Christ	84
Building our heavenly house	85
Baptised with the Holy Spirit	86
Baptised with fire	87
The spiritual body	88
Differing glories	89
The bride of Christ	90

CHAPTER 7

Multiplying talents and minas	91
The Son's possessions given to slaves	91
Talents and minas	92
Talents	92
Minas	93
Working with talents and minas	94
The outcome of trading with the possessions of the Son	95

Preface

We have been considering the gospel of sonship and the way of salvation for many years. This has been an ongoing journey in the word of present truth. Our goal in this book is to harmonise the writings of the New Testament into a cohesive summary of the pathway of salvation. We have endeavoured to identify ‘the steps of salvation’ that are consistent with the frameworks presented by each of the New Testament writers. This is an important consideration, because every Christian needs to be fully assured of their own salvation, and also fully equipped to minister the gospel of sonship to others.

In approaching this subject, it is helpful to remember that Jesus was the first great preacher of the gospel of sonship. We know this because the apostle John recorded His interaction with Nicodemus, who was one of the most eminent teachers of the Jews. It is likely that this interaction took place soon after Jesus began His earthly ministry. Jesus said to Nicodemus, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’¹ This can equally be translated ‘born from the first’ and ‘born from above’. Jesus then continued by saying, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the

1 Joh 3:3

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

kingdom of God.² Jesus clearly explained that there are *three distinct elements of new birth* that are necessary for a person to see, and to enter, the kingdom of God.

It is important that we understand each element of new birth. What does it mean to be born from above? What does it mean to be born of water? What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? These concepts were completely new to Nicodemus. He was familiar only with what it meant to have the promise of the adoption that had been given to Abraham, and to live by the Law that had been given to the nation of Israel through Moses. These concepts may also be new to many believers today who are only familiar with a gospel of reconciliation. However, Jesus explained to Nicodemus that every Christian needs to understand and apprehend the gospel of sonship.

The gospel that Jesus delivered to Nicodemus was the same message that He taught His disciples. Jesus trained His disciples for well over a year before He sent them out as messengers to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of heaven.³ He sent the twelve disciples into the regions of Judea, and He sent the seventy disciples into every city and place where He ‘was going to come’.⁴ We know that the disciples did not understand everything that Jesus taught them during His earthly ministry. However, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would enable them to remember everything that He had explained to them.⁵ After the Day of Pentecost, all the apostles preached the gospel of sonship with great boldness.

Following his conversion, the apostle Paul became the most systematic exponent of the gospel of sonship. His illustrations were snapshots, or encapsulations, that expressed his wonder and enthusiasm about the high calling to sonship that we have in the New Covenant. He earnestly prayed that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened to know the hope of the Father’s calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power toward those who believe.⁶ His greatest desire was that every person would be genuinely illuminated about the high calling of the gospel of sonship.

The gospel of sonship has been lost

Even before the apostle Paul had died, this high calling had begun to be rejected by many believers.⁷ Perhaps the notion of sons of men becoming sons of God seemed too lofty a pursuit. The gospel of sonship began to be replaced by other

2 Joh 3:5

6 Eph 1:18-19

3 Mat 10:7

7 2Ti 1:15

4 Luk 10:1

5 Joh 14:26

Preface

man-made gospels. Receiving illumination was replaced by the pursuit of information. Paul was evidently concerned by these alternatives when he said to the Galatians, 'I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.'⁸ He testified to the Corinthians that he was afraid that they would be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ, in the same way that the serpent deceived Eve with an alternate word.⁹

It is quite likely that the Gospel of Matthew was written after the death of Paul. This is significant because we notice that Matthew used his Gospel to correct many errors that had begun to impact the early church. It is apparent that many believers had lost sight of the gospel of sonship and had reverted to living by the principles of the Old Covenant. They thought that they could fulfil the commands of Jesus by the strength of their own flesh. By the time the apostle John received the revelation of Jesus Christ at the close of the first century, and then wrote his Gospel account and personal letters, the situation among the early church had regressed even further. The apostle John was contending with the spirit of antichrist that had gained a foothold in the church.¹⁰

Sadly, church history bears witness to how quickly the gospel of sonship was rejected, and replaced by various alternatives, including Gnosticism.¹¹ The first few centuries were characterised by many philosophical and theological arguments. Church councils were convened to settle such disputes and to clarify the orthodox Christian position, but they did not recover any illumination on the primary message of the Scriptures. The gospel of sonship was not understood or proclaimed by those who are often considered to be the 'early church fathers'. In fact, history records that many of these men were the enemies of the gospel that had been proclaimed by Paul and the other apostles.

In the same way, the gospel of sonship was not preached during the Reformation in the early sixteenth century. The hope of being born as a son of God was even mocked and ridiculed by some preachers. It was not until mid-way through the nineteenth century that a well-known Baptist preacher began to teach that the blood of Christ was more than a ransom price that obtained a legal position of salvation. He taught that the blood had power to heal the sin-sick soul. This was something of a step forward, but it still fell well short of understanding the covenant that Christ has made with us in His blood.¹²

8 Gal 1:6 9 2Co 11:3 10 1Jn 4:3. 2Jn 1:7

11 A gospel based on the impartation and possession of certain secret knowledge (Greek *gnosis*) to obtain salvation

12 Mat 26:28

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

In the last hundred years, there have been a number of preachers who have emphasised the need for a salvation crisis, and proclaimed that we can be assured that we have eternal life. In many cases, there has also been a significant emphasis on the need to be baptised with the Holy Spirit. However, there has still been very little understanding on the elements of new birth and the pathway of salvation. Much has been written on man's need for salvation and the offering of Christ on our behalf. However, it is very difficult to find any Christian writing or teaching that goes beyond this to begin to identify the *steps of salvation*.

An orientation toward our subject

It is a lengthy process to identify the steps of salvation because it requires the perspective of all the New Testament writers. When we read the New Testament, we find that each writer used different terminology to address this important subject with a different point of emphasis. Developing an integrated view is like trying to put together a giant jigsaw puzzle. However, once all of the pieces are in the right places, the picture is incredibly clear. We find that all the New Testament writers described this picture in vivid detail, and that the steps on the pathway of salvation are relatively simple to understand.

Let us say again that our goal in this book is to provide an overview of the steps of salvation by harmonising the various frameworks that are used in the New Testament. In doing this, we will be highlighting some important points of distinction and emphasis. For example, we will consider that there is a distinction between the love of God being ministered to a person by the Holy Spirit when the gospel is proclaimed to them; and the love of God being poured into their heart through the Holy Spirit once He has been given to them.¹³ There is also a difference between having faith *in God*; and receiving the faith *of God* so that a person can believe 'what God believes about them' and confess that Jesus Christ is their Lord.¹⁴

We will also explain that receiving the incorruptible seed of our name from the Father is not the same as the Father sending the Person of Jesus Christ (the Seed of the Father and the seed of Abraham) to dwell in our heart.¹⁵ Further to this, we will show that Jesus Christ is not the first to come into our heart. The first Person to come into our heart is the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ He comes to regenerate and renew us in the inner man so that we can see the kingdom of God.¹⁷ The second Person to come

13 Tit 3:4. Rom 5:5 17 Tit 3:5. Joh 3:3

14 Rom 10:9-10

15 1Pe 1:23. Eph 3:17

16 Joh 14:16-17.
Joh 20:22

Preface

into our heart is the Father. He comes to birth the incorruptible seed of His word within us so that we become a new creation.¹⁸ This is what it means to be born of water.¹⁹ The third Person to come into our heart is Jesus Christ.²⁰ He comes to share the life of the divine nature with us as the substance of our sonship. It is only when all three Members of the Godhead have taken up residence in us that we have been born of the Spirit.²¹

All of these aspects are major clarifications. We will also highlight that Jesus Christ coming into the heart of a person is not the same thing as a person coming into Christ, by baptism, to become a participant in the New Covenant in His blood.²² In a similar way, when a believer receives the Person of the Holy Spirit into their heart, it is not the same as being baptised in the Holy Spirit. When a person is baptised in the Holy Spirit, they receive the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God to be a minister of the New Covenant in the church and in the world.²³ We will consider all of these clarifications on the steps of salvation, along with many others, in the chapter called 'The overview of the steps of salvation'.

There are many examples in the New Testament indicating that all of these steps happened very quickly in the life of a believer. On the Day of Pentecost, three thousand people were cut to the heart, converted, baptised into Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit.²⁴ The apostle Paul was miraculously confronted by Christ on the road to Damascus, and three days later he was baptised into Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit.²⁵ The Philippian jailer was converted and baptised on the same night, along with his whole family.²⁶

All of the steps of salvation can happen very quickly if a person receives the initiative that God takes toward them for their salvation. However, it will then take time for a believer to be fully established in the work that God has accomplished for them and in them. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul spoke of the need to 'continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven'.²⁷ Later in this same letter he wrote, 'As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude'.²⁸

18	1Pe 1:23. Eph 3:14-16	22	Rom 6:3	26	Act 16:27-34
19	Joh 3:5	23	Act 1:8	27	Col 1:23
20	Eph 3:17. Gal 4:6	24	Act 2:37-41	28	Col 2:6-7
21	Joh 3:5	25	Act 9:3-18		

The parable of the sower

Jesus made it clear that we must be firmly established as Christians who are bringing forth the fruit of our sonship, or the seed of new creation that we have received from the Father will die. This was the lesson of the parable of the sower and the seed. Jesus explained to His disciples that this parable is the foundation of all the parables.²⁹ The person who is likened to good ground is evidently a believer who is committed to the fellowship of the body of Christ and their sanctification as a son of God. They are bringing forth the fruit of sonship – thirty, sixty, and one hundredfold.³⁰ However, Jesus used the illustration of wayside, stony and thorny ground to illustrate why many believers do not continue in the pathway of salvation. Each ground draws our attention to a particular crisis that all Christians must face and overcome.

Wayside ground

The crisis for the person likened to wayside ground is *illumination*. Jesus said, concerning the wayside ground, ‘When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and *does not understand it*, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.’³¹ The wayside person received the word into their heart, but they did not allow the Holy Spirit to bring conviction so that they could look, by illumination, upon Jesus Christ whom they have pierced.³² It is apparent that the wayside person has not recognised their wretched condition, become poor in spirit, and cried out to God for help.³³ They have not received the Holy Spirit, which would enable them to genuinely confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.³⁴ However, more than this, they have not been regenerated and renewed in their inner man so that they can see the kingdom of God.³⁵

The person who can be likened to wayside ground may be very religious. They may regularly attend church, know a lot about God and the Scriptures, and have a strong Christian world view. However, if the eye of their heart has not been enlightened by the word of life and the work of the Holy Spirit, then they will still be walking in darkness. The birds of the air represent all of the alternate gospels that have been fathered by Satan. These gospels devour the word of sonship and replace it with an alternative that has no capacity to bring life and light to the hearer. In this case, the hope of the glory of sonship will be replaced by some other religious, social, political, financial or personal goal.

29 Mar 4:13

33 Mat 5:3

30 Mat 13:23

34 ICo 12:3

31 Mat 13:19.
Mar 4:15. Luk 8:12

35 Tit 3:5. Joh 3:3

32 Zec 12:10

Stony ground

The crisis for the person likened to stony ground is *conversion and baptism*. Jesus likened the stony ground person to ‘the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away’.³⁶ The stony ground person has been born from above to see the kingdom of God. The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit have been active in their life so that they can ‘rejoice’ in the hope of becoming a son of God. However, they have ‘no firm root’ in them because they have not yet been converted to enter the kingdom of God.³⁷ Jesus explained to Nicodemus that a person cannot enter the kingdom of God unless they have been born of water and the Spirit.³⁸

A believer is born of water when the Father causes the incorruptible seed of His word to germinate in their heart.³⁹ This incorruptible seed contains their name as a son of God. The work of the Father in a person’s life will only be effective if they are willing to be submitted to His will and redefined by His word. This is a crisis for some believers. Further to this, a believer is born of the Spirit when Christ comes to dwell in their heart by faith so that His life becomes their life.⁴⁰ This is the beginning of a life-long process as the substance of Christ’s life is formed in them. The need for the virtues of Christ to be received by us, formed in us, and demonstrated through us, will also precipitate a crisis for many believers.⁴¹

If a person has been born of water and the Spirit, they will want to be baptised to come into Christ. Baptism will be the fruit of their conversion and the expression of their faith to join the fellowship of the body of Christ. This will involve a unique participation in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. However, the stony ground person will be offended by the need to join the fellowship of the body of Christ and the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. They will not want to join the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings so that sin can be processed in their lives and they can be equipped to reveal Christ, as a member of His body. Such a believer will be offended by the word of the cross, and this offence will cause them to stumble and fall away.

36 Mat 13:20-21.
Mar 4:16-17.
Luk 8:13

37 Mat 18:3

38 Joh 3:5

39 1Pe 1:23

40 Eph 3:17

41 2Pe 1:3-8

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

Thorny ground

The crisis for the stony ground person is joining the fellowship of the body of Christ, whereas the crisis for the thorny ground person is their *ongoing, individual sanctification* as a son of God. The issue is whether they will continue to submit to the sanctification of the Father's will upon their life so that they become a firstfruits Christian.⁴² Jesus said that the thorny ground person becomes unfruitful. They do not bring forth any fruit to maturity. He likened the thorny ground to 'the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity'.⁴³

The Gospel of Mark elaborates on the nature of the thorns by saying that the word is choked by the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things. The worries of this world would include the distractions and anxiety caused by business, employment, family, health and any number of other things. The deceitfulness of riches would include the pursuit of money and lifestyle, but also the pursuit of security and the validation of identity based on success and achievements. The desire for other things is simply a person's desire for anything that is not according to the will of God for their life.

Every Christian must recognise that their only freedom is to be the person whom God has predestined them to be.⁴⁴ The pursuit of every other thing is a deception and the evidence of bondage. When a person is committed to sanctification, it means that they are no longer free to be preoccupied with the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things. All of these things will cause the seed of sonship within a person to slowly die. In contrast to the stony ground person who will become offended and fall away suddenly, it may take many years for the life of the thorny ground person to wither and die. It is sobering to consider that this will be happening to many believers while they are still part of a congregation.

The church is a ministering and evangelistic community

In most congregations, there will be people who fall into each of the categories that were identified by Jesus in the parable of the sower and the seed. There will be people who have not received an illumination about their sonship, but enjoy religious friendship and society. There will be others who have been illuminated,

42 1Th 4:3

43 Luk 8:14

44 Gal 5:1

but are warring against the Spirit regarding the need to be converted and to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. There will be those who are consumed with other things and are slowly drifting away and dying. And then there will be those who are fully committed to their sanctification as members of the body of Christ and as sons of God.

Jesus likened those who are being sanctified, and bringing forth the fruit of their sonship, to good ground.⁴⁵ It is only firstfruit Christians, such as these, who are genuinely part of the church. We recall that the scriptural meaning of the word 'church' is 'the called out ones'. Firstfruits Christians who are being sanctified will recognise the need to participate in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings for their whole life. Having been baptised with the Holy Spirit, they will be receiving power for sanctified living. This means that they will be able to conduct themselves as sons of God in this world according to the will of God.

The church should be a sanctified group of firstfruits Christians who are committed to walking by the Spirit, not reverting to the ways of the flesh.⁴⁶ This is the only way that the church can be a community that is able to minister the life of Christ. The sanctified offering of every member of the body of Christ will enable the body to build itself up in love.⁴⁷ However, further to this, the sanctification of firstfruits Christians and households in the world enables a lampstand church to fulfil its mandate to be the light of the world.⁴⁸

Jesus has commissioned ascension gift apostles and prophets, along with evangelists, pastors, and teachers, to preach and teach the gospel of sonship. Their work is then to adjust and train those who receive the word, so that they can become disciple-messengers of Christ.⁴⁹ The work of disciple-messengers in the world is to proclaim the gospel of sonship and to nurture those who receive the word, so that each new believer is fully established as a firstfruits Christian in the church. The work of nurturing new believers is not limited to the public communion gathering of the body of Christ. Much of this work will be done by disciple-messengers from house to house.

The work of evangelism is much more than sharing the gospel. It is an evangelistic labour which includes travelling prayer as part of a begetting work. Paul testified to the Galatians that he was in 'labour' for them so that Christ would be formed in them.⁵⁰ In his letter to Philemon, he spoke of his child Onesimus whom he had 'begotten' while in prison.⁵¹ This is the work of firstfruits Christians

45 Luk 8:15.
Mat 13:23.
Mar 4:20

46 Gal 3:3

47 Eph 4:16

48 Mat 5:14-15

49 Eph 4:11-12

50 Gal 4:19

51 Phm 1:10

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

and households. Evangelism will only be effective when Christian households have been equipped and mobilised toward this kind of ministry. It is for this reason that we must have a clear understanding of the steps of salvation.

It is important for every Christian household to be fully established in the gospel of sonship so that they can survive and overcome the onslaught of the spirit of antichrist that is already coming against the church. Jesus warned His disciples that lawlessness would increase, and the love of the majority of Christians would grow cold in the period of history that precedes the time of the end.⁵² We are certainly witnessing an exponential increase in lawlessness and a great falling away of Christians in the world today. This is particularly true in the western nations of the world. There has never been a greater imperative for lampstand churches in every place to be clear on the gospel that must be proclaimed as a light in a dark place.⁵³ Jesus said that the gospel of the kingdom, which is the gospel of sonship, will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.⁵⁴

52 Mat 24:12

53 Php 2:15

54 Mat 24:14

CHAPTER 1

The creation, fall and redemption of man

Introduction

The gospel of sonship is the primary message of the Scriptures. Paul often referred to this gospel as ‘the mystery of Christ’.¹ He was referring to the mystery of how sons of men can be born as sons of God, and then have the substance of Christ’s life and sonship formed within them. Paul said that this mystery had been hidden from previous generations.² Even though the Old Testament saints had the promise of sonship by adoption, they did not yet possess the divine nature in their flesh as the fulfilment of this promise. The mystery of Christ dwelling in the heart of man had not yet been revealed to them.

Paul rejoiced that God now wanted this mystery to be fully proclaimed and known among all Gentile nations.³ He declared that the mystery is ‘Christ in you,

1 Col 4:3

2 Col 1:26. Eph 3:5

3 Rom 16:26

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

the hope of glory'.⁴ We have been predestined to become sons of God who will forever reveal the glory of the Father. When we become the sons whom the Father has named us to be, the glory of our sonship demonstrates that He is our Father, and magnifies His glory as our Father. The manifestation of the glory of a great multitude of sons is to 'the praise of the Father's glory'.⁵ Paul preached this gospel of sonship in every place. This word was to become the foundation and basis upon which his hearers would receive faith to become sons of God.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote concerning the gospel of sonship so that all believers would be greatly encouraged, knit together in love, and would possess the wealth that comes from having a true knowledge of the mystery of Christ. In short, he wanted every believer to have a *full assurance of understanding* about their salvation as a son of God.⁶ This is obviously a message with vast implications. We must give careful attention to rightly understanding the gospel so that it is effective in our lives and we are fully equipped to minister it to others.

In this first chapter, we will briefly consider God's covenant purpose, the creation of man, the fall of man, and the redemptive work of Christ. These major biblical themes will continue to be developed throughout the book. They form the foundation upon which the steps of salvation will be outlined in chapter two.

The Everlasting Covenant

The purpose of God for mankind is summarised in the statement, 'Let us make man in Our image and after Our likeness'.⁷ This was the shared initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit before the foundation of the world. It is called 'the Everlasting Covenant'.⁸ The Everlasting Covenant reveals the purpose of God and is the primary message of the Scriptures. We have been predestined to become sons of God, who will possess the very image and likeness of all three Persons in the Godhead, without ever becoming God. In chapter three, we will consider how this covenant was made, and the unique contributions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit toward its fulfilment.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all involved in making the Everlasting Covenant, and all Three are involved in its achievement and fulfilment. For this reason, the Everlasting Covenant includes the unique covenant that the Father makes with us, the unique covenant that the Son makes with us, and the unique covenant that the Holy Spirit makes with us. The apostle John declared that there

4 Col 1:27

8 Gen 17:7

5 Eph 1:6,12

6 Col 2:2

7 Gen 1:26

are Three who bear witness to this covenant in heaven. The fulfilment of these three individual covenants means that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will dwell in us and with us forever.⁹ We will briefly introduce these *three covenants* before we proceed to consider the creation, fall and redemption of man.

The covenant of the Holy Spirit

The writer to the Hebrews declared that it is the Holy Spirit who said, ‘This is the covenant that *I will make with them* after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart and on their mind I will write them’.¹⁰ It is important that we fully appreciate the contribution of the Holy Spirit toward the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant and our salvation. The Holy Spirit is the Helper of the Father and the Son in every aspect of the Everlasting Covenant. He has also given Himself to the Father and the Son so that He can be sent to be our Helper.¹¹

When we receive the Holy Spirit and He comes into our heart, He brings the love of God with Him. Paul explained that the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.¹² The love of God is the nature and capacity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, given to us ‘without measure’.¹³ It is ‘without measure’ because it is the full expression of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. This is the fullness of God, who is love. The apostle John rejoiced that ‘of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace’.¹⁴

It is the Holy Spirit who joins us to the fellowship of Yahweh and empowers us to worship in Spirit and sanctification. He writes the law of our sanctification upon our heart. Our sanctification is the expression of the truth of our name as a son of God. When the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart, it gives us the capacity to express love according to our name, in one Spirit with the Lord and with one other. This means that we will be fulfilling God’s Royal law, which is love. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit is the essence of the Everlasting Covenant. In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul called this the covenant of the Spirit’.¹⁵

The covenant of the Father

The covenant of the Father is made known through the expression of His will. His desire, motivated by love, was to bring to birth a multitude of sons. We have been foreknown by name and predestined to become sons of God according to the Father’s will.¹⁶ His will is revealed to us and expressed toward us by His word.

9 Rev 21:3

13 Joh 3:34

10 Heb 10:16

14 Joh 1:16

11 Joh 14:16-17

15 2Co 3:6. Gal 3:14

12 Rom 5:5

16 Rom 8:29. Eph 1:11

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

It is the unique capacity of the Father to give identity and life to a multitude of sons by His word. The apostle James summarised the covenant of the Father toward us by saying, 'Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights [identities], with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of firstfruits among His creatures.'¹⁷

The covenant of the Son

In contrast to the Father, who gives us identity and life by His word, the Son *shares* the substance of His life with us by offering. The covenant that the Son has made with us is a new covenant in His blood.¹⁸ We recall that Jesus said to His disciples at the last supper, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood'.¹⁹ Before the foundation of the world, He *emptied Himself* to make room for a multitude of sons. And He *poured out His life* to the Father so that He could share the substance of His life with us by offering. We have an ongoing participation in the covenant of the Son when we join the fellowship of His offering through baptism. As we continue to participate in the fellowship of His sufferings, the Son continues to share the substance of His life with us.

The creation of man

The present heavens and earth were created as the context in which God's covenant purpose would be accomplished. On the sixth day of creation, the Lord God formed the physical body of man from the dust of the ground. He then breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives, and Adam became a living soul. Adam was completely unique, and different from the rest of the creation and the animals because the Spirit of Yahweh formed 'his spirit' within him when He breathed life into his nostrils.²⁰ Because Adam had been given a spirit, he could have fellowship with Yahweh.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit discussed Adam's name before the foundation of the world, along with the name of every person who would ever be born in his lineage. When Adam's spirit was formed within him on the day of his creation, Yahweh gave him identity as an eternal possession according to his name. His identity was resident within his spirit. Adam was given identity and the freedom to choose the privilege of becoming the son whom God had named and predestined him to be from before the foundation of the world. Because he had been given

¹⁷ Jas 1:17-18

¹⁸ Luk 22:20

¹⁹ Luk 22:20

²⁰ Zec 12:1

possession of his identity, he was also fully accountable for the choices that he made.

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed unhindered fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They met with the Lord God 'in the cool of the day'.²¹ It is helpful to note that the word 'cool' in Hebrew is *ruach* and can be translated 'wind, breeze, breath, spirit'. Adam and Eve's fellowship with Yahweh was 'in the Spirit'. In this fellowship, their mortality was sustained by the life and Spirit of Yahweh. As they walked and talked with Him each day, His word gave them life and illumination.²² They knew all things in God and God in all things.

We know that Adam was not complete in the day of His creation. He was not yet born of the Spirit, even though he had the anointing of the Spirit upon him. Adam possessed the mandate, which belonged to his name, to have dominion over the natural creation, to name all the animals, and to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth. However, he had yet to receive his name from the Father, as the incorruptible seed of his eternal inheritance by which he would be born as a son of God. As we consider the steps of salvation in the next chapter, it will become clear that Adam had not yet been born to see, born of water, and born of the Spirit. These *three elements of new birth* are something completely new that was not available for mankind until after the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

The fall of man

In the garden of Eden, God said to Adam, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'²³ God did not place this tree in the garden to test or tempt Adam. The spiritual capacity to discern both good and evil was to be part of the predestination of man, but only once he had been born of the Spirit. The apostle Paul said that 'he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no-one'.²⁴ In his letter to the Hebrews, the writer referred to those who 'by reason of use have their spiritual senses exercised to discern both good and evil'.²⁵

God explained to Adam that if he presumed to lay hold of the knowledge of good and evil in the flesh, then he would die. Adam was completely free to choose whether or not he would obey this word. He had the capacity to believe and obey this word as he walked in fellowship with God, with the anointing of the Spirit

21 Gen 3:8

25 Heb 5:14

22 Psa 119:50,130

23 Gen 2:16-17

24 1Co 2:15

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

upon him. Satan, however, used this command as an opportunity to undermine Eve's trust in God and to present her with an alternative proposition. He promised her that she would not die if she ate this fruit but, rather, that her eyes would be opened and she would be like God, knowing good and evil.²⁶ This, of course, was a lie. Satan knew that if Adam and Eve chose an alternative to the predestination of sonship that God had given them, they would die.

When we consider the fall of man, we observe the interplay between two distinct principles. The first principle was the potential for *carnality* that resided within man. God had given man his identity as an eternal possession and, hence, he had the freedom and capacity to choose whether he would set his mind on the Spirit or on the flesh. In the fellowship of Yahweh, Adam and Eve had *no reason* and *no propensity* to set their mind on the things of the flesh. However, Eve was deceived into choosing to do this by engaging in a discussion with Satan. As she did this, she began to be drawn away from fellowship with Yahweh by her desire to be in *control* of her own life. It was this desire within her that made her vulnerable to Satan's proposition. The apostle James explained this principle when he said, 'Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust [desire]'.²⁷

The second principle contributing to the fall of man was *the deception* that was fathered by Satan's lie. Satan proposed to Eve that she would be able to gather information through her natural senses and then use the knowledge of good and evil as a resource to make her own decisions. He promised her that she could *live this way* - outside of fellowship and without faith - to receive the predestination that Yahweh was offering to them. The fruit of Eve receiving this lie into her heart was *deception*. Her senses became distorted and she lost her capacity for sound reasoning. She looked at the fruit of the tree and believed that it was a viable alternative to the life and peace that she already knew in fellowship with Yahweh.

Once Eve had received the word of Satan and believed his lie, she presented this same proposition to her husband. Adam *chose* to disobey God by receiving this word from his wife. Through his disobedience, Adam alienated himself, his wife and all of mankind from the life of God. In the day that Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he *died* to God. He did not lose his identity, but his spirit was now in darkness. Adam was no longer walking 'in the light and life' of fellowship with Yahweh. He had lost the capacity to see and perceive the things of the Spirit, and to have fellowship with God in the Spirit.

26 Gen 3:4-5

27 Jas 1:14

The only *new knowledge* that Adam and Eve gained as a consequence of the Fall was an awareness of the *evil* of their own disobedience. They were ashamed of their sin and hid themselves from the Lord because of their shame and condemnation. When the Lord did meet with them, He sacrificed an animal to clothe them with garments of skin. This sacrifice foreshadowed the offering that Christ would make, at the appropriate time, to ransom and redeem mankind from the bondage and death of sin. God then sent Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden so they would not eat of the tree of life, and thus be preserved forever in their wretched state of condemnation and fear.²⁸ This was the expression of His *mercy* toward them.

As a consequence of the Fall, the desire of Adam and Eve to control their lives from a self-centred perspective became a ‘law’ in their flesh and in the flesh of all their descendants. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul called this the ‘other law’.²⁹ It is the self-centred motivation of a person that desires control and independence. Likewise, the mode of living that Satan proposed to Eve, as an *alternative* to obedience and fellowship with God, became the only way that mankind could live apart from God. The disobedience of Adam consigned the whole human race, and all of the natural creation as well, to a desperate struggle for survival. Adam had sold himself and all of his descendants into bondage to ‘the law of sin’.

Because of their fallen condition, mankind is motivated by the law of sin to use all the resources at their disposal in the vain pursuit of establishing a life apart from the predestination that God has planned for them. These resources will include their own knowledge of good and evil; the information they gain from their natural senses, the natural creation and other people; and, perhaps, even the Law of God. A fallen man believes that he can use all of these resources to not only survive, but to build an image of himself according to his own vain imagination. We know that this ultimate deception has gripped and enslaved the hearts of mankind, and its only outcome is death. It is because of this deception that the apostle John wrote that ‘the whole world lies under the power of the evil one’.³⁰

The apostle Paul summarised this reality by saying that every fallen person walks ‘in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their heart’.³¹ Fallen man has been separated from the life of God and the light of fellowship with God. He walks in darkness and has no idea why he

28 Gen 3:22

29 Rom 7:23

30 1Jn 5:19

31 Eph 4:17-18

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

exists and what the purpose of God is for his life. Not only is he fallen and lost, but he has also become antagonistic toward God. The apostle Paul declared that the whole human race has become hostile to God. This is the situation of a fallen man in the world today. He is dead in trespasses and sins, lost and without hope in this world, and an *enemy of God*.

It is important to understand how great the fall of man was, and how desperately hopeless our fallen condition is, so that we can fully appreciate how great the mercy of God is toward us. God is rich in mercy toward us because of His great love for us. When we understand our fallen condition, we also begin to appreciate how extensive the work of salvation needed to be to recover us to God's purpose.

Ransom and redemption

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul declared that 'while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son'. And more than this, 'having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life'.³² The work of redemption was operative *in Christ* as His blood was being shed for us, so that His life could be given to us. This redemptive work enables us to be reconciled to God and saved from our sin and the judgement of the Law. The apostle Paul called this 'the redemption which is in Christ Jesus'.³³

The work of redemption was accomplished for us, in Christ, when His blood was shed from the garden of Gethsemane through to His cry, 'It is finished!', on the cross. His blood was shed from seven wounds when He suffered as a living sacrifice. Paul explained that when Christ was lifted up on the cross, the whole redemptive work in His blood was publicly portrayed and revealed before the eyes of all.³⁴ It was revealed as a completed, finished work. Christ's redemptive work enables the grace of God to be extended to us so that we can be justified by faith in Christ; reconciled to God; and then saved by the life that is in His blood as we join the fellowship of His death and offering.

The ransom price

The first aspect of Christ's redemptive work that we will consider is the ransom price. Jesus explained to the disciples that 'the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a *ransom* for many'.³⁵ Christ gave His life for us and shared His life with us when His blood was shed. It is the life of Christ

32 Rom 5:10

33 Rom 3:24

34 Rom 3:25

35 Mar 10:45

in His blood that has ransomed us. The apostle Peter rejoiced that we have been ransomed by the precious blood of Christ.³⁶ The ransom price was the *cost to God* in releasing us from our bondage to sin and the judgement of the Law. This was a costly work because Christ could only do this by giving us His life.

On the basis of this significant cost to God, the apostle Paul declared that we have been bought with a price.³⁷ The ransom price was an essential element of our salvation, because we had been sold into bondage. Paul testified, 'I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin'.³⁸ This prompts us to ask an obvious question. Who sold us into this bondage? In his letter to the Romans, Paul clearly answered this question. It was Adam. Our father, Adam, sold himself and all of his descendants into the bondage to sin.

The outcome of Adam's transgression was that we became slaves of sin and were dead in trespasses and sins. Paul explained, 'By the transgression of the one the many died'.³⁹ And, more than this, 'By the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one'.⁴⁰ Not only are we subject to death because of Adam's transgression; death also became a ruler that has power over us. We are in bondage to the law of sin and the fear of death. It is the fear of death that enables Satan to hold us captive to do his will.⁴¹

In chapter five of the book of Romans, the apostle Paul established the truth that the first Adam was a type of Him who was to come.⁴² We know that the last Adam is Jesus Christ.⁴³ Having established this parallel, Paul contrasted the 'one transgression' of the first Adam with the last Adam's 'one act of righteousness'. He also contrasted the disobedience of the first Adam with the obedience of the last Adam.⁴⁴ Paul explained, 'As through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men'.⁴⁵

In this parallel between the first Adam and the last Adam, Paul was comparing and contrasting two kinds of death. The death of the first Adam was the result of his disobedience. It was the outcome of his transgression. The death of Christ was the result of his obedience to the Father's will. It was an act of righteousness. Jesus Christ came in the flesh of mankind and suffered the death that we have inherited from our father, Adam. However, because He did this obediently and righteously, it was impossible for Him to be held by its power. He has fully revealed a different kind of death. Instead of condemnation, the outcome for those who join the fellowship of His death is the justification of life.

36 1Pe 1:18-19

40 Rom 5:17

44 Rom 5:19

37 1Co 6:20. 1Co 7:23

41 Heb 2:14-15

45 Rom 5:18

38 Rom 7:14

42 Rom 5:14

39 Rom 5:15

43 1Co 15:45

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

We were sold into bondage to sin by the first Adam, and we have been ransomed from our bondage to sin by the last Adam, Christ. However, the ransom price needed to deal with more than our bondage to sin. When the Law Covenant was made with the flesh of the nation of Israel, it made sin exceedingly sinful.⁴⁶ Paul said, 'For until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.'⁴⁷ The Israelites were bound by their captivity to sin and bound by their obligation to keep the Law. We know that they could not keep the Law because of the weakness of their flesh. This invoked upon them the judgement of the Law, which was death.

We observe that there are two aspects to our bondage – sin and the Law. We are dead because of the consequence of sin and the judgement of the Law. Jesus Christ has ransomed us from both of these aspects of bondage by establishing *another death*. Jesus Christ has paid the ransom price to secure our release by destroying sin in His flesh and abolishing the Old Covenant. In this way, He has preached peace to all men. However, we only lay hold of our freedom by joining His death. Paul explained that when we join the death of Christ by baptism, we die *to sin* and we die *to the Law*.⁴⁸

We are released from our captivity to sin and the Law because we have died 'to that by which we were bound'.⁴⁹ Paul reasoned that sin has no power over us when we are dead.⁵⁰ Likewise, if we are dead, the Law has no jurisdiction over us.⁵¹ When we die to sin and to the Law, we live to God and are able to bear fruit to God because of the life that Christ has given us in His blood.⁵² Paul declared that we have been reconciled by the death of Christ, but we are saved from sin and saved from wrath (the judgement of the Law) by His life.⁵³ This is the life that we receive in the blood of Christ as we join the fellowship of His body and the fellowship of His sufferings.

Once we have died to sin, sin will also be dead to us. The only reason that sin will revive, causing us to die, is if the other law within our flesh provokes us to lay hold of the Law of God by the flesh. We are delivered from this propensity as we continue to participate in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Our fellowship in His sufferings is our participation in His circumcision. This is the circumcision 'made without hands' that Christ experienced as He condemned and destroyed our sin, in His flesh, on the cross. It is our participation in the circumcision of Christ that removes the body of sin from our flesh.⁵⁴

46 Rom 7:13

47 Rom 5:13

48 Rom 6:2. Rom 7:4

49 Rom 7:6

50 Rom 6:7

51 Rom 7:1

52 Rom 6:10-11.

Gal 2:19. Rom 7:4

53 Rom 5:9-10

54 Rom 6:6. Col 2:11

The body of sin is our propensity to sin because of the other law and the law of sin in our flesh. Our participation in Christ's circumcision frees us from our compulsion to obey the flesh, with its lusts and demands upon us. This means that we will be free to live and serve God by the power of Christ's life that is resident within us once we have been born of the Spirit. In fact, under the New Covenant, we are obliged to walk by the Spirit as the only means by which we can fulfil the will of God.⁵⁵

It is important to recognise that Jesus Christ has ransomed us from our bondage to sin and the Law so that He can deliver, or commit, us to a new master. Paul called this new master the 'form of doctrine to which you were committed'.⁵⁶ This doctrine is the word of the Father concerning our name and work. When we are obedient from the heart to this word, it reveals the righteousness of Christ.⁵⁷ We reveal the righteousness of His sonship as members of His body and, as we do this, the firstfruits of our sanctification as sons of God is also expressed in us by the Holy Spirit. The outcome of this is the fruit of eternal life as we continue to serve God by the newness of the Spirit within us.⁵⁸

The work of atonement – reconciliation

We will now consider the work of the atonement in more detail. There are two important aspects to the work of atonement. The first is reconciliation, and the second is what we will call 'true substitution' so that we are saved by Christ's life. We recall again the words of Paul, 'For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life'.⁵⁹

We have been reconciled to God through the death of Christ for a number of reasons.

1. The death of Christ removed the *impediments* between God and mankind. Sin was condemned and destroyed through the work of Christ that He accomplished in His flesh from the garden of Gethsemane through to the cry 'It is finished!'⁶⁰ We know that Christ did not abolish the Royal law, but He did abolish the Old Covenant which Paul called 'the law of commandments contained in ordinances'.⁶¹ When these two impediments were removed, it made forgiveness and reconciliation possible.

55 Rom 8:4.
Rom 8:12-13

56 Rom 6:17

57 Rom 6:16

58 Rom 6:22

59 Rom 5:10

60 Rom 8:3

61 Eph 2:15

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

2. The death of Christ removed the things that were *causing us harm and killing us*. Sin was not only harming us; it had also become our master so that we were slaves who were bound to obey its lusts.⁶² Sin was fathered by Satan in the beginning, and it is our enemy. It is intent on our destruction and death. In contrast to this, the Law Covenant was never given to cause us harm.⁶³ However, the Law Covenant proclaimed both blessing and cursing. It bestowed a blessing upon those who kept it and invoked a judgement upon those who broke it. As we have considered, the nation of Israel was unable to keep the Law Covenant because of the weakness of their flesh. The law that could have brought life, only resulted in death for them.⁶⁴
3. The death of Christ *delivers us from God's wrath* and reconciles us to God by extending mercy, preserving justice, and fulfilling the will of God on our behalf.⁶⁵ Christ was made to be a sin offering for us. When Christ was laid hold of by the hands of wicked men, the Father laid the sin of the whole world upon Him. He then suffered the full wrath of God for our sin and rebellion. This was the 'cup' of judgement that He drank on our behalf.⁶⁶

As Christ suffered under the wrath and judgement of God, we know that He was not the victim of a law-based punishment nor the victim of the Father's need for retribution. This is an important point. In the first case, the wrath of God was the manifestation of atonement. It was the revelation of God's jealous love that purges and destroys all sin, impurity, and iniquity. When we join Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings, we receive His life, and the judgement of God becomes a discipline upon us that reconciles us to God, delivers us from sin, and perfects and matures us as sons of God.⁶⁷

4. The death of Christ enabled the recovery and restitution of all that had been lost to God through Adam's transgression. The principle of restitution is that compensation is made for a loss that has been suffered.⁶⁸ When Adam sold himself and all his descendants into bondage to sin, the Father lost *the whole human race*. Jesus Christ ransomed us so that we could be recovered and restored to the Father. This was motivated by His love for the Father, and for us. Christ has reconciled the whole world; but only those who respond to His invitation and heed the call to repent are restored to the Father's family as His children.

62 Rom 6:12

63 Rom 7:7,12

64 Rom 7:10

65 2Co 5:18-19

66 Mat 26:39.

Mar 14:36.

Luk 22:42

67 Rom 3:23-26

68 Gen 32:13-20.

Exo 21:22,32-36

The work of atonement - true substitution

The highpoint of the work of atonement is the *substitution of one life for another*. This important aspect of the atonement has often been limited to the vicarious work of Christ. The word 'vicarious' is sometimes used by Bible teachers or commentators to describe the work that Christ has done 'on our behalf'. The death of Christ on our behalf has enabled us to be reconciled to God. However, the principle of atonement extends far beyond the work of reconciliation.

The substitution of one life for another means that the life of Christ has been given to us, to become our life. When the Law Covenant was given to the nation of Israel, it revealed that we have no capacity to please God in the strength of our own flesh. The life of Christ is given to us to replace the capacity of our human life to live and serve God. We are being saved by His life as this exchange takes place. This is 'true substitution'. When we consider this element of Christ's atonement, we can understand why the apostle Paul could say, 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'⁶⁹

This principle is best illustrated by the verse that declares, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement'.⁷⁰ The life of Christ was in His physical blood. His body was the altar and mercy seat of the true heavenly temple of God. His life was made available to us as His blood fell on His body from the wounds that were inflicted upon Him. When we join the fellowship of Christ's death by baptism, we are able to receive His life in the fellowship of His body, which is the church. As we continue to fellowship in His sufferings, His life is being given to us, and it is becoming our life.

It is important to recognise that the life of the Son's offering was first made available to us in the fellowship of the Everlasting Covenant, before the foundation of the world. In the fellowship of this covenant, Yahweh the Son emptied Himself to make room for us, and then poured out His life to the Father so that it could be shared with us by offering. He became the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.⁷¹ Peter explained that this offering, from before the foundation of the world, has now been manifested in time.⁷² This occurred when Christ offered Himself to the Father and His blood was shed from the garden of Gethsemane

69 Gal 2:20

70 Lev 17:11

71 Rev 13:8

72 1Pe 1:20

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

to the cross. We are able to receive His life, now, by joining the fellowship of His death and sufferings.

The first outcome of receiving the life of Christ, by participation in His offering, is that His blood cleanses our conscience from our own dead works.⁷³ The life of Christ that is in His blood cleanses our conscience from every self-centred and self-seeking activity by becoming the power and expression of our life. We know that the blood of the sacrificial animals in the Old Covenant had no capacity to cleanse the heart and make the worshippers perfect in conscience.⁷⁴ In contrast to this, Paul declared that the blood of Christ is able to cleanse the conscience. It is for this reason that Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant.⁷⁵ His life is given to us so that it can cleanse our conscience as we join the fellowship of His sufferings.

The second outcome of receiving the life of Christ is that His life equips us to do the Father's will, and gives us the capacity to serve the living God as His sons and priests.⁷⁶ We have no capacity to give our own life, and our life has no capacity to give life to another.⁷⁷ It is the life of Christ that gives us the capacity, by the Spirit, to serve God and to become ministers of the New Covenant. The life that is ministered in the New Covenant is the life of Christ. We read in the book of Revelation that Christ has 'released us from our sins by His blood and He has made us to be a kingdom [of sons], and priests to His God and Father'.⁷⁸

The third outcome of receiving the life of Christ is that it becomes our eternal inheritance as sons of God.⁷⁹ This is the fulfilment of the promise that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit made to us in the Everlasting Covenant. This covenant could not be realised until the life of Christ was made available to us by the shedding of His blood. The life of the Son was poured out for us in the fellowship of the Everlasting Covenant before the foundation of the world. This offering was manifested in time when the blood of Christ was shed in the garden of Gethsemane.⁸⁰ As Christ offered Himself to God as a living sacrifice, from the garden to the cross, the bequeathing process of the Everlasting Covenant was accomplished. The life of the Son of God was shared with us so that it could become our eternal inheritance.

Judgement at the end of the age

We have considered how the offering of Christ and the shedding of His blood was a full and complete redemptive work. The mercy and prevenient grace of God

73 Heb 9:14

77 Psa 49:7-8

74 Heb 9:9

78 Rev 1:5-6

75 Heb 9:15

79 Heb 9:15

76 Heb 13:21.
Heb 9:14

80 Heb 9:17

is able to be extended to all those who are willing to receive Christ's invitation to find repentance and salvation. The Father is free to judge, and free to remit the sin of any person on the basis of Christ's propitiatory work. Peter explained that He is patient toward us, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.⁸¹ However, He has also set a day in which He will judge the world. If the love and kindness of God, which has been fully revealed by Christ, does not lead a person to repentance, then they are storing up wrath for themselves 'in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God'.⁸²

God will not judge the world because He is bound by Law to do so. We know that the Law has been nailed to the cross. He will judge the world in righteousness on the basis of every person's response to Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. Paul explained to those on Mars Hill that the Father 'has *fixed a day* in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead'.⁸³ The world will be judged because it neither believes nor receives Christ. The Scripture is clear that faith is the basis for deliverance, and that unbelief is the ground for condemnation. Jesus said, 'He who has believed and has been baptised shall be saved; be he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.'⁸⁴

81 2Pe 3:9

82 Rom 2:4-5

83 Act 17:31.
Rom 2:4-5

84 Mar 16:16

CHAPTER 2

Overview of the steps of salvation

Introduction

In this chapter we present an orientation to the framework of salvation that is contained in the Scriptures. Our purpose for doing this is to identify from the Scriptures the key waypoints of our salvation so that, with confidence, we can continue to be established and mature as sons of God, and also be fully equipped to minister the gospel of sonship to others.

From the writings of the New Testament we can identify some key waypoints on the pathway of sonship. In summary, these include:

1. *A disciple-messenger proclaims the gospel – grace that brings salvation (prevenient grace)*
The word of Christ is preached by disciple-messengers to people who are dead in trespasses and sin. The messenger proclaims the gospel of salvation that calls the hearer to be reconciled to God and to be born again as His son. This does not just mean that they will be reborn as a human person into the same condition that Adam was before he sinned. Rather, it means to be born

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

‘of God’ and to now become His son. They are being called to become a *new creation*. The lovingkindness of God is ministered to them, as the Holy Spirit pours out upon them a Spirit of grace and supplication. If the hearer does not resist the Spirit and the grace that is coming to them in the word, they will be illuminated and convicted concerning their sin, righteousness and judgement. They will desire to be recovered to the family of God, and to become God’s son.

2. *Bankrupt in spirit, and mourning*

Through illumination, the hearer realises the *wretchedness* of their bondage to sin and self-centredness. Because of this, they have no capacity to be the son of God whom the Father is calling them to be. This is what it means to be bankrupt in spirit. They begin to sorrow, repenting for their sin, for piercing Christ, and for the loss of their sonship.

3. *The hearer is forgiven*

The Father hears the cry of the repentant believer, and forgives them on account of Christ’s blood that was shed for them on the cross while they were still enemies. Through the spirit of supplication from the Holy Spirit, the hearer’s mourning then shifts from a sorrow for what has been lost, to a travail to believe and receive the sonship that the messenger has proclaimed.

4. *Righteousness reckoned to the believer*

The hearer believes that the messenger is speaking the truth. However, having become poor in spirit, they know that they are unable to believe that they can be the son of God that the word is calling them to be. Consequently, they cry out, ‘Help my unbelief!’ Although unable to believe for this high calling to sonship that is beyond all human capacity and comprehension, they are evidently choosing what is being proclaimed to them. God responds to their cry and imputes their sonship to them. In this action, God also imputes righteousness to the hearer, which gives them right standing with Himself. Furthermore, He gives His faith to them so that they are able to believe to become the son of God that He has predestined them to be. At this point, they have been justified by faith.

5. *Receiving the Holy Spirit and confessing Christ as Lord*

At the same time, the Son asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit into their heart. The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into their heart. Their imputed faith now begins to work by the love of God that is being poured into

their heart. They are able to believe what God believes about them, and to confess that Christ is their Lord.

6. *Born to see – regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit*

Through the ongoing ministry of the word, the Holy Spirit, who is in the believer, regenerates and renews them in the inner man. This is the recovery of their human spirit, or *identity*. The human spirit is the eye of a person's whole being. Through regeneration and renewing, they are now *born to see the kingdom* and are able to be joined in one Spirit with the Father and the Son.

7. *Born of water – the Spirit of the Father births new creation sons through incorruptible seed*

The incorruptible seed of the Father is planted in the believer's regenerated and renewed heart. It comes in the Father's word, through Christ, by the Holy Spirit. The seed contains the Spirit of the Father. Through His Spirit, the seed of their sonship germinates within their heart. At this point, they are born of God as a new creation, according to the name that was foreknown by God before the creation of the heavens and the earth. They are more, now, than just a son of man. They are now a son of God. The seed contains the potential for everything that the Father has predestined for the newborn son of God to become. This includes the works that have been planned for them to do in this world, and also in the age to come. When a person receives the seed of the Father by His word, *they have been born of water*.

8. *Born of the Spirit – the Spirit of the Son gives the new creation a share in the life of sonship*

Once a believer has been born as a new creation, the Father sends the Spirit of the Son into their heart. The Son is the substance of all sonship. When He comes into their heart, they receive a share in His life, which is the divine nature. They are no longer living by their own life. Rather, Christ is now in them, and they are living by the faith of the Son of God. *At this point, they are born of the Spirit*. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son are now all abiding within them.

9. *Baptism into Christ – the response of a son of God*

Once Jesus Christ is dwelling in their heart, they will be motivated by the love of God to come into Christ by baptism. By this means, they enter the kingdom of heaven. Baptism joins the believer to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. They join the death of Christ by participating in the fellowship of His sufferings. This means that their propensity to sin is circumscribed, or removed, from them, and they live by the power that is resident in His life.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

The conscience of a son of God is cleansed from dead works so that they can begin to serve God as His priest.

A person, having died with Christ by baptism, now has their life hidden with Christ in God. They have been raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places. As a son in the Father's house, their citizenship is in heaven, even though their work is on earth as a member of Christ's body.

10. *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the seal of sonship for those who have been born of the Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives a Christian the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God to be the witness of Christ as a member of His body and as a son of God. The Holy Spirit is the expression of the firstfruits of their sonship in the world, and the expression of their ministry as a member of the body of Christ.

11. *Firstfruits – walking after the Spirit*

A firstfruits believer is one who has been fully converted from living according to the flesh, to walking according to the Spirit. They rely on the Holy Spirit, each day, to help them in this regard. Importantly, their life is revealing the righteousness of God. This is the good fruit that they are bearing - thirty, sixty or one-hundredfold. Having been established in the culture of the kingdom, they have been fully equipped to minister to others the same reconciliation which they have received.

We will now consider, in more detail, each of these waypoints that a person will experience as they enter the kingdom of heaven as a son of God and a member of the body of Christ.

A messenger of Christ

Receiving and believing the word of God is the beginning point of sonship for every person. Christ sends His disciples as messengers to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to those who are dead in their trespasses and sins, and afar off from God¹. The disciples of Christ are members of His body who have received

1 Rom 10:14-15

the treasure of His word in their hearts.² Accordingly, they have been established in the culture of the kingdom, and are able to share the gospel with others.

Christ's disciple-messengers do not preach in order to reveal themselves. Rather, they are His ambassadors and witnesses on the earth.³ Jesus said, 'He who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me [the Father].'⁴ The words that are in their mouths are the words of Christ. These words are from the Father, and are accomplishing His work as Christ's messengers preach the gospel *by the Holy Spirit* who is sent from heaven.⁵ Their ministry is not merely the communication of information. Like the apostle Paul, they are able to *travail* for others so that Christ may be *formed* in them.⁶

Christ has given to His disciples the ministry of reconciliation, through which their hearers can receive the forgiveness of sins and be recovered to God's plan for them.⁷ When this message is first received, the hearer begins to be *converted*. Conversion is a whole process through which a hearer can be delivered from their slavery to sin and death, and established in the glorious freedom of the sons of God. The travail of disciple-messengers, through prayer and word, continues throughout this process. In this regard, disciple-messengers are participating in the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to see a new believer birthed as a fruitful son of God and established as a member of the body of Christ.

Grace and supplication

Working with the messenger, the Holy Spirit pours out a spirit of grace and supplication upon the unsaved hearer.⁸ Grace and supplication summarises the work of the Holy Spirit as the Helper of the Father and the Son, to bring the hearer to the point of repentance and faith in God. This includes convicting them of sin, righteousness and judgement.⁹

The spirit of grace comes to an unsaved person *before* they choose to receive it. This means that it is 'prevenient grace'. God's grace is necessary for them at this point because they are dead in sin, and have no capacity to hear the word or even to choose whether or not they will receive it. Regarding this grace, Paul wrote, 'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared [given light] to all men'.¹⁰ Through the Holy Spirit, grace enables every person to receive the light of the gospel, even though, in themselves, they have no capacity to see or receive the things of God.¹¹

2	2Co 4:7	6	Gal 4:19.	10	Tit 2:11
3	2Co 5:20		Eph 3:14-19	11	1Co 2:14
4	Joh 13:20	7	2Co 5:18-19		
5	Joh 14:10. 1Pe 1:12	8	Zec 12:10		
		9	Joh 16:8		

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

God's prevenient grace frees a person from any influence that may otherwise affect their capacity to choose the call of sonship that God is offering to them. These influences may include, for example, sin and its consequences in their lives, their personal histories and traditions, lusts, bondages, addictions, hurts, anger, depression, protective reflexes, demonic oppression, and even their 'other law'. Through God's grace, they *can* be completely freed to choose whether they will accept the call to be a son of God or refuse Him and continue in their own familiar ways and sin.

However, the grace of God is *not* irresistible. As the grace in the word begins to release the hearer from these influences upon their life, they can still *choose* to close their ears and harden their heart to the word. When they do this, they choose to remain in the darkness of their separation from God, rather than receive the light that is coming to them, in the word of God, for their salvation. The word that is proclaimed, the sight that is available, and the freedom it has offered them, make them fully accountable for their decision.

Conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement

As the word of Christ is being proclaimed, the Holy Spirit brings the *conviction* of sin, righteousness, and judgement. By this means, the hearer is enabled to look upon Jesus Christ whom they have pierced.¹² At this point, either they will receive the illumination that is coming to them concerning their sin, righteousness and judgement, and begin to mourn; or they will resist the Holy Spirit by hardening their heart to Christ's word. We recall, for example, the preaching of Stephen, who noted that the Jews had *always resisted the Holy Spirit* and were responsible for the death of the Son of God. Upon hearing this, they were cut to the heart. However, instead of crying out for forgiveness, they gnashed their teeth at the messenger, stopped their ears to his word, and put him to death.¹³

If a person does not resist the Holy Spirit, the conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement causes them to be illuminated concerning the truth of their predicament. That is, they are made aware of their sin and lawlessness; they accept their guilt for being the enemy of God and piercing Christ; and they realise that, on account of their sin, they lost the sonship that God had predestined for them.

This illumination is the effect of the love of God being streamed to the hearer by the Holy Spirit as disciple-messengers proclaim the word of reconciliation.

12 Zec 12:10. Rev 1:7

13 Act 7:51-60

It is the lovingkindness of God that is bringing His mercy and grace to them. Concerning this work, Jeremiah wrote, ‘The Lord appeared to me from afar, saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have *drawn you with lovingkindness*”’.¹⁴ Paul, similarly, declared that ‘when the *kindness* of God our Saviour and His *love* for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy’.¹⁵ The effect of the love of God upon them is that they begin to believe what is being preached to them.

The believer’s heart is being won by the love of God that is coming to them in the word, by the Holy Spirit. God is love. This describes the fullness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a fellowship of one life and one Spirit. In love, They predestined every person to be born of Their life and joined to Their fellowship. This love, and the capacity for its fulfilment, is communicated through the word by the Holy Spirit. This is the capacity to be one Spirit with Yahweh. For this reason, the apostle John wrote, ‘Whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected’.¹⁶ The word first illuminates a person to see the great love of the Father that calls them to be His son.¹⁷

As they receive the word, the Spirit then begins His sanctifying work. He is the Spirit of sanctification, and He begins to sanctify them *from* the world and its uncleanness so that they can be joined to the fellowship of the Father and the Son. The Spirit brings the word of the Father that says, ‘ “Come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me”’.¹⁸

Bankrupt in spirit

The conviction of the Holy Spirit causes the hearer to recognise the *wretchedness* of their bondage to sin and their self-centredness. As a slave of sin, they have attempted to have life apart from God, through the works of their flesh.¹⁹ They are acknowledging that they are unable to save themselves, and have evidently become *poor in spirit*.²⁰ Through grace, they have let go of the right to define their own life and righteousness, and have accepted that they are unable, because of their bondage to sin, to be obedient to the word of God that calls them to enter the kingdom of heaven.

14 Jer 31:3

18 2Co 6:17-18

15 Tit 3:4-5

19 Rom 7:24

16 1Jn 2:5

20 Mat 5:3

17 1Jn 3:1

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

When a person comes to this point of bankruptcy, Christ is setting them free from sin. This is not yet the glorious freedom of the sons of God. Rather, they are being set free so that they can enter this glorious freedom once they have been born of the Spirit. Their freedom is from bondages such as addictions, and other destructive behaviours and thoughts that would otherwise keep them bound in sin. In a sense, the prison doors of their captivity to sin are being opened, and the kingdom of heaven is theirs to enter.²¹

However, as we noted above, the hearer who has become poor in spirit does not know how to proceed beyond their impoverished spiritual condition. Neither do they possess the capacity to be the son of God whom He is calling them to be. Consequently, they begin to cry out in the same manner as those who were converted on the Day of Pentecost – ‘Men and brethren, what must I do [to be saved]?’²² The first thing that the messenger calls them to do is to *repent*.²³

Mourning

Under the influence of the grace and supplication that has been coming to the hearer through the word of the messenger, the believer has already begun to sorrow as one who is bankrupt in spirit. This leads to repentance. Paul described their sorrow as ‘according to the will of God’ so that they may not be lost to Him. He explained that godly sorrow ‘produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation*’.²⁴ It is demonstrated through the mourner’s diligence, clearing of themselves, indignation, vehement desire, zeal and vindication.²⁵ In summary, they cry out to God for forgiveness, turn from their sinful activities, and make amends, where possible, for the impact of their sin on others.²⁶

God sees and hears the cry of the penitent believer, and they receive the forgiveness of their sins on account of Christ’s blood which was shed for the reconciliation of all, while we were yet sinners.²⁷ Having received forgiveness, they are able to testify like King David, who said, ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.’²⁸ They are no longer His enemies and under condemnation.

21 Mat 5:3

22 Act 2:37

23 Act 2:38

24 2Co 7:10

25 2Co 7:11-12

26 Mat 3:8

27 Heb 9:22.
Col 1:13,19-20

28 Rom 4:7-8

Righteousness and faith are imputed

Through the influence of the Holy Spirit upon them, the believer's mourning now shifts from a *godly sorrow* for the consequences of their sin, to the *travail* of one who desires to be made adequate for what God has planned for them. This is a travail of labour for something new to be birthed in their life. They are *joining* the travail of the Spirit and the travail of the messengers who have been labouring to see Christ formed within them.²⁹ Their travail is epitomised by the statement, 'I do believe; *help my unbelief*'.³⁰

Whilst the hearer believes in God, and also believes the word that calls them to be a son of God, they recognise that this call is *extraordinary*. It is not of this earth. From their fleshly perspective, being born as a son of God is *impossible*. Nevertheless, they are choosing what God is bringing to them through His word. This is why they petition the Lord to help their unbelief.

As they choose what is being proclaimed to them in the word, the Father reckons them to be His son. This is what it means for God to reckon, or impute, righteousness to them.³¹ This righteousness is not on account of any of their works. Because they are poor in spirit, they know this to be true. They are now in the position of a son, and an heir of all that God has promised to the sons of God.

Writing to the Christians in Galatia, Paul reminded them that faith had now come through Jesus Christ, so that a hearer can be a son of God through faith in Him.³² In addition to righteousness, God also imputes the faith of the Son of God to the hearer so that they can believe for what the Father has purposed for them; that is, to be born from above as a new creation son of God. Now able to believe and rejoice in this promise, the believer is justified by the faith of the Son of God. Being a son of God is the first expression of righteousness. They now, therefore, have peace with God.³³

Receiving the Holy Spirit

Jesus said that the outcome of mourning is *comfort*.³⁴ This is because, at the same time as the righteousness of faith is imputed to the new believer, they receive the Holy Spirit, who is called the 'Comforter'.³⁵ Jesus said that a person who has received and believed His commandments can ask Him anything in His name, and He will do it.³⁶ As we have already noted, 'help' is the one thing that a person who

29 Rom 8:26.
Gal 4:19

30 Mar 9:24

31 Rom 4:3

32 Gal 3:25-26

33 Rom 5:1

34 Mat 5:4

35 Mat 5:4. Joh 14:16

36 Joh 14:14

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

is truly bankrupt in spirit, wants. In response to their earnest request for help, Jesus asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be *in* their heart.³⁷

The believer receives the Holy Spirit into their heart when Christ breathes on them as they continue to receive His word through His messengers.³⁸ Now that He is in the believer, the Holy Spirit begins to pour the love of God *into* their heart.³⁹ As we have noted earlier, this love is the capacity to be in one Spirit with the Lord. It is restoring us to fellowship with Him. Furthermore, the faith of God that was imputed to them now begins *to work by the love* that is being poured into their heart.⁴⁰ These works of faith are righteousness. The first work of the righteousness of faith is to begin to speak.⁴¹ It is to confess Christ as Lord.

Confessing Christ as Lord

God has faith for His covenant purpose to be fulfilled. This means that He has a plan and purpose for every person, and believes that we can all become the sons of God whom He predestined us to be. Once the hearer's faith *in* God has become the faith *of* God, they are able to *believe what God believes about them*. This is the faith that comes by hearing the word of God. As we considered earlier, the capacity to hear came through the prevenient grace of God.⁴²

The faith that the believer has received will be evident through some specific works.⁴³ Regarding this point, Paul wrote, 'Having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I *believed*, therefore I *spoke*," we also believe, therefore we also speak.'⁴⁴ What is it that a person speaks? It is the confession with their mouth that Jesus is Lord!⁴⁵ This is not some symbolic statement or gesture that they make to identify themselves as a Christian believer. The confession of Christ's lordship is *only* possible because the Holy Spirit is now in them. As Paul said, 'No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.'⁴⁶

From the moment that they are confessing that Christ is the Lord of their life, they are beginning to be transferred, or translated, from the domain of darkness in which they live according to their own way, to the kingdom of the beloved Son in whom they have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.⁴⁷ In the kingdom of darkness, the believer was a slave to sin and lawlessness.⁴⁸ However, they became *obedient* from the heart to that form of teaching to which they were committed.⁴⁹ It is Christ, their Master, who commits them to

37 Joh 14:17

41 Rom 10:6

45 Rom 10:8-9

49 Rom 6:17

38 Joh 20:22

42 Rom 10:17

46 1Co 12:3

39 Rom 5:5

43 Jas 2:14,17

47 Col 1:13-14

40 Gal 5:6

44 2Co 4:13

48 Rom 6:17,19

this teaching. He has taken them captive to Himself and they are now a slave in His house.⁵⁰

Disciples of Christ

Because Christ is their Lord, and the Holy Spirit has poured the love of God into their heart, the believer is able to love Jesus and keep His commandments.⁵¹ Practically, this means that they submit themselves to those who, as His ambassadors, are bringing the word of Christ to them. Their submission is demonstrated through their obedience. Paul called this ‘the *obedience of faith*’.⁵² At this point, they have been made a *disciple of Christ*. We recall the words of Jesus, who said, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you *free*.’⁵³

No doubt, this will be a new thought for many. How can a person be a disciple, or follower, of Christ, *before* they have been born as a son of God? The most obvious examples of this reality are Christ’s twelve disciples. He called them to follow Him *before* they had been born from above as sons of God. Their willingness to follow Christ cost them everything. Jesus said to them, ‘Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times [lit: one hundred times] as much, and will inherit eternal life.’⁵⁴

We note the connection of this statement to Jesus’ description of the good ground in the parable of the sower and the seed. He said that people who were like good ground brought forth fruit – some thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.⁵⁵ Jesus was speaking about the fruit of sonship. The implication to note here is that discipleship should *lead* to fruitfulness as a son of God in this age and in the age to come.

Jesus’ reference to an inheritance that they would receive, reveals that disciples are recipients of what Paul called ‘the adoption’. This is the *promise* of sonship.⁵⁶ They are brought into the position of a son; however, at this point, they are not yet in possession of the inheritance that belongs to an authentic son of God. This inheritance is the divine nature.

50 Eph 4:8	54 Mat 19:29
51 Joh 14:21	55 Mar 4:20
52 Rom 1:5. Rom 16:26	56 Rom 8:23
53 Joh 8:31-32	

The new birth

To understand what it means to be born again as a son of God, it is helpful to recognise that, when something is born, it is *new*. It has not been seen before. Concerning the new birth, the apostle Paul reminded us, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’.⁵⁷

In His discussions with Nicodemus, Jesus identified three dimensions of the new birth. He said that a person needs to be *born to see* the kingdom of God. Having seen the kingdom, they then need to be *born of water* and *born of the Spirit*, if they are to enter the kingdom.⁵⁸ Each of these dimensions of being born of God establishes *something new* in the life of the believer.

Born to see – regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit

Now that the Holy Spirit is within the believer, they receive the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹ Through the word of God, by the Holy Spirit, their identity as a son of man is being recovered. This is specifically referring to the regeneration and renewing of their inner man (soul and spirit) by the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, they are being reconciled in one Spirit to the fellowship of the Father and the Son.⁶⁰

These actions are causing their human spirit, which Jesus described as ‘the eye (spiritual sight) of their body’, to be restored. Consequently, their whole being – body, soul and spirit – is able to be full of light. They are now able to walk in the light of fellowship with God, who is light.⁶¹ When the human spirit, or identity, of the believer has been made alive through regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, they have been *born from above to see the kingdom of heaven*.⁶²

What does it mean to ‘see the kingdom’? It means that a person is able to know what it means to be a son of God, and how to enter into all that God has prepared for His sons and daughters in this age and in the age to come. This is summarised by Paul who wrote, ‘Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God’.⁶³

57 1Co 2:9

61 1Jn 1:5-7

58 Joh 3:3-5

62 Joh 3:3

59 Tit 3:5

63 1Co 2:12

60 Eph 2:18

In the first instance, the restoration and enlightenment of a person's inner man, through regeneration and renewing, restores their capacity to know God and to receive His word. In this regard, they are being restored to the capacity for fellowship that Adam and Eve had with God in the garden of Eden before the Fall. If this was all that being born to see entailed, then it would not be new. We would simply be returning to the condition of the first creation from which we had fallen. However, unlike Adam and Eve, who had the anointing of the Holy Spirit on them so that they could relate with Yahweh 'in Spirit', a person who is born to see receives the Holy Spirit *in them*. This is new. The capacity for fellowship and expressing the love of God is now in them.

Born of water – a new creation by the Father's seed

Once the believer's identity has been recovered, they are able to receive the incorruptible seed of their name as a son of God.⁶⁴ The seed comes in the Father's word, through the preaching of Christ and His messengers, by the Holy Spirit. This seed is not Christ; it is the *word* of Christ. We recall the teaching of Jesus, who said, 'The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but *the Father abiding in Me does His works*.'⁶⁵ The Spirit of the Father is in the word, and causes the seed of sonship to germinate in a person's heart. We note that the power is in the word itself to bring a person to birth as a son of God.

When the seed of the Father germinates in the renewed heart of a believer, the outcome is a *new creation*. They have been born as a son of God according to the name that was foreknown by God before the heavens and the earth were created. The seed of God's life has come alive in the regenerated heart of a son of man. They are now more than just a son of man. They are also a son of God. This is why they are a new creation. As the apostle John declared, 'See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are.'⁶⁶ *At this point, they have been born of water.*⁶⁷

In the same way that a seed in nature contains all the potential of a fruiting plant, the incorruptible seed of the Father contains the potential sonship of the newborn son of God. This includes the works that have been planned for them to do in this world and also in the age to come. Once the seed has germinated, the Father and the Holy Spirit begin to sanctify the son of God to the word of their incorruptible name. By this means, they are being redefined by the word of their name, and this

64 1Pe 1:23

65 Joh 14:10

66 1Jn 3:1

67 Joh 3:5

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

will have some tangible implications for their life. In order to be the son that God made them to be, they will need to let go of their own dreams and self-sourced initiatives in life so that they can attain to the fullness of what the Father has named for them as His son.

Born of the Spirit – receiving the Spirit of the Son

When the seed of sonship germinates in the inner man (or heart) of the believer, the Spirit of the Father strengthens them with His power so that Christ, the Person, may dwell in their heart by faith.⁶⁸ The Father send forth the Spirit of the Son into their heart as the *substance* of their sonship. When the Father first sends the Spirit of His Son into the heart of the believer, they will cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ as little children.⁶⁹ The substance of Christ’s sonship is the divine nature. It will continue to be formed in them until they reach full maturity as a son of God. Before this point, they did not have the divine nature within them. This is new.

It is important to note that when the Father sends Christ into the heart of a believer, this is *not* the incorruptible seed of the word. As we considered earlier, the incorruptible seed is the word that Christ proclaims through His disciple-messengers, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. However, when the Father sends the Son into the heart of the believer, it is the Person of Christ who is coming in them as the Seed (or Son) of the Father and of Abraham.⁷⁰ He comes to share the substance of sonship with the new creation sons of God. In this regard, we can see that there are *two seeds*. The first seed is the word of God. The second Seed is the Person of the Son.

Once Christ dwells in their heart by faith, the believer can live by a life that is not their own. We recall the testimony of the apostle Paul, ‘It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by [the faith of] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me’.⁷¹ If the believer is no longer living by their own life, it means that they will no longer be trying to demonstrate their own righteousness. They will begin to demonstrate the righteousness of Christ by the power of His life within them. They have not been able to live this way previously.

At this point, all three Persons of the Godhead are dwelling within the believer’s heart. *The person has been born of the Spirit*. We note that it is the Holy Spirit who takes up residence in their heart first, regenerating and renewing them in the

68 Eph 3:16-17

69 Gal 4:6

70 Gal 3:16

71 Gal 2:20

inner man. This is followed by the Spirit of the Father who comes to bring them to birth as a new creation through the incorruptible seed contained in the word of God. Finally, the Spirit of Christ comes to dwell in their heart as the substance of their sonship.

Jesus provided an explicit description of what it means to be born of the Spirit. He said, 'The wind [spirit] blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'⁷² Jesus was explaining that when a person is born of the Spirit, they are able to relate to the Spirit and to others 'in the Spirit'. Together, they are able to know and move with Him, in one Spirit, as He leads according to His own intrinsic substance and will. In contrast, a person who lives by the principles of the flesh is nothing like the wind. They know where they are going and how they will go about it, because their initiatives are all *sourced in themself*. Their desire for control over their life and the lives of others is the antithesis of the nature of the Spirit.

Baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ

Having been born of God, a son of God will begin to experience tribulation because of the word. However, they should not be surprised when this happens. This is because they are being invited to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering through baptism. At this point, a person who has been born of water and the Spirit will desire to be baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see that it is a new creation son of God who dies with Christ. When they are baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they begin to exercise the *right* that Christ has given them to share in His life and become members of His body, the church.⁷³ This now defines the way that they live and relate with others in all contexts of life.

For these reasons, a son of God exults in tribulations. This is because tribulation is a fire that refines their life, producing perseverance within them.⁷⁴ Perseverance demonstrates that they believe in the word of sonship which they have received. It is the proven character of a son of God that is being demonstrated in their life as they truly believe in the hope of sonship. As we manifest His life through sanctified living, God's will is being done in our lives.⁷⁵ We are fulfilling God's will, then, as members of His body. By fellowshiping in the sufferings of Christ,

⁷² Joh 3:8

⁷³ Joh 1:12

⁷⁴ Rom 5:3

⁷⁵ Heb 10:10

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

sin and our carnality, described by Paul as the ‘other law’, are being circumcised (cut) from our lives.

Hidden with Christ in God

In his letter to the Christians in Colossae, Paul said, ‘You have died [with Christ in baptism] and your [new creation] life is *hidden with Christ in God*. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.’⁷⁶ When a son of God is baptised into Christ, it is their new creation life that dies with Him. The life of their sonship is hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father. The bosom of the Father is also called ‘the Father’s house’.⁷⁷ Now they have been raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places. As a son in the Father’s house, their citizenship is in heaven, even though their work is on earth as a member of Christ’s body.

When they are hidden with Christ in God, the Christian’s life is no longer theirs to express as they see fit. Their sonship rests in the bosom of the Father in the hope of its full revelation in the age to come. The life which they now live in the flesh is Christ’s life.⁷⁸ This is important to understand because, unless a person lives by Christ’s life as a member of His body, they will not receive the full glory of their sonship in the new heavens and earth. In the positive, Paul said, ‘When Christ, *who is our life*, is revealed, then *you also will be revealed* with Him in glory.’⁷⁹

Although the complete motivation of a son of God in Christ is to reveal His life as a member of His body, they have been given the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of their inheritance as a son of God. Through the Holy Spirit, they are able to express this sonship in firstfruits measure without being motivated by their own fleshly desire to be revealed or to dictate how they should be received by others. This is how they are able to do the works according to their name, even though their named sonship is hidden with Christ in God.

Jesus used the parables of the talents and minas to communicate the point that the works which a person does on earth, as a son of God and member of the body of Christ, have an impact on their eternal reward in the new heavens and earth. When a person comes into Christ through baptism, they are made a slave in His house. Through the parables of the talents and the minas, Jesus taught that each slave in His house receives a quotient of His possessions with which to trade, or to do business. The possessions that the Son gives to His slaves are *His* sonship life and the authority to trade with, or express, this life. As a person multiplies Christ’s life

76 Col 3:3-4

77 Joh 14:2-3

78 Col 3:4. Gal 2:20

79 Col 3:4

according to their name, their heavenly house is being built. They receive this as their reward in the age to come.

Baptised in the Holy Spirit

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is called ‘the *heavenly gift* of God’.⁸⁰ When a son of God is baptised in the Holy Spirit, they are immersed in Him. The Holy Spirit is also the *seal of sonship* for those who have been born of the Spirit. Paul wrote, ‘Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption’.⁸¹ A seal is a statement of guarantee, a sanctification, and an authority over one’s name, to facilitate the sonship of the one who has been sealed. This is so that the Holy Spirit can reveal our sonship life in us. The Holy Spirit is the expression of the first fruits of a person’s sonship in the kingdom of heaven and as a member of the body of Christ.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives a son of God the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God to be a witness of Christ as a member of His body and as a son of God. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He said to His disciples, ‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’⁸²

Fellowship in the offering and suffering of Christ

Through baptism, a believer becomes a participator in Christ’s offering and His sufferings. This demonstrates their faith to receive the *circumcision of Christ*.⁸³ In the fellowship of His sufferings, Christ’s life is transferred to us as a saving and justifying capacity. This is how we are saved by His life.⁸⁴ The fellowship of His sufferings is also the means by which we are delivered from the law of sin and the other law within us. Regarding this process, Paul wrote, ‘Our old self was crucified with Him, so that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin’.⁸⁵ Later in this book we will consider, in more detail, the implications of our fellowship in the offering and suffering of Christ and, in particular, the work of His blood in our lives.

80 Heb 6:4

84 Rom 5:10

81 Eph 4:30

85 Rom 6:6

82 Act 1:8

83 Col 2:11-12

Communion

As members of the body of Christ, we are joined, by communion, to Christ's dying on a daily basis. This is our ongoing participation in Christ's circumcision, which is His sufferings.⁸⁶ As we eat and drink of the communion elements each week, we are to have faith for participation in these sufferings. This is what Paul meant when he said, 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.'⁸⁷ The communion elements are a fellowship and participation in the body of Christ.⁸⁸ As a member in particular of the body, our work is to reveal Christ's sonship.

Walking according to the Spirit

When we are converted, we will readily recognise that we do not even know how to pray as we ought to pray. Paul explained that 'the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words'.⁸⁹ The Son comes to the aid of the Holy Spirit. The Son is the One who searches our heart and knows what is the mind of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰ As He searches our heart, Christ seeks to know, from the Holy Spirit who is within us, what He should be praying to the Father for in relation to our sonship and pilgrimage.

The Son intercedes for us to the Father, praying according to the will of God.⁹¹ He petitions the Father to strengthen our spirit with His (the Father's) Spirit. The Father answers the prayer of the Son through His word which, if received, continues to bring regeneration and renewing to our lives so that we grow in the capacity to live the life of Christ. As we pray in the Spirit, we are enabled to show forth the virtues of Jesus Christ as members of His body.⁹² This becomes an ongoing dimension of our lives. This 'prayer meeting' describes how we are to walk according to the Spirit.

The Father also gives us grace to participate in the sufferings of Christ. Through the power of Eternal Spirit, which is the sevenfold Spirit of God, Christ was able to offer Himself in the midst of His sufferings without spot or blemish to God.⁹³ This same capacity of Eternal Spirit is made available to us. Our sufferings are 'according to the will of God'.⁹⁴ This is why Paul said that we should not despise the chastening of the Father. 'He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful;

86 1Co 10:16

87 1Co 11:26

88 1Co 10:16-17

89 Rom 8:26

90 Rom 8:27.
Rev 2:23

91 Rom 8:27

92 Rom 8:25

93 Heb 9:14

94 1Pe 4:19

yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.⁹⁵

Firstfruits believers

The goal of the gospel is to see every believer established as a *firstfruits* Christian. A firstfruits Christian is a person who has been born of God, planted in Christ's body and joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, and has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, a firstfruits Christian is able to bring forth the good fruit of the righteousness of God. God's righteousness is being revealed in them as they are sanctified to their name as a son of God by walking after the Spirit.

Sanctification now defines the entire life and culture of a son of God - in the body of Christ, in their family, and in the contexts of the world in which they live. Paul summarised the outcome of our sanctification by writing, 'But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive [have] your benefit [fruit], resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, *eternal life*. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'⁹⁶

Importantly, as firstfruits Christians, we have the ministry of reconciliation. Because we have received the message ourselves, and have this treasure in our hearts, we are now called to minister the word of reconciliation to others. By this means, our hearers have the opportunity to be delivered from their bondage to sin and death, and to experience the joy of being restored to the magnificent and high calling of sonship. 'Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and *He has committed to us the word of reconciliation*.'⁹⁷

95 Heb 12:10-11

96 Rom 6:22-23

97 2Co 5:18-19

CHAPTER 3

The Everlasting Covenant

In this chapter, we will turn our attention to the Everlasting Covenant. The Everlasting Covenant was made between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit before the foundation of the world. It reveals the purpose of God for mankind and includes the fulfilment of this purpose. We cannot know ourselves and understand the high calling of our sonship if we don't firstly know God and understand His covenant purpose for us. We can be assured that God wants to be fully known by us. The psalmist rejoiced that 'the secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant'.¹

The Everlasting Covenant is summarised in the words, 'Let Us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness'.² There is no more profound description of the purpose of God and the predestination of man in the Scripture. In the book of Genesis, these words are recorded in conjunction with the events of the sixth day of creation. This is because the creation of man was the first stage in its fulfilment. However, this statement also reveals the purpose of God *before*

1 Psa 25:14

2 Gen 1:26

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

anything was created. The heavens and earth were only created as the context in which God would achieve His covenant purpose.

There are a number of preliminary observations that we can make regarding the statement, 'Let Us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness'. First, it is evident by the words 'let Us' that all three Persons in the Godhead were involved in making this covenant. The Everlasting Covenant was not the primary initiative of the Father, which the Son and Holy Spirit simply agreed to support. This is an important point to note as we begin. In the fellowship of Yahweh, the Father did not have any kind of pre-eminence as the 'first among equals'. The Everlasting Covenant was the *shared initiative* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Second, it is evident by the words 'let Us' that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all involved in *fulfilling* the Everlasting Covenant. In this regard, it is important to consider the unique initiative and contribution of each Person in the Godhead. The contributions of all Three are essential in bringing many sons to glory. When the apostle John declared that there are Three who bear witness in heaven, he was referring to the unique witness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit toward the fulfilment of the covenant.³ The Scriptures clearly identify the covenant that the Father makes with us, the covenant that the Son makes with us, and the covenant that the Holy Spirit makes with us.

The covenant that the Father makes with us is according to His word. The Father has the unique capacity to give identity and life. In the exercise of His will, He has brought us forth by the word of truth to be 'a certain firstfruits'.⁴ In contrast to the capacity of the Father to give identity and life by His word, the Son shares life with us by offering. The covenant that the Son makes with us is in His blood. It is the unique capacity of the Holy Spirit to include us in the fellowship of the life of Yahweh. It is the Holy Spirit who joins us to the Lord in one Spirit. He makes covenant with us as He pours the love of God into our hearts and writes the law of our sanctification upon our hearts.

Third, it is clear from the way that They said 'in *Our* image' and 'according to *Our* likeness' that we have been predestined to partake of the life, and be included in the fellowship, that belongs to all three Persons of the Godhead. When we are born of God, we become sons of God who partake of the divine nature that belongs to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Scriptures explain that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all come to take up residence with us and in us. This is what

3 1Jn 5:7

4 Jas 1:18

it means to be born of the Spirit. More than this, the Scriptures explain that we are to abide in the house of the Father, the body of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The apostle John testified, concerning each son of God, that ‘God abides in him, and he in God’.⁵

When we consider this predestination of man, we realise that we have certainly been blessed with great and magnificent promises!⁶ There is no higher calling than to be sons of God who have inherited the very image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We become partakers of the divine nature, without ever becoming God. And we are included in the fellowship of Yahweh, without ever becoming part of the Godhead. This important distinction is highlighted in the book of Revelation where we read that the Father said, ‘He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.’⁷ As sons of men, the Father will forever be our God. As sons of God, He will forever be our Father.

Fourth, if we are made in the image and likeness of all three Members of the Godhead, then all Three will have an inheritance in us. The apostle Paul prayed that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened so that we would know the hope of the Father’s calling and ‘the riches of the glory of *His inheritance* in the saints’.⁸ As a great multitude of sons, we are the inheritance of the Father, and will forever live to reveal His glory. As members of the body of Christ, we are the inheritance of the Son. The church will become the bride of Christ, and will forever reveal His glory and facilitate His administration in the new heavens and new earth.⁹ The Holy Spirit also has an inheritance in us for eternity. We will forever be the temple of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

The image of God

The image of God is not a set of attributes that are used to describe God, philosophically or theologically. We know that God has many attributes, but these do not reveal who God is, how we can know Him, and how we are born of His life. In fact, the study of God’s attributes, alone, will only reinforce the difference between God as the Creator and mankind as the creation. We can be assured that God does not want to be remote or separate from us. He wants us to be born of His life and joined to Him in one Spirit.

‘The image of God’ refers to who God is. It is His life and divine nature. The Scriptures make a number of definitive statements about the image of God.

5	1Jn 4:15	9	Rev 21:9-11
6	2Pe 1:4	10	1Co 6:19
7	Rev 21:7		
8	Eph 1:18		

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

For example, the apostle John declared, ‘God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him’.¹¹ Love is not an attribute of God. It reveals the substance of who God is, in the same way that God is Spirit. We understand that love is the nature of God and that it defines the culture of Their fellowship. The key statements of the Scripture concerning who God is and the nature of His life include, God is love; God is Spirit; God is light; and God is the Word.¹²

The first description of the image of God in the Scripture is as a consuming fire. Moses said to the nation of Israel, ‘The Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.’¹³ When the glory of the Lord rested on the top of Mount Sinai, we read that ‘to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top’.¹⁴ In a similar way, the prophet Ezekiel’s vision of God was as a fire enfolding itself.¹⁵ This description helps us to understand the nature of God who is love. The fire reveals the love and fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one life and one Spirit. The ‘infoling’ nature of the fire reveals that this love does not require ignition; nor does it rely on any external source to sustain itself. It is not motivated by need; nor does it require satisfaction. This is the pure love of God.

We can say that these dimensions of God – word, light, Spirit – are dimensions of His life and nature. The Scriptures, for example, speak of ‘the Word of life’, ‘the Light of life’, and ‘the Spirit of life’.¹⁶ This is how His life is proceeding to us. It is from all three Persons. These dimensions of God’s life are not independent of one another, but are dynamic and interrelated. For example, we note that the *word* of God is described as a lamp to our feet and a *light* to our path.¹⁷ Similarly, having identified God as light, John said that if we walk in that light, we have fellowship with one another.¹⁸ Fellowship is only possible in one Spirit. Love is the sum of these dimensions of life, because love is His life.

It is important to understand these aspects, or dimensions, of who God is, because they define for us what it means to be in the image and likeness of God. If we are to be made in the image of God, we know that we will need to be born of each of these elements of who God is. We need to be born of light, born of the word, and born of the Spirit. These are the three elements of new birth that Jesus explained to Nicodemus. We must be born of light to see the kingdom of God, and then born of the word and born of the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. Having been born of God in all of these dimensions, we will be a son of His love. The apostle John

11 1Jn 4:16

12 1Jn 4:8,16.
Joh 4:24. 1Jn 1:5.
Joh 1:1

13 Deu 4:24

14 Exo 24:17

15 Eze 1:27

16 1Jn 1:1. Joh 8:12.
Rom 8:2

17 Psalms 119:105

18 1Jn 1:7

declared, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves *is born of God* and knows God'.¹⁹

The love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

We know that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are fully satisfied in Their own fellowship. They do not *need* anything else.²⁰ The motivation of God that brought forth the Everlasting Covenant was love - and love alone. They were not making this covenant in order to satisfy a need or lack in Their fellowship. The Everlasting Covenant is a revelation of God's love toward us. He declared, 'I have loved you with an *everlasting love*; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness [mercy and grace]'.²¹ The Scriptures identify the love of the Father, the love of the Son, and the love of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul declared that 'in love, He [the Father] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ'.²² It is clear that the love of God is the motivation behind the will, or volition, of the Father. In this regard, John said that 'we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us'.²³ He declared, 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God!'²⁴ The love of the Father is His desire for many sons. It is expressed by His endless motivation to give. We recall the well-known verse, 'For God so loved the world that He gave'.²⁵

The love of the Son is revealed by offering. It is expressed by His willingness to empty Himself to an endpoint and to pour Himself out so that His life can be shared with us. One of the most remarkable statements regarding the love of the Son is found in the Gospel of John. It notes that Christ, 'having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them *to the end*'.²⁶ His love was demonstrated for us by His willingness to die for us. Paul spoke of 'the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me'.²⁷ And again, 'Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her'.²⁸

The love of the Holy Spirit is revealed by fellowship. The apostle Paul implored the Roman church 'by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers'.²⁹ The love of the Holy Spirit is a sanctifying, reconciling, preserving love, which guards the sanctity and dignity of every person. It is a jealous love. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit is revealed as a consuming fire.³⁰ It is also the love

19 1Jn 4:7

23 1Jn 4:16

27 Gal 2:20

20 Act 17:24-25

24 1Jn 3:1

28 Eph 5:25

21 Jer 31:3

25 Joh 3:16

29 Rom 15:30

22 Eph 1:4-5

26 Joh 13:1

30 Heb 12:29

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

of the Spirit that joins us to the Lord in one Spirit and enables all worship and true appreciation of one another.

The grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

If love is the motivation behind the Everlasting Covenant, then grace is the capacity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to establish the covenant and to fulfil it. When we speak of 'grace', we are referring to much more than the unmerited favour of God. The fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant reveals the unique capacities that belong to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can identify the 'intrinsic capacity' of Yahweh Father, Yahweh Son and the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures clearly show us that there are some things that only the Father can do; some things that only the Son can do; and some things that only the Holy Spirit can do.

Yahweh Father is the source of the inexhaustible supply of identities and life. He has named every person before the foundation of the world. Paul testified that he bowed his knee before the Father from whom every family has been named.³¹ He is called 'the Father of lights' and 'the Father of spirits'.³² The seed of the Father contains the identity and life of an innumerable number of sons. The Father gives spiritual identity to us, and He is the only One who has the capacity to beget sons of God by His word. For this reason, it is the Father who establishes the 'hope' of sonship.

We can identify a number of capacities that belong exclusively to Yahweh Son. The first and most obvious is that the Son can empty Himself to make room for another. The Son is the only Person in the Godhead who has the capacity to empty to an endpoint and to pour out His life to a death. For this reason, it is the unique work of the Son to be our Redeemer and the Pioneer of our salvation. Further to this, kingship and priesthood are part of the intrinsic capacities of the Son. When Yahweh Son emptied Himself, He laid aside all His kingly prerogatives to become the Slave of Yahweh. At the same time, He exercised His priestly prerogative to pour out His life to become the Lamb of Yahweh. This revealed the 'faith' of the Son to give substance to the Father's hope for many sons.

If the Father is the *source of the life* as it proceeds from the fellowship of Yahweh, then the Son is the *substance of the life*. The substance of the life that we are to receive as sons of God is in Jesus Christ. He shares the fullness of His life with us by offering. This is the significance of the communion. The apostle Paul declared,

31 Eph 3:14-15

32 Jas 1:17. Heb 12:9

‘Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a *sharing* in the body of Christ?’³³

It is the particular work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify all things to their sequence, according to both ontology and time. The Holy Spirit is the witness to the sanctification of the Godhead, the Everlasting Covenant, and every foreknown and predestined son of God. We could say that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit enables fellowship; but, more than this, the Holy Spirit *is* the fellowship of Yahweh.³⁴ It is the Holy Spirit who invites us to join the fellowship of Yahweh, and extends the fellowship of Yahweh to include us.

In many ways, the work of the Holy Spirit has the opposite outcome to the Father’s work. The Father is multiplying identities and giving the one life of Yahweh to a great multitude of sons. The Holy Spirit is able to take this great multitude of sons of God and make them one Spirit in the fellowship of Yahweh. He has the capacity to join us in one Spirit with the Lord and with each other.³⁵ It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the name of the Father and the Son to us so that we can have fellowship with Them. He also reveals the truth of our name to us. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the capacity to worship in Spirit and in truth.³⁶

If the Father is the *source* of the life of new creation, and the Son is the *substance* of the life, then the Holy Spirit is the expression of the life. The Holy Spirit is the expression of the life of new creation in a great multitude of sons because He pours the love of God into our hearts and sanctifies us to the truth of our name.³⁷ The love of God poured into our hearts gives us the capacity to express love according to the sanctification of our name. This means that we will be fulfilling the Royal law. The covenant of the Spirit is the capacity to love through sanctification.³⁸ It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit is the essence of the New Covenant.

The dialogue of the covenant

The foundation of the Everlasting Covenant was the dialogue between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit concerning Their will and purpose for us. The Scriptures often refer to this dialogue, or discussion, as ‘the council of the Lord’. The prophet Jeremiah declared, ‘Who has stood in the council of the Lord, that he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?’³⁹ Of course, no man was privy to this council before the foundation of the world. However, as we

33 1Co 10:16

37 Rom 5:5

34 2Co 13:14

38 Heb 10:15-16

35 1Co 6:17

39 Jer 23:18

36 Joh 4:23-24

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

have already considered, the substance of this discussion is revealed by the words, 'Let Us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness'.⁴⁰

We have often considered that it was the Father's desire to have many sons.⁴¹ Whilst this is true, it is important to recognise that the foundation of the Everlasting Covenant was the discussion and decision of *all three Persons* in the Godhead. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all involved in discussing the sonship of every person. Together, they considered every detail of our being as a son of God. Concerning the content of this discussion, King David wrote, 'Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them'.⁴²

The shared desire of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to create man in Their image and Their likeness established the *holy ground* of the Everlasting Covenant. This discussion was the conception and the *beginning* of the covenant. The apostle John was referring to this beginning when he declared, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word as with God, and the Word was God'.⁴³ John also referred to this dialogue as 'the Word from the beginning'.⁴⁴ Everything that we witness God doing in time is the manifestation of what has already been discussed and accomplished in the dialogue of the Everlasting Covenant.

The entire covenant purpose of God was *finished* in this discussion even though the covenant had not yet been inaugurated, or 'cut', by blood. The initiative of each Person in the dialogue of the Everlasting Covenant established the end and the beginning of Their covenant plan. We read, for example, that God declared '*the end from the beginning*, and from ancient times things that are not yet done'.⁴⁵ This is why Paul said that 'His works were *finished* from [before] the foundation of the world'.⁴⁶ We note that it is the Father's unique capacity to establish the end, and the Son's unique capacity to establish the beginning. It is the unique capacity of the Holy Spirit to separate the end from the beginning, and to sanctify time and eternity so that we can be included in the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant.

The cutting of the covenant

The dialogue within the fellowship of the Godhead was the foundation of the Everlasting Covenant. However, the covenant was not 'cut' until the Father, Son and Holy Spirit actioned Their covenant plan. We recall that when God made an

40 Gen 1:26

44 1Jn 1:1

41 Eph 1:4-5

45 Isa 46:9-10

42 Psa 139:16

46 Heb 4:3

43 Joh 1:1

everlasting covenant with Abraham, the blood of a circumcision was the seal of the covenant.⁴⁷ We know that the Israelites circumcised each newborn son when they were eight days old as the sign that they had been joined to this covenant. We observe the same principle in the Everlasting Covenant before the foundation of the world. The covenant was made outside of time and eternity, but we could say that it was cut a *figurative eight days* after the discussion between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit began.

Specifically, the blood of the Everlasting Covenant was manifest when Yahweh Son emptied Himself and poured out His life to the Father for the sake of the Father's seed. In this regard, the cutting of the covenant could be described as the circumcision of Yahweh Son. It was at this point that Yahweh the Son became 'the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world'.⁴⁸ The life that He poured out was the blood 'as of a lamb'. It was the life of His offering. This life is the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.

Even though it was the offering of Yahweh Son that yielded the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, all three Members of the Godhead were involved in cutting the covenant. As we have already considered, the unique contribution of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all needed to fulfil the covenant. These unique contributions were revealed through the simultaneous, yet ordered, giving of the Father, sharing of the Son, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. We will consider that the giving of the Father revealed *His hope that becomes our hope*; the sharing of the Son revealed *His faith that becomes our faith*; and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit revealed *the love of God that becomes our love*. In this regard, we recall the words of Paul, 'And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; the greatest of these is love'.⁴⁹

When we apply this verse to the contributions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are not inferring that the contribution of the Holy Spirit was greater than the contribution of the Father and the Son. However, we do need to fully appreciate and appropriately magnify the unique work of the Holy Spirit. He was essential in every covenantal action between the Father and the Son, and He is essential in every step on the pathway of our salvation. As we have already said, it is the unique capacity of the Holy Spirit to pour the love of God into our hearts. This is essential because we must receive the love of God before we can have the faith of the Son as the substance of the hope of sonship that we receive from the Father.⁵⁰

47 Gen 17:7,11

48 Rev 13:8

49 1Co 13:13

50 Gal 5:6. Heb 11:1

The Father laid down the seed

We will now consider the unique offering of the Father and the Son in a little more detail. Let us say again that the Father is the everlasting *source* of names and identities. As we noted earlier, He is called ‘the Father of lights’ and the ‘Father of spirits’.⁵¹ This capacity is His glory. The Father took all of His glory as the inexhaustible *source* of names and identities, and laid it down to the Son as a seed. He did this ‘in hope’. The Father’s own will was fully manifest by laying down all His glory to the Son. This revealed the perfect giving of the Father. Everything that will reveal the Father was in this seed as the word of the covenant. This was the beginning of the inauguration of the Everlasting Covenant.

Although the Father is the source of the identity and life of every son of God, when He laid down all His glory in the seed, He was no longer seen. This is what the apostle John was saying when He wrote, ‘No one has *seen* God [the Father] at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained [declared] Him’.⁵² If the Son did not empty Himself and pour out His life to be the substance of the Father’s seed, it would have remained as only a seed. It would have been full of unquantifiable potential, containing the name and glory of an innumerable company of sons. However, without the offering of the Son, this potential would not have been realised. This is because there is no capacity for the expression of sonship without the life of Yahweh Son, *for He is the substance of all sonship*.

The Son emptied Himself and poured out His life

Yahweh Son is the expression and substance of all sonship in the fellowship of Yahweh. However, in his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul explained that the Son *emptied Himself*. Although the Son existed in the form of God, He ‘did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but *emptied Himself*’.⁵³ He did not presume His equality with God a thing to be taken to Himself. It also means that He was not robbed of this equality with God. No-one took it from Him. Yahweh Son willingly emptied Himself of His prerogative to express all sonship in order to make room for a multitude of sons of God, that is, for the Father’s seed.

At the same time, the Son poured out His life to the Father. The prophet Isaiah declared that ‘He poured out Himself to death’.⁵⁴ We know that ‘emptying’ and ‘pouring out’ are not the same action but, in the fellowship of the covenant, they

51 Jas 1:17

52 Joh 1:18

53 Php 2:7

54 Isa 53:12

occurred at the same time. When Yahweh Son poured out His life to the Father, it revealed His faith to make His life available as the substance of the Father's seed. He poured out His life for us so that it could be given to us. We recall the words of the Lord to the nation of Israel, 'The life of the flesh is in the blood, and *I have given it to you on the altar*'.⁵⁵ These two dimensions of the Son's offering – emptying and pouring out – revealed the Son as the Slave of Yahweh and the Lamb of Yahweh.

Let's consider this further. In love, Yahweh Son emptied Himself of His kingly prerogative to be the expression, or full glory, of all sonship. By this means, room was made for the expression of sonship by a great multitude of sons in the fellowship of Yahweh. Although He did not empty Himself of His identity, He emptied all the way to the point of being naked in relation to His kingly expression. This means that He laid aside the clothing of His kingly mandate. It is important to recognise that the Father did not command the Son to empty Himself. The Son willingly emptied and *made Himself* the Slave of Yahweh Father.

Although Yahweh Son fully emptied Himself of His kingly prerogative and made Himself a Slave, He was not naked. Rather, Yahweh Son was clothed in the garments of *priesthood*. The Son knelt before the Father, dressed in the clothing of a priest. As He travailed for our sake, the garments of His priesthood and His whole being were dipped in, or made wet with, His blood. His blood was shed as He offered Himself as the Lamb of Yahweh. By this offering, He made His life, or the *substance of His sonship*, available to be the life of the new creation.

The faith of the Son to empty Himself to become the Slave of Yahweh, and the priestly travail of the Son to pour out His life for us, were both revealed in the garden of Gethsemane. The offering of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane was the manifestation, in time and history, of His offering before the foundation of the world. Peter explained this by saying, 'He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you'.⁵⁶

The faith of the Son to become the Slave of Yahweh was revealed when He prayed to the Father, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done'.⁵⁷ The priestly travail of the Son to pour out His life for us was revealed when He began to pray fervently to the Father. It was at this time that His sweat became like great clots of blood all over His body.⁵⁸ As His blood was being poured out for us, His life was being given to us. His physical body was the Mercy Seat and the Altar of the true temple of God in the heavenly places.

55 Lev 17:11

56 1Pe 1:20

57 Luk 22:42

58 Luk 22:44

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

It was the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God, which is also called *Eternal Spirit*, that enabled the Son to empty Himself and pour out His life to become the substance of the Father's seed. The apostle Paul declared that it was through 'Eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without blemish to God'.⁵⁹ This power was ministered to Him by the Holy Spirit. In the garden of Gethsemane, this power was ministered to Him by the Holy Spirit through the agency of an angel sent from heaven.⁶⁰ It is the work of the Holy Spirit as the *Paraclete*, or Helper, to the Father and the Son to bring the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God.

Begotten as the Son of the Father

When Yahweh Son emptied Himself and poured out His life to the Father's seed before the foundation of the world, room had been made for us, and the Everlasting Covenant had been cut. The covenant had been inaugurated by blood. However, the beginning of the new creation was not yet manifest. Because Yahweh Son had emptied Himself to become the Slave of Yahweh, the Father was able to command the Son to receive the seed and become the covenant Seed. This command was the word of the Father. It was this word that had the capacity to beget Yahweh Son as the Son of the Father. The Father said, 'I will *make* Him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.'⁶¹ Likewise, He declared, 'I will be a Father to Him and He will be a Son to Me.'⁶² And, most definitively, He proclaimed to the Son, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.'⁶³

In response to this word, the Son committed Himself into the hands of the Father, and the Father immediately brought Him into His bosom. Yahweh Son was begotten as the Son of the Father by the word of the Father. The word of the Father had been proclaimed to the Son, and the Father was able to do His work, in and through the word, once it had been received by the Son. This brought forth something altogether new in the fellowship of the Godhead. The relationship of the Father and the Son has been eternally redefined by the Everlasting Covenant. The identity of Yahweh Son has not changed, but His relationship to the Father has changed for our sake.

Yahweh Son was begotten as the Father's Son in an *order of headship*. The order of headship did not exist in the fellowship of Yahweh before the foundation of the Everlasting Covenant. As we have already mentioned, the Father did not have pre-eminence over the Son and Holy Spirit as the 'first among equals'.

59 Heb 9:14

63 Act 13:33. Heb 1:5

60 Luk 22:43

61 Psa 89:27

62 Heb 1:5

The order of headship was jointly established by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the order by which the life of new creation would be brought forth. The Son willingly submitted Himself to the Father's headship. This is an important point to note once we begin to consider the implications for families in the kingdom of God.

When Yahweh Son was begotten as the Father's Son, He was brought forth as the Firstborn of the creation of God.⁶⁴ The substance of everything that would be brought forth was in Him as the covenant Seed but, at the same time, He was completely sanctified from everything that would be brought forth. When He was revealed as the Firstborn of the creation of God, the space, or 'void', for the new creation was also revealed. This included the space, or 'void', for all the elements of the natural creation and a multitude of sons of God. We recall that the Scriptures begin by declaring, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was formless and void'.⁶⁵

Conclusion - two seeds

The important conclusion that we draw from this consideration of the giving of the Father and the offering of the Son, before the foundation of the world, is that there are 'two seeds'. In the first case, the seed is the word of the Father that was laid down to Yahweh Son in hope. This is the *same word* that is now laid down to all men through Christ and the messengers whom He sends to proclaim the word of the Father. This is a significant point. The word of the Father that begat Yahweh Son as the Son of God in the Everlasting Covenant is the *same word* that is able to beget us as sons of God. Peter declared that we are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God.⁶⁶ We recall that, in the parable of the sower, Jesus described the seed as the word of the Father.

When we receive the incorruptible seed of the word of God, we are born as a son of God and we receive our name that comes from the Father. However, we do not receive the divine nature as the substance of our sonship until Jesus Christ Himself, who has become the covenant Seed, comes into our heart. The apostle Paul explained that the Father strengthens us in the inner man by His Spirit, through His word, so that Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith.⁶⁷ In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote that Christ 'is our life'.⁶⁸ He is the substance of our sonship.

64 Col 1:15

68 Col 3:4

65 Gen 1:1-2

66 1Pe 1:23

67 Eph 3:16-17

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

Once Jesus Christ has come into our heart, we then come into Christ by baptism. We are able to partake of the substance of His life as we continue to participate in the communion of the body of Christ. This is our ongoing participation in the new covenant that Christ has made for us in His blood.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Luk 22:20

CHAPTER 4

The nature of mankind

The Lord God created man with a body, soul and spirit.¹ He fashioned his body from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of ‘lives’. By this means, the spirit of man was formed within him and he became a living, or spiritual, soul.² Together, the soul and spirit of a person is called their *inner man*. The *outer man* refers to the mortal body of a person.³ Their *heart* is the point of meeting between their body, soul and spirit. It is the very essence, or centre, of their person and expression.

Our *identity*, or who we are, resides in our spirit. The state of our spirit – whether it has been enlightened by God or remains in darkness – affects how we know and express ourselves through the faculties of our soul. These faculties include our will, mind and emotions, and influence how we behave, make decisions, communicate, and interpret our environment in and through our body. Jesus highlighted this relationship when He taught that ‘*out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts,*

1 1Th 5:23

2 Gen 2:7. Zec 12:1

3 2Co 4:16

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness'.⁴

The spirit of man

Animals, like people, possess a body and a soul, but do not have the capacity for fellowship with God. This is because they were not created for this purpose. In contrast, the spirit of a person is the faculty of our being through which we are able to know and relate with God.

God is Spirit, and can only be known 'in Spirit'.⁵ God formed the spirit of man within him because of His desire to have relationship with us. This is why the Scriptures describe a person's spirit as 'the lamp of the Lord'.⁶ Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were connected to, and sustained by, the light and life of fellowship with Yahweh. Because of this, the lamps of their bodies (their spirits) were alight. They knew God and they knew who He had made them to be. They were also able to hear and receive His word to them.

Although they did not yet possess their names as sons of God, they lived by His word which they received in fellowship with Yahweh each day.⁷ They knew what works God had prepared for them to do and, because they were 'in the Spirit', they knew how to go about their works. God did not need to 'micro-manage' them. In fact, He brought the animals to Adam to see how Adam would name and define them.⁸ The faculties of the souls of Adam and Eve (e.g. will, mind, cognition, emotions) were all employed for the purpose of fulfilling the mandate that God had given to them.⁹ These were the good works that they were to do in their mortal bodies, which were being sustained by the life of God.

In darkness

Because of sin, mankind was separated from the fellowship of Yahweh. Adam and Eve had partaken of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil in an attempt to possess and define their lives apart from God. This principle of carnality was established as 'another law' within them. God's word was no longer the source and definition of their lives. Consequently, they were no longer in fellowship with Yahweh, and the lamps of their spirits went out. They still had a spirit, but it was now degenerate and in darkness. Their souls were now lost and wasting, and their bodies were subject to corruption and death.

4 Mar 7:21-22

8 Gen 2:19

5 Joh 4:24

9 Gen 1:28-29.

6 Pro 20:27

Gen 2:15,19

7 Gen 3:8

Now that the spirit of man is in darkness, his soul cleaves to the dust.¹⁰ This simply means that his awareness of himself (his light) is no longer coming from God. Instead, those who are dead to God seek to know themselves through what they do in their bodies. As we noted earlier, their bodies are from the dust, and their souls are depending on the initiated actions, instinctive motivations and sensory responses of the body for definition. People who live according to the flesh either seek to define their own identity through the exercise of their fleshly capacities or they arrive at an understanding of themselves from the information that they collect through the senses of their bodies.

In light of the predestination of mankind, we can view the whole of fallen humanity as backsliders who are *filled with their own ways*.¹¹ They now walk in the futility of their own minds, 'being darkened in their understanding [i.e. having no illumination of who God is and who He created them to be], excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart'.¹²

The eye of the body

Jesus said that the lamp of the body is the eye.¹³ He was talking about the faculty of our whole person that is able to distinguish between the darkness of this world and the light of God's life. Evidently, our 'seeing' capability is in our spirit. Jesus then said that the condition of our eye, or spirit, affects how we are able to receive the rays of light from a lamp.¹⁴ This second lamp that Jesus was speaking about is the lamp of a lampstand church.¹⁵ The lamp is the presbytery fellowship from which the word of God proceeds to every member of the body of Christ in a local congregation. The apostle John said that this fellowship was with the Father and the Son.¹⁶

If our spirit is healthy, we are able to receive the light of the proceeding word, which is Spirit and life to us.¹⁷ Our *whole* being – body, soul and spirit – will be full of light.¹⁸ This is what it means to be *illuminated* by the word. Our spirit is *us*, and we are now alive in the Lord. According to our name as a son of God, we are able to employ the capacities of our soul, including our mind, will and emotions, to present our body as a slave of righteousness.¹⁹ Because they have been sourced in the Spirit, the deeds that we do with our body are the good works that God prepared for us to do.²⁰

10 Psa 119:25

14 Luk 11:36

18 Luk 11:34

11 Pro 14:14

15 Luk 11:33. Rev 1:20

19 Rom 6:19

12 Eph 4:18

16 1Jn 1:1-3

20 Eph 2:10

13 Luk 11:34

17 Joh 6:63

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

Jesus warned, however, that if our spirit is degenerate or evil, our whole being will remain in darkness. Why would a Christian's eye be degenerate? It is because they do not arrive at the point of *conversion*, by becoming bankrupt in spirit, mourning and becoming meek.²¹ Instead, they want to maintain control over their life. They believe that their own perspective is the truth, and they judge the proceeding word from the basis of their education, tradition or reasoned position. The word of God is used as information to support the agenda of their own life. This is their 'light', which Jesus called darkness. Clearly, they love the darkness more than the light.²² Jesus said, 'If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!'²³

The law of my mind

Every person has a mind. Our mind operates by its own unique mechanisms. These operations of our mind are impacted upon by the information that is brought to it through various sources. For those who are in darkness, the senses of their body provide the only source of information that their mind is able to process, interpret and respond to.

Importantly, 'we' are not our 'mind'. Neither do we exist because we *think*. Our identity is who we are, and this dimension of our being resides in our spirit. Of course, our identity can be in darkness so that it seems as though our mind is the basis of our consciousness. However, this is the outcome of being dead in trespasses and sins, rather than the way that God created us to be. The mind, therefore, is not the decision-maker, or director, of our life. We know this to be so because a person who has been born of the Spirit is able to *set their mind* in a particular way – either on the things of the flesh or the things of the Spirit.²⁴

All the elements and activities of our mind are called, in Scripture, 'the law of my mind'.²⁵ If the law of our mind is reinforced by its imaginations and fears, we will experience personal difficulties. These may include depraved and futile thoughts, hostile actions toward others, and slavery to the fear of death.²⁶

When untrained, our mind can operate on the basis of reflex actions for our self-preservation. However, our mind can be trained so that it has real, *eternal* value for us. This is only possible for a person who is able to set their mind on something other than the flesh. A person who has been born of the Spirit has been delivered from the fears that drive them to preserve their own life. In place of these fears, God

21 Mat 5:3-5

22 Joh 3:19

23 Mat 6:23

24 Rom 8:5

25 Rom 7:23

26 Rom 1:28.
Eph 4:17. Col 1:21.
Heb 2:15

gives us a spirit of power and of love and of a *sound mind*.²⁷ He does this through the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit, we are able to arrest our thoughts and conform them to our obedience as slaves of Christ.²⁸

The other law

On account of the fall of mankind, every person now has ‘another law’ within them.²⁹ This ‘other law’ is an innate desire within our whole person for *control* over our life. Inherent in this desire for control is a propensity within us to react against, conquer or use every other law for our personal advancement.

This law within us is fundamentally self-seeking and lawless. That is, it does not submit itself to any other law, including God’s law. The ‘other law’ seeks control of our mind so that it can dictate the mode of our living. The other law is the expression of our fallen, carnal nature. The Scriptures call our conduct when we live this way, ‘living and walking after the flesh’.³⁰ The outcome of walking according to the flesh is death.³¹

Our physical body

Distinct from the operations of ‘the other law’ and ‘the law of our mind’, our bodies have their own desires that demand fulfilment. These desires spring from the essential requirements for sustaining the life of our flesh. In the first case, this includes our basic needs for food, shelter and security. However, it also refers to our desire for expression within society. Our need for creative expression is based in our desire for acceptance and affirmation from others in the contexts in which we live and function.

The need to express status, experience pleasure, and be free from fear and pain are also distinctive expressions of a law within us that we must contend with as our body makes its demands (or lusts) known to our mind.

For our ongoing wellbeing and health, our body must be regulated and brought into conformity with our will. Our will is a faculty of our soul. It administers our life, on behalf of our spirit, by using the information and directives that are made available to it from our mind, regarding our body. Our will expresses the motivations and choices that are made in our spirit. These choices are then articulated through our soul and expressed through the activities of our body.

27 2Ti 1:7

31 Rom 8:13

28 2Co 10:5

29 Rom 7:23

30 Rom 8:4-5

The law of sin

The law of sin is within us because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Satan fathered this law within mankind, and energises it by motivating us to rebel against God. If we are not vigilant, instead of submitting ourselves to God as His son, by participating in fellowship with Him as a member of His household, we can succumb to Satan's devices. These are his attempts to arouse the desire within us to be like God. When we give heed to Satan's temptation, we endeavour to emulate God by taking hold of His law and using all of the resources available in creation to make ourselves into the *image of our own imaginations*.

As Christians, sin is *dead* within us. In this state, we are happy and at peace. However, when the commandment of the Lord comes, sin is revived within us. Paul explained that sin takes opportunity through the commandment to kill us.³² In response to the commandment, sin stirs up our 'other law' so that we attempt to keep the commandment through the exercise of our flesh. However, our efforts result in the practice of the very evil that we do not want to do. Paul said, 'No longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.'³³ Because of our evil deeds, we come under the judgement and penalty of the law that we desire to keep. Consequently, the commandment, which we set out to fulfil in order to have life, results only in death for us.³⁴

Sin does this to us so that we will be destroyed. We can see that sin is actually our enemy. It is a destructive force within the members of our person, affecting every part of our being. It is contrary to our true identity, and is at war with it. The law of sin can keep us locked up to the fear of death for the whole of our life.³⁵ It does this by motivating the instinct for self-preservation as our way of life. In this way, the law of sin undermines our faith in God. This is what Satan claimed when he said to God, 'Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.'³⁶ Unless this principle of evil is removed from us, we remain a slave of sin, and continue to suffer the judgement and penalty for transgressing God's law.

Competing laws

Before we heard and received the word of God, we were unclear about who and what we were meant to be. Until the time that we received God's word, we were caught in a web of confusion because of the demands of the competing laws that

32 Rom 7:11

36 Job 2:4

33 Rom 7:17

34 Rom 7:10

35 Heb 2:15

were resident within us. Each law was demanding its right of expression, claiming to be the best and truest representation of our mode of living.

This competition resulted in competing emotions, chained to various imaginations that Paul the apostle called 'the emotions of sin'. He wrote, 'For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death'.³⁷ In other words, these emotions of sin, or sinful passions, sought to be a motivating force that controlled our identity, which is in our spirit. This whole activity is also described in Scripture as living in darkness, without sight and true direction.³⁸

Redemption

Christ suffered and died for us under the judgement and punishment of the law. He satisfied the demands of law on our behalf. This means that the law is no longer exercising its judgement upon Him or upon those who are in Him. He suffered its full penalty, and established redemption as a process that gives us His life.

Christ was more than the victim of a law-based requirement for punishment of sin on our behalf. It would have been an immense injustice to punish the Just for the unjust. That is, of course, unless the Son was *offering Himself*. Through this offering, He was reconciling us to God, destroying sin and abolishing the Old Covenant, and recovering us to a life of righteousness.

Through His redemptive work, as He suffered and shed His blood, from the garden of Gethsemane until He cried, 'It is finished!', on the cross, Christ *overcame* death by destroying sin. He did this by willingly and proactively receiving all of the judgement of sin into Himself. Jesus' testimony was, 'I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting'.³⁹ He did not draw back, or recoil, from His sufferings. Rather, He was giving Himself to this redemptive work. By this means, Christ brought life and immortality to light.⁴⁰ He established the ground of faith that we are to join, and upon which we are delivered from the fear, power and judgement of death.

37 Rom 7:5

38 Joh 12:35

39 Isa 50:6

40 2Ti 1:10

The law of the Spirit of life

When we believed the word that God spoke to us through a messenger about being restored to our true identity as a son of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit undertook to bring us into the kingdom of heaven through the process of being born of water and the Spirit.⁴¹ Once we are born of the Spirit, the law of the Spirit of life is now in us. This is because the Spirit of Christ now dwells in the centre of our being, i.e. our heart.⁴² The power that is in the divine nature of Christ now dwells in our heart. This power is transforming our fallen nature, enabling us to express the divine nature as the son of God whom He predestined us to be.

By joining the offering of Christ through baptism, we are given the privilege and capacity to fulfil the commands of God's royal law by the Spirit and power of God. The law is agreeable to, and compatible with, this new covenant that God has made. For this reason, Paul said that we should not continue to live in sin.⁴³ As we continue in the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering, we are being delivered from the operation of another law within us, and cleansed from an evil conscience.⁴⁴ As this happens, our motivations are changing from self-centredness to love. We are able to present ourselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God, and to lay down our life for our friends.⁴⁵

When we have been born of the Spirit of God, our weapons in the conflict of competing laws are not weak. This is because they are not exercised through the efforts of our weak and failing flesh. The Spirit of God within us motivates our mind and emotions to fulfil the law.⁴⁶ Although sin within us also wants to motivate our mind and emotions to fulfil the law in the flesh, we have the capacity to determine in our mind whether we will walk and live by the Spirit or after the flesh.⁴⁷

Through the Spirit we are able to destroy the arguments of competing laws within us. We are able to cast down the idolatrous imaginations that we have of ourself. These are not based in God's word concerning us. Moreover, we are able to set our mind on the things of the Spirit, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.⁴⁸

41 Joh 3:5

42 Rom 8:2. Eph 3:17

43 Rom 6:2-4

44 Heb 10:22

45 Rom 12:1. Joh 15:13

46 Rom 8:4

47 Rom 7:8-11.

Rom 8:6. Col 3:2

48 2Co 10:4-5

CHAPTER 5

The covenant in Christ's blood

Introduction

To understand the implications of entering and living as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, it is helpful to consider again that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each make a covenant with us as part of Their Everlasting Covenant. These covenants are specific to each Person of God, but are not made independently of one another. Together, the covenants of the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son are necessary for making us in *Their* image and after *Their* likeness.

The Holy Spirit is the Helper. His covenant is to pour the love of God into our heart so that we can be joined in one Spirit with the Lord and each other. He empowers the sons of God to worship in Spirit and sanctification. Sanctification is the capacity to express the love of God in fellowship with the Lord and one another according to our name as a son of God. As we live and walk according to

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

the Spirit, we, through sanctification, fulfil and exemplify God's royal law, which is love.¹

The covenant of the Father involves the giving of two seeds. First, we receive the incorruptible seed of our name through the living and enduring word of God.² By this means, we are born as a new creation son of God.

The second aspect of the Father's covenant is that He sends the Spirit of the Son into our heart as the substance of our new creation sonship.³ This is the Person of the Son, who is both the 'only begotten' (or Seed) of the Father, and the seed of Abraham.⁴ It is important that we note that receiving the Spirit of the Son is part of the Father's covenant. It is *not* the covenant that the Son makes with us, even though it is His Spirit that we receive.

Jesus said that the covenant that He makes with us is a *fellowship* in His body and His blood.⁵ We join this covenant through baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The communion becomes our continual commitment to this covenant. The bread of the communion is Christ's body. We eat the bread in faith for our ongoing participation as members of the body of Christ.⁶ We drink the cup in faith for participation in the blood of Christ. His life is in His blood and has been given to us on the Altar of His body. Christ's blood was made available through His sufferings, and we are able to avail ourselves of His blood as we are joined to the fellowship of His sufferings.

Members of His body, sharing His life

We note the distinction, then, between Christ coming *in* us, and us coming *into* Christ. Both are *essential* to our salvation and our lives in the new heavens and earth. In fact, we learn from Jesus' parable of the sower and seed that the sonship we received through the covenant of the Father will die away unless we are *planted* in the body of Christ.⁷

When we are baptised into Christ, our sonship is to remain hidden with Christ in God, and our works are to reveal the sonship of Christ as a member of His body.⁸ We are joined to a *corporate* expression of the Son's life. We are able to do this according to our name, by the Holy Spirit. When we are baptised in the Holy Spirit, *He* reveals our sonship life in us, in a firstfruits measure. He is the expression of our sonship in the kingdom of God and as a member of the body of

1	Jas 2:8	5	Luk 22:19-20
2	1Pe 1:23	6	1Co 12:27
3	Gal 4:6	7	Luk 8:11-15. Rom 6:5
4	Joh 3:16. Gal 3:16	8	Col 3:3. Gal 2:20

Christ. As we walk by the Spirit, we are able to reveal Christ's life as a member of His body, according to our name.

As we do this, we receive of His fullness and *grow up* as a son of God into Christ who is the Head of His body.⁹ At the same time, we are storing up the treasure of our own sonship in heaven. In the new heavens and earth, we will receive our sonship as an eternal inheritance and will also *continue* to be part of the corporate expression of the Son's life.

The life of the Son is in His blood. His life is the divine nature of sonship, and is given to us to become our life as we join Him in the fellowship of His offering on the cross. Although a person receives the divine nature when Christ comes into their heart by faith, it is only active and sustained in them as they join Him in the fellowship of His offering. His blood is effective in our life to process and cleanse us from sin, and is the life that we are to reveal as a member of His body.

The sufferings of Christ

Christ suffered when He was being wounded. Isaiah the prophet, speaking of Christ, said, 'He was pierced through [wounded] for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our wellbeing was upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.'¹⁰

Every kind of wound that Christ endured cut His body open, causing His blood to be poured out. Christ's blood was the element within His body that contained His life. As Christ suffered, and His blood flowed from His body, the life that was in His blood was given to us as a possession.¹¹ The life of Christ is given to us on the condition that we suffer with Him, in order that we may be glorified together with Him.¹²

It was on account of our carnality and sin that Christ was wounded. Christ wants us to meet Him, make covenant with Him, and then join Him in fellowship, at the point in time when God the Father laid on Him, as our sin offering, the punishment for our transgressions and iniquities.¹³ That point in time was His passion that led to His death on Calvary.

As we noted earlier, Christ made covenant with us in His blood and body at the last supper.¹⁴ The covenant then became *active* when His blood began to flow from His body as He agonised for us in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.¹⁵

9 Eph 4:1

13 Isa 53:6

10 Isa 53:5

14 Luk 22:19-20

11 Lev 17:11

15 Luk 22:44

12 Rom 8:16-17

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

Regarding the *inauguration* of this covenant, Paul taught, 'For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the *death* of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without *blood*.'¹⁶

From Gethsemane to Calvary, the blood that Christ shed, flowed all over His body. He was both the Mercy Seat and the Altar, upon which the blood was being 'sprinkled'. As the Mercy Seat, the shedding of His blood was a propitiation for our sin. As the Altar, the shedding of His blood was giving to us a share in His life. He was the Mediator of a new covenant so that, through His death for our sake, we 'who have been called may receive the promise of eternal life'.¹⁷

Dying with Christ

There is no carnality in Christ's offering. Rather, it reveals the perfect love of God. For this reason, His death, and our participation in it, is profitable. Paul reminds us that 'if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing'.¹⁸

Christ was not, in any way, carnal. Nevertheless, in the garden of Gethsemane He numbered Himself with us, the transgressors, and was *made sin*.¹⁹ He drank the cup of the wrath of God and was cut off from God, having come under judgement with us, as the Sin-bearer. This revealed both the priesthood of the Son and His offering. He was our Priest, offering Himself to God for our sin. And He was God's Priest, offering Himself so that we could be reconciled to God and restored to Their Everlasting Covenant purpose for us.

From the point where Christ died and was cut off from God, He was *progressively* put to death in the flesh in the stages of His suffering from Gethsemane until He was lifted up as a mercy seat to die on the cross. As He suffered, and His blood flowed from His body, He was being made alive again in the Spirit; and we were coming to life again, with Him, as sons of God. Christ was our great Shepherd and we were coming back, with Him, from the death of sin and alienation from God. Atonement was made for us by Him, and His life was given and transferred to us to become our life.

As new creation sons of God, we are to die with Christ. There is no room for the expression of our carnality, or self-interested initiative, in this death.

16 Heb 9:16-18

17 Heb 9:15

18 1Co 13:3

19 2Co 5:21

This is because, when we are joined to Christ's death and suffer in fellowship with Him, we know that a circumcision is happening to our heart. This is the process by which we are being delivered from our carnality. Motivations and attitudes that are detrimental to us are being cut from our lives. We are not trusting in ourselves while we suffer, but in God who raises the dead.²⁰ Furthermore, the blood of Christ is purging our hearts from an evil conscience, which is the basis of our carnal motivations.²¹

Christ purges our conscience

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul wrote, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'²² Purging is a combination of suffering and the power of the life of Christ to cleanse the heart. Christ's wounds were His suffering, and caused His blood to be poured out. The apostle Peter reminded us that by His wounds we are healed.²³

As we noted earlier, the blood is the element that contains Christ's life, and His life is given to us in the fellowship of His offering. His life is a treasure that sustains us in the afflictions that we suffer, so that we are not crushed or destroyed.²⁴ At the same time, Christ's life contains the full expression of all that He is. That is, His motivations are given to us. These cleanse our hearts from evil, selfish motivations, enabling us to serve God as His priests.

Christ's life causes the love of Christ to *control our motivations*. This is what Paul was saying when he wrote, 'For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf'.²⁵ We are beheld as new creation as we show forth the life of Christ as a member of His body.²⁶

Disciples of Christ

When we join Christ in the fellowship of His suffering, we are joined to more than just a participation with Christ in the suffering that we caused Him on account of our sin. The suffering that is caused by the sin of others also becomes *our portion* of Christ's sufferings so that, through it, we are perfected.

20 1Co 1:9

21 Heb 9:14

22 Heb 9:14

23 1Pe 2:24

24 2Co 4:7-8

25 2Co 5:14-15

26 2Co 5:17

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

By joining Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings, *we become His disciples*. Jesus asked us to take His yoke and learn of Him.²⁷ His sufferings are a training context for us. Through suffering, Jesus was personally putting into effect all of the principles of offering that are part of His identity as the Son of God.²⁸ By this means, He was perfecting knowledge through experience. Isaiah said, ‘By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many.’²⁹

Ambassadors for Christ

Christ wants to share this knowledge with us. The Father has not only reconciled us to Himself through Christ, to whom He gave the ministry of reconciliation, but He has also given to us the ministry of reconciliation. The specific aspect of the ministry of reconciliation that has been committed to us is ‘the word of reconciliation’. The message that we are to proclaim is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.³⁰

We are now ambassadors for Christ. God is using our voices on behalf of Christ to proclaim the word of reconciliation. In this way, God is appealing to others through us, so that they might be reconciled to God. As members of Christ’s body, we have replaced His physical presence on earth. We are now God’s ministering priests in Christ’s stead on the earth.³¹

We are now involved in the sufferings of Christ in a most positive sense. Paul the apostle, speaking to the Colossian church said, ‘I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.’³²

As we proclaim the word of sonship in this world, we will experience tribulation and affliction. This will be the same ‘contradiction of sinners’ that Christ endured against Himself.³³ These experiences are how we manifest, in a real way, the dying of Christ in this world. And, by this means, the life of Jesus is being manifest through us to others.

Paul said that God ‘always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.’ To one, we are an aroma of death to death, and to the other, an aroma of life to life.³⁴ We are the aroma of death to those who are afflicting us, because they

27 Mat 11:29

28 Heb 2:9-18

29 Isa 53:11

30 2Co 5:19

31 2Co 5:18-21.

Rev 1:6

32 Col 1:24

33 Heb 12:3

34 2Co 2:14-16

seek our destruction. However, to those who are receiving and responding to the life that we are sharing with them, we are the aroma of life.

We are carrying in our body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.³⁵ The effect of our participation in the sufferings of Christ is that, as His death works in us, the life of Jesus is ministered to others.

Our faith is that, as we die with Christ in the fellowship of ministering His life to others, we will also be raised with Him to the reward of eternal glory, as the result of our labours. As Paul explained, 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*'.³⁶ This kind of affliction is called, by Paul, 'momentary and light', and produces for us a permanent, glorious, and solid reward that is out of all proportion to our pain.³⁷ Our reward will be beyond all comparison.

35 2Co 4:10

36 Rom 8:17

37 2Co 4:17

CHAPTER 6

The body and God's covenant purpose

The name of every son of God was discussed and foreknown by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit before the beginning of creation. However, in order for Their covenant purpose to be fulfilled, the identity of each person would first need to be conceived, and then clothed with a body. This was the case even for the Son of God. He testified that a body had been prepared for Him by the Father, in which the will of God would be fulfilled.¹ The Son was referring both to His personal *physical* body, which He received when He was born of Mary as the Son of Man, and to His *corporate* body.

We note here two different types of bodies that are fundamental to the fulfilment of God's will – a physical body and a corporate body. As we consider the theme of the body in the Scriptures, we can, in fact, distinguish five different bodies that are essential to the fulfilment of God's Everlasting Covenant purpose for us.

1 Heb 10:5-7

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

These are: the earthly body, the heavenly body, the spiritual body, the body of Christ, and the bride of Christ.

The earthly body

The physical body of man was created by the Lord God from the dust of the earth. Paul described this body as ‘earthly’ and as an ‘earthen vessel’.² Once the Lord God had fashioned this physical body, He then breathed into it the breath of ‘lives,’ and man became a living soul.³ As we have previously considered, the spirit and soul of a person is called their *inner man*. Their body, into which God breathed, is called their *outer man*. This earthly body is mortal, meaning that it is subject to death. Because of the fall of mankind, the outer man is decaying, and returns to the dust of the earth when we die.⁴

The apostle Paul likened our mortal body to a *tent* or a house. In this sense, it is a dwelling place for the inner man. He said, ‘For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we [our soul and spirit] have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’⁵ Drawing from the book of Ecclesiastes, we learn that this tent is held together by a figurative ‘silver cord’. King Solomon explained that when we die, this cord is ‘loosed’, and our soul and spirit are returned to God.⁶

Our deeds, or works, are performed through our body. These works are not without consequence. When a person’s soul and spirit return to God, they are judged for the deeds done in the body. Paul made this clear when he wrote to the Corinthians, saying, ‘We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his *deeds in the body*, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.’⁷ For this reason, we should fear God.

The heavenly body

The second body that Paul discussed is the *heavenly body*. He observed that ‘there are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another’.⁸ Appreciating the distinction between these two bodies and their glories is fundamental to our understanding of how we receive our eternal inheritance as a son of God in the age to come.

2 1Co 15:40. 2Co 4:7 6 Ecc 12:6-7

3 Gen 2:7 7 2Co 5:10

4 2Co 4:16. Ecc 3:20 8 1Co 15:40

5 2Co 5:1

As we considered earlier, when the silver cord of our earthly tent is broken, 'We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens'.⁹ This 'building in the heavens' is our heavenly body. Paul was highlighting the truth that, when a son of God dies, they *already* have this house, or body. This is because it was being built while they were still living in their mortal body. How is this so?

Jesus spoke of this heavenly body when He said to His disciples, 'Do not let your heart be troubled; *believe in God, believe also in Me*. In My Father's house are *many dwelling places*; if it were not so, I would have told you; for *I go to prepare a place for you*.'¹⁰ This is a place that has been prepared for every named son of God.

On the cross, when Jesus committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, He went to the Father's bosom, while His body rested in a tomb for three days and three nights in hope of the resurrection.¹¹ He brought all our names as sons of God with Him to the bosom of the Father. By this means, He was preparing a place for each of these sons in the heavenly house of the Father. He was the Seed that had gone into the ground and was coming up a great multitude of sons.¹²

When Jesus Christ rose again, His body had been changed into an immortal body. As He promised, Jesus had come again to receive His disciples to Himself. He was making them members of His corporate body, so that *where He was*, they would also be.¹³ Jesus explained to His disciples where *He would be*, saying, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'¹⁴ Accordingly, when Jesus went into heaven after appearing to His disciples, He went back to the bosom of the Father.¹⁵ Jesus is now seated in heavenly places at the right hand of the Father. The Father has put all things in subjection to Him, and has *given Him* as the immortal Head over the church, which is His corporate body.¹⁶

When we are baptised into Christ, we are raised and seated in heavenly places *with Him*. Our name, life and glory as a son of God are to be *hidden with Christ in God*.¹⁷ The bosom of the Father, which is the Father's house, becomes our dwelling place. Our sonship rests in the bosom of the Father as an eternal inheritance, in the hope of its full revelation in the age to come. For this reason, we do not need to worry about our name or about revealing our own sonship. It is already secure in heaven. The life which we should now live in the flesh is Christ's life.¹⁸ Paul summarised this by saying, 'I have been crucified with Christ [through baptism]; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God'.¹⁹

9	2Co 5:1	13	Joh 14:3	17	Col 3:3
10	Joh 14:1-2	14	Joh 20:17	18	Col 3:4
11	Luk 23:46. Act 2:25	15	Joh 1:18	19	Gal 2:20
12	Joh 12:24	16	Eph 1:20-23		

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

Only those who have received the incorruptible seed of the word of God, which contains their name, and have been born as sons of the Father, have a dwelling place in His house. This dwelling place is their heavenly body. In this regard, our heavenly body comprises our name, life and glory as a son of God. While our sonship remains hidden with Christ in God, we are to live by, and reveal, the life of the Son as a member of His body. As we reveal Christ's life as a member of His body, our heavenly body is continuing to be built and made more glorious *by the Father*. Let's consider this further.

The body of Christ

When we are baptised, we - i.e. our earthly body, along with our identity as a son of God - become a physical member of Christ's corporate body on the earth. Paul stated that we are made members of His body - His flesh and bones.²⁰ This corporate body is the third body that we note in the teachings of Paul. The apostle Paul said, 'Do you not know that *your bodies are members of Christ*?'²¹ Elsewhere, he wrote, 'Holding fast to the [immortal] Head, from whom the entire *body*, being supplied and held together by the *joints* and *ligaments*, grows with a growth which is from God'.²² Christ is in heaven and is the immortal Head of His body, and we are the flesh and bones of His body on earth. Evidently, members of the body of Christ must be *tangibly* connected to one another in their localities, for this is where the Father has placed them.²³

Paul said that, as a member of the body of Christ, we are not free to engage in wicked deeds with our body. He asked, 'Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?'²⁴ When we received the Holy Spirit into our heart, we became a temple of the Holy Spirit, and He enabled us to be baptised in one Spirit into Christ. We are one Spirit with the Lord and with the members of the body of Christ. As members of the body of Christ, we do not have the liberty to join ourselves to fallen, fleshly ways. Paul reminded us that we are not our own. This is because we have been purchased with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, we are to glorify God in our body.

We cannot be members of Christ apart from being members of one another.²⁵ For this reason, Paul implored believers to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.²⁶ When we fail to do this, it demonstrates that we are not joined to Christ

20 Eph 5:30

21 1Co 6:15

22 Col 2:19

23 1Co 12:18

24 1Co 6:15

25 Eph 4:25.
Rom 12:5

26 Eph 4:3

in one Spirit. This is the same point that the apostle John was making when he asserted that we cannot say that we love God if we hate our brother.²⁷

Building our heavenly house

The Father is the Builder of our heavenly dwelling.²⁸ He is the One who birthed us and gave us the elements of our heavenly body. To build our dwelling place, the Father uses building materials that we accrue on earth. These building materials, with their value and glory, are gained on earth by those who trade with the precious possessions of Christ's life. We receive this life when we are baptised into Christ and are joined to the fellowship of His suffering.

Through His parables, Jesus likened His life to the currency of talents and minas that were given by Him to the slaves in His house.²⁹ The master commanded His slaves to trade and do business with His possessions while He was away. When He returned, He asked them to give an account for their labour with His talents and minas. The reward that the slaves received from the master was commensurate with the increase from their labours. It is this increase that the Father is using to build our heavenly house, and it is given to us as our eternal reward for the age to come.

In the next section, we will discuss the principle of the talents and minas in more detail. However, in summary, the talents and minas represent various aspects of Christ's own sonship. By offering, the Son has given us a share in His life. This life proceeds from the Father. We remember that Jesus said, 'For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.'³⁰ Christ's life is in His blood and it is given to us on the altar of His body. We only have an ongoing share in the life of the Son as we continue in the fellowship of His body and the fellowship of His sufferings.

As a son of God, the key consideration for us is how we trade with the talents and minas that we have received so that we can multiply this life as an eternal possession for the age to come. We must understand how to live as a son of God and as a member of the body of Christ, so that we are revealing Christ, and not ourselves. To seek our own expression as a son of God is fleshly. The only alternative to living this way is to set our mind on the Spirit and, by this means, walk according to the Spirit every day.³¹

27 1Jn 4:20

28 Heb 11:10

29 Mat 25:15.
Luk 19:13

30 Joh 5:26

31 Rom 8:6. Col 3:2.
Gal 5:16

Baptised with the Holy Spirit

John the Baptist said that Jesus would come and baptise His disciples with the Holy Spirit and with fire.³² The Holy Spirit and fire are the two elements that enable us to reveal the sonship of Christ, multiply His life, and obtain an eternal reward. We will first consider the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.³³

The Holy Spirit is given to us as the expression of our sonship. By the Holy Spirit we are able to reveal Christ's life, according to our name, without this work being an exercise of our flesh. When we are baptised with the Holy Spirit, the Father seals us as a son of God *in Christ*. Paul explained that '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'.³⁴

A pledge is a down payment that is given in *lieu* of a total amount that is to be fully paid at a later time. It is a guarantee of the full payment. It is amazing to consider that the Holy Spirit is given to us as a down payment of our eternal sonship. He is given to us as a firstfruit of our inheritance so that we are able to trade with and multiply Christ's life according to our name, and through the works that were prepared by the Father for us to do.

The seal of the Holy Spirit is, in the first instance, this guarantee that we are a son of God and will receive an inheritance in the age to come. The seal also signifies the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our life as He leads us in the truth of whom the Father named us to be as a son of God. The third aspect of this seal is that the Holy Spirit is given to us as the expression and authority of our name as a son of God. This is vitally important. It means that we are able to express the life of Christ as a member of His body, rather than seeking to express our own sonship. This is what it means to remain hidden with Christ in God. As we live Christ's life by the power of the Holy Spirit, our works are not an exercise of the flesh, leading to death. Rather, our works are 'of the Spirit', leading to eternal life.³⁵

The Holy Spirit knows our weaknesses and helps us to pray so that we are delivered from our fleshly propensities, and are enabled to fulfil the will of God through the works that are set before us each day. Paul reminded us that 'we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words'.³⁶ Moreover, the Holy Spirit enables us to travail in the same way that He does. 'We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even

32 Mar 1:8

36 Rom 8:26

33 Heb 6:4

34 Eph 1:13-14

35 Rom 6:22-23

we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.³⁷ This is the travail of a son of God who desires to be released into the glorious freedom that belongs to their sonship, and also to be clothed with their dwelling from heaven.³⁸

A spiritual son of God understands that they must labour for their heavenly dwelling now, so that they are not found unclothed on the day of resurrection.³⁹ We must, therefore, set our minds on the Spirit through prayer, and do all things that are before us 'as to the Lord'.⁴⁰ At the same time, we accept that the Spirit is leading us according to the will of God, and that the things that befall us each day are working together for the good of our sonship.⁴¹

Baptised with fire

The 'fire' speaks of the refining work of God in our life as we are joined to the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. In this fellowship we are being delivered from our carnality and cleansed from an evil conscience so that we can serve God as His priests, and be given a share in the life of the Son. This is the life we are to reveal as members of Christ in the kingdom of God and in His body.

To help our understanding of this work, it is important to recognise that our heavenly body does not have any carnality in it. The apostle John affirmed this point when he wrote, 'Whoever abides in Him [the Son] does not sin', and 'Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God'.⁴² However, John also clearly pointed out that 'if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us'.⁴³ This is because we still have another law at work in our body, which is on earth.

It is this other law within us that motivates us to attempt to fulfil the will of God our own way. This is what it means to live by the flesh. Our participation in the sufferings of Christ achieves two key outcomes for us. First, these sufferings are our fellowship in the *circumcision of Christ*, through which these carnal propensities are being cut from us. Furthermore, the blood that we share in, as a result of this cut, cleanses our conscience so that we are no longer motivated to serve God our own way. Rather, we are able to present our body as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God.⁴⁴

37 Rom 8:23

38 2Co 5:2

39 2Co 5:4

40 Eph 6:5-8

41 Rom 8:28

42 1Jn 3:6,9

43 1Jn 1:10

44 Rom 12:1

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

At the same time, the sufferings of Christ are also the fire of God's *testing* upon us to reveal the nature of our labours as a son of God. Paul likened the works of our flesh to building with wood, hay and stubble. In contrast, we only have an enduring reward if we live by the Spirit and build with the precious possessions of the life of the Son. These are described as gold, silver, and precious stones. The way that we are building is revealed through the fiery trial. As Paul noted, 'If any man's work which he has built on it remains, *he will receive a reward*. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.'⁴⁵

In summary, as we do the works of Christ's sonship on earth, we receive the wages, or fruit, of eternal life. By this means, our own heavenly dwelling is *being* made more glorious. On the other hand, if we insist on expressing our own sonship through our unwillingness to be joined to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to walk according to the Spirit, the glory of our eternal reward will be greatly diminished. As was the case for the Pharisees, we will receive our reward in this age.⁴⁶ Furthermore, our Christian experience will be plagued by agitation, judgements and discontent, demonstrating that our own sonship is not resting in hope with Christ in the bosom of the Father.

The spiritual body

The fourth body that Paul identified is the *spiritual body*. He introduced this body, and the means by which we receive it, by explaining that we are *sown* a natural body (speaking of our earthen vessel) and *raised* a spiritual body.⁴⁷ The spiritual body is our immortal, *resurrection body*, and it is ours forever in the new heavens and earth. We receive the spiritual body on the day of resurrection.

Concerning this day, Jesus said, 'Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which *all* who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgement.'⁴⁸ We note that *only* those who do the works that were prepared for them by the Father, as His sons, receive an immortal body. This is 'the resurrection of life'. Those who rejected God's predestination are cast into the lake of fire, where their soul and spirit are tormented for eternity. This is 'the resurrection of judgement'.

45 1Co 3:12-15

46 Mat 6:2,5,16

47 1Co 15:44

48 Joh 5:28-29

On the day of resurrection, the sons of God will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Paul explained, 'For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.'⁴⁹ Regarding this event, we note that when the Lord descends from heaven, those who have died in Christ before this time will be raised first.⁵⁰ This raised mortal body will be clothed with their heavenly body in which they already reside. When their physical body is clothed with this heavenly body, they are a spiritual and immortal son of God. Their body is suited to their life and works in the new heavens and earth.

Immediately following this, the sons of God who are still on the earth will be clothed with their heavenly bodies. They will also be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and will then be caught up with those who have already put on incorruption, to be with the Lord forever.⁵¹

Differing glories

The Scriptures teach us that there are different glories in heaven. We learn that 'there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory'.⁵² Paul was speaking here about the glory of the Father, and the glory of the Son, and the glory of the Holy Spirit. These glories are Their unique expressions of the one covenant life of Yahweh. These expressions of glory are equally necessary for bringing many sons to glory in the image and likeness of the glory of God.⁵³

Having noted the different contributions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to our glory as a son of God, Paul then taught that the resurrection bodies of the sons of God would vary in glory from one son to another. This is what he meant when he said, 'For star differs from star in glory'.⁵⁴ We recall that Abraham's children – the sons of God – were likened by God to the stars of heaven.⁵⁵ The glory of our spiritual body will depend on the glory of the heavenly body with which we are clothed. As we have already considered, the glory of this heavenly body depends on how we have traded with the possessions of the Son as a member of the body of Christ, while still in our mortal body.

49 1Co 15:52-53

50 1Th 4:16

51 1Th 4:17

52 1Co 15:41

53 Heb 2:10. Gen 1:26

54 1Co 15:41

55 Gen 15:5

The bride of Christ

The fifth body that the Scriptures refer to is the bride of Christ. Like the body of Christ, the bride consists of individual members who are corporately one body. Paul explained that the bride of Christ is His church. He reminded us that Christ offered Himself for His church, that He might sanctify her, cleanse her by the washing of water by the word, and present her to Himself in all her glory.⁵⁶

We recall that the first man's wife, Eve, was formed from a rib that was removed from the side of Adam. The same is so for the second man, Christ. The bride of Christ comes forth from the side of Christ's body, which was pierced when He offered Himself on the cross.⁵⁷ We can see that those who are part of the bride of Christ are also of Christ's corporate body. When Paul was referring to all the glory of the bride of Christ, he was speaking of a company of people whose expression of glory was perfect, or full. We could say that it was 'one hundredfold'.

In the new heavens and earth, the bride of Christ is called 'the New Jerusalem'. John testified of her, writing, 'I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.'⁵⁸ The New Jerusalem becomes the administrative headquarters of the new heavens and earth. Here, those who are part of the bride company will serve the Lord forever.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit predestined every person to be a part of this bride company. A person who has been joined to this company is called 'the elect'. We note, for example, that the apostle John wrote to the church, addressing her as 'the elect lady and her children'.⁵⁹ God has made every provision for this inheritance; however, we are accountable for how we receive this provision and what we do with it. For this reason, Peter exhorted Christian believers to be 'even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'.⁶⁰

56 Eph 5:25-27

60 2Pe 1:10-11

57 Joh 19:34

58 Rev 21:2

59 2Jn 1:1

CHAPTER 7

Multiplying talents and minas

The Son's possessions given to slaves

Through the parables of the talents and the minas, Jesus taught that each slave in His house receives a quotient of His possessions with which to trade or do business. A slave in the Son's house is simply a son of God who has come into Christ through baptism. The possessions that the Son gives to His slaves are *His* sonship life and the authority to trade with, or express, this life. Paul was explaining this point when he wrote, 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and *the life which I now live* in the flesh I live *by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me and gave Himself up for me'.¹

The Son expects His slaves to trade with and multiply His sonship life. If we do not multiply His possessions, our heavenly house is not being built, and we will have no glory in the resurrection. On the day of judgement, if we have lived this way, the Son will describe us as 'wicked' and 'slothful', and we will lose our

1 Gal 2:20

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

salvation.² Jesus made it clear that there is no excuse for failing to multiply His sonship as a member of His body. In this regard, a person can even qualify for a minimal resurrection through usury or putting the talents and minas that they have received in the bank.³

At this point, it is important to note that the parables of the talents and minas are not simply alternative accounts of the same parable. They are two different lessons concerning the conduct of slaves in the house of the Son. When we consider these parables *together*, we understand that the slaves who received one talent, two talents and five talents, respectively, *also* received one mina each.

Talents and minas

The first and most obvious difference between talents and minas in the parables of Jesus is their monetary value. One talent was the equivalent of between fifteen and twenty-two *years*' worth of wages. This is referring to a life's work. In contrast, one mina was equivalent to about one hundred *days*' wages. This is referring to the wage for a specific season of labour.

Talents

In the parable of the talents, Jesus taught that different measures are given to the slaves in His house, 'each according to his own ability'.⁴ The ability of a person is an aspect of their identity that is recovered by the Father through the process of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.⁵ Also, when a person is born from above by the seed of the Father's word, they receive their eternal name, along with their predestination as a son of God. Their predestination is who they are to be and the works they are to do, not only in this world, but also in the world to come.

The varying talents can be understood as a quotient of the divine nature that belongs to the Son, and is given to us according to our abilities. This is life that has been given to the Son by the Father, so that it can be given to us. On this point, Jesus testified, 'For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself'.⁶

We learn from Jesus' parable that the slave who received five talents had gained five more talents, while the slave who had received two talents had gained two more.⁷ Both of these slaves had *doubled* the quotient of the Son's possessions they

2 Mat 25:26,30

6 Joh 5:26

3 Mat 25:27.
Luk 19:23

7 Mat 25:20,22

4 Mat 25:15

5 Tit 3:5

had received. This was the return from a *full* application to trading with the possessions that they had received from the Son.

Minas

In the parable of the minas, there was no disparity in the amount that each slave received. They were each given *one mina*. Yet we know that the number of minas that the slaves generated through their business transactions differed. One slave generated ten minas, while another generated five minas.⁸

The mina that is *given* to each slave represents the authority of their name to labour with the talents that they have received from the Son. In this regard, we recall from the teaching of Jesus that the reward for being faithful with a mina in this age is *authority* over cities in the age to come.⁹

We can understand the mina as two aspects of the life of God that the Son gives to us from the Father. *Regeneration* is the first aspect. Through the process of regeneration, the abilities associated with our identity are recovered so that the dimension of ‘talent’ that we also receive from the Son can be utilised ‘according to ability’.

The second aspect of the life of God that we receive is *the Holy Spirit* as a down payment, or pledge, of our sonship. Paul taught that we were sealed in Christ ‘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’.¹⁰ Our name is the sonship that the Father predestined for us.

In summary, the mina that we receive in Christ is the regeneration of our ability, and the possession of our name as a firstfruits quotient, through which we are able to take initiatives and trade with the talents we have received. This work is in the context of the kingdom of God in which we live and have been established by the Father. It includes, for example, our neighbourhoods and the places where we work or study.

The Holy Spirit leads us and gives us the capacity to live and function as firstfruits Christians, doing the works that belong to our sonship. These works, in this age, are to reveal Christ’s sonship as members in particular of His body, resulting in a multiplication of His life, and the fulfilling of the will of God.

8 Luk 19:16,18

9 Luk 19:17,19

10 Eph 1:13-14

Working with talents and minas

Paul taught that in all these contexts of life we are to conduct ourselves in a particular way in order to receive the reward of our inheritance. He wrote, 'Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily [from the soul], as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.'¹¹

This passage helps us to understand how we multiply the life of the Son, each day. Through baptism, we have died with Christ and our sonship is hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father.¹² This is what it means to be raised and seated with Christ in heavenly places.¹³ The bosom of the Father is also called the 'secret place'.¹⁴ Jesus taught that we are not to practise our own righteousness before men to be noticed by them. Rather, we are to fast and pray to remain 'in secret' with the Father, so that we are able to do the will of God as a member of the body of Christ.¹⁵ The opportunity and capacity to do the will of God in Christ and, by this means, to multiply the life of the Son, is how we are 'rewarded openly' by the Father.¹⁶

Talents and minas are only given to members of the body of Christ. A member of Christ is a slave in the house of the Son. However, as slaves, we do not trade with our talents and minas in the house. Rather, we labour in the context of the kingdom of God according to our name as a son of God, by the capacity of the Spirit. We are to bring the increase of our trading into the house of the Son as offerings. Our works, therefore, are as members of Christ who are slaves of His righteousness, *and* as sons of God. These dimensions of our labour are interdependent and in complete harmony.

The Holy Spirit is called 'the Spirit of truth'. Jesus said that, when He comes, He will guide us into all truth.¹⁷ This is the truth of our *name*. To walk after the Spirit, then, is to exercise the authority of our name according to how the Spirit is leading us. Jesus also explained that the Spirit, who is guiding us into all the truth, will *glorify the Son, for He will take of what is the Son's and disclose it to us*.¹⁸ This is more than just knowing the works that we are to do in Christ each day.

11 Col 3:22-24

12 Col 3:3

13 Eph 2:6

14 Mat 6:18

15 Mat 6:1-18

16 Mat 6:4,6,18

17 Joh 16:13

18 Joh 16:14

The outcome of trading with the possessions of the Son

We know, from the parable of the sower and the seed, that the fruit of eternal life is brought forth some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold and some one hundredfold.¹⁹ This is speaking of the reward that a person receives in the age to come on account of the wages they have accrued in this present age. Jesus taught, ‘Already he who *reaps* [grain] is receiving *wages* and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together’.²⁰ The principle of the seed, and the parables of the talents and minas, communicate the *proportional* return that a person can generate from their labours in the kingdom of God. The increase that is gained by a slave from this labour is built into their heavenly house and the glory of their name.

To understand the relationship between talents and minas, let us consider a slave who received one talent and generated a second talent. This slave doubled the quotient of sonship they received from Christ, gaining for their Master a *full increase* from His investment. This was the outcome of the slave’s *full capacity and application* to do the work of revealing the sonship of Christ through the exercise of the authority of their name. This full application, across the course of their Christian life, could be likened to the generation of ten minas. This represented, in the teaching of Jesus, a *full return* on the mina that the slave received.

The principle here is that a slave’s capacity to multiply their talent is dependent upon the utilisation of their mina. We can see the importance of continuing to receive regeneration so that our abilities are fully adequate to trade with the life of Christ. Moreover, we are to continue walking in the Spirit so that the basis of our trading is not the unprofitable exercise of our flesh.²¹

To help our understanding, let us consider a second scenario in which a five-talent person laboured, and generated only one more talent. This was not a full return on the investment of the Son. From this perspective, we would expect that the return on their mina would also have been less than the full measure of ten minas. Proportionally, it would be the equivalent of two minas and authority over two cities.

19 Mat 13:23

20 Joh 4:36

21 Gal 5:16

