

THE STEPS OF
*S*alvation

*The four dimensions of the grace of God
that are ministered from the face of Jesus Christ*

PART 2

VICTOR HALL

with Peter Hay & David Baker

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CHAPTER 1

The glory of Christ shining on us by offering

The gospel of sonship is the most amazing message. We, the sons and daughters of men, were predestined by God to be born again as sons of God. The apostle Paul summarised this message as ‘the gospel of the glory of Christ’.¹ He explained that, through the preaching of this gospel, the light of God’s life is being shone upon a hearer. If they receive this message, the light is shone into their heart by the Holy Spirit, birthing them again with God’s own life.

In the first volume of *The Steps of Salvation* we outlined, from the Scriptures, eleven waypoints on the pathway of sonship. As the Spirit has been continuing to illuminate our understanding of the steps of salvation, it has become clear that these eleven points are predicated upon the light of God’s life shining from the marred face of Christ into the hearts of men and women. This is, in fact, the first

1 2Co 4:4

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waypoint on the pathway of becoming a son of God. We are, therefore, able to identify *twelve, rather than eleven, waypoints* that are fundamental to the process of a believer being brought to glory as a son of God.

The light of the glory of Christ

In his letter to Titus, the apostle Paul wrote, ‘For the grace of God that brings salvation has *appeared [given light] to all men*’.² This was a work that commenced while we were all sinners.³ The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ began to shine as a beacon from His marred face as He offered Himself, and was lifted up to be crucified on the cross. Through the process of offering, the light of life was revealed and made available to all men.

Paul described the light that shines from the face of Christ as ‘*the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ*’.⁴ Regarding this glory, the apostle John declared that ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’.⁵ John was explaining that the glory of Christ is the substance and expression of new creation sonship that is born of the Father. As a Man who was born of God, *Jesus was full of grace and truth*.

When we receive the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as it is expressed from the face of Christ, we receive of Christ’s fullness.⁶ This fullness is grace and truth. Through Christ, God ministers His grace from His own being as Yahweh. This is why Jesus said, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man [on the cross], then you will know that I am [Yahweh].’⁷ God’s favour is realised, or ministered, from His grace, which is His love, word, life and Spirit. We will develop this point in more detail in chapter three. The grace of God is given to us to make us sons in the image of Christ’s sonship.

The grace of God comes to us from the offering of Yahweh that was made *before* time began. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit covenanted together to create and bring to glory an innumerable company of sons who would be born of Their life and joined to Their fellowship. This was the unmerited favour of God. Through offering, They made the fullness of Their one life and Spirit available for the sons of God. This fullness is the grace of God and was given to the Son.

The offering of God, before time began, was revealed in the realm of time when Christ offered Himself on the cross. As we noted earlier, this was when He was

2 Tit 2:11 6 2Co 4:6
3 Rom 5:8 7 Joh 8:28
4 2Co 4:4
5 Joh 1:14

revealed as Yahweh.⁸ On the cross, the grace of God that was given to the Son by offering, before time, was made available to the sons of men as the light of the glory of Christ that shines from His face. As they receive this light, the sons of men are able to become the sons of God.

As the word of the cross is proclaimed to us by Christ's messengers, the grace (which is Spirit and life, as well as word and love) is reflected from the marred, crucified face of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, into our hearts, as a treasure that we possess. It is a treasure that transforms us into the same image and glory of the sonship that we see in Christ.⁹ This is the key point of the gospel.

Ministry of light

Paul preached Christ crucified.¹⁰ He ministered this gospel in the weakness of Christ, testifying, 'I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.'¹¹

Paul was able to minister in this way because the life of God, as light, had been shone into his heart as a treasure that was now in him. This was the life of Jesus that was being formed in him because he had been co-crucified with Christ through baptism.¹² In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Paul was always carrying about the dying of the Lord Jesus in his own body so that the life of Jesus (for both himself and for others) would be manifested in his body. He summarised this as 'death working in us, but life in you'.¹³ The implication of this ministry was that the light of the glory of Christ was being shone from the face of Christ *through Paul's preaching* to his hearers.

The light that Paul received

How did Paul come to be a messenger of the gospel of the glory of Christ? Testifying to King Agrippa concerning his own conversion, Paul said that a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, had shone all around him and those who were with him, causing them to fall to the ground. This light was the glory of Christ that was shining from His face. Jesus spoke to Paul, asking him why he was persecuting Him. Paul's response was, 'Who are you, *Lord?*' Jesus introduced Himself to Paul

8 Joh 8:2 12 Gal 2:20

9 2Co 3:18. 13 2Co 4:12
2Co 4:6-7

10 1Co 1:23

11 1Co 2:3-5

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by saying, *'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'*¹⁴ The light that shone around Paul was coming from the marred face of Christ, who had been lifted up on the cross as an offering, and was now seated on a throne in heavenly places.¹⁵ This was the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, through which grace and truth were being made available to Paul.

The Lord Jesus then said to Paul, 'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen [You have seen Me.] and of the things which I will yet reveal to you [There is more for you to receive.]. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'¹⁶

As the light shone from the face of Christ and into his heart by the Holy Spirit, Paul was converted. He received his name, and was told what the works associated with his name would be. He received the treasure of Christ's life within him. This was the light that he would bear to the Gentiles as a minister of Christ. Jesus said that He would show Paul more of what this would mean for his life. The first step in receiving this further clarification and capacity came through Ananias, who prayed for Paul, and then baptised him into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁷

In his first epistle, John also explained that the message that he and his brethren preached was *light*. It would bring illumination to those who received it, and would establish them in a fellowship. He said, '*This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all ... if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*'¹⁸ In summary, their message was *the gospel of light*. It connects a hearer to the *fellowship* of Yahweh in the body of Christ, where the *blood of Christ* is effective in a person's life to cleanse them from the sin of living according to their own desires, and enables them to live as a son of God. This is because His life becomes their life. Moreover, they are able to minister this life to others. We will now consider this process in more detail.

14 Act 26:13-15

18 1Jn 1:5,7

15 Eph 1:20-21.
Rev 5:6

16 Act 26:16-18

17 Act 9:10-18

The creation of man

A son of God is a person who has been born of God. The apostle James taught that a person is brought forth, or birthed, as a son of God through the exercise of the Father's own will, by the word of truth. He does this in order that they might become a firstfruits of His creatures.¹⁹ A son of God is a new creation.²⁰ They have become a new humanity with a different life; that is, they have received the *zoe* life of the Father. The apostle John used the Greek word *zoe* to describe the life of Yahweh, and to distinguish this life from *bios*, which is biological life, and *psuche*, which is soul life. To understand how sons and daughters of men can be born of *zoe* life, which is the life of Yahweh, we need to consider the differences between creation, incarnation, and new creation.

The Son of God, who was the Creator of heaven and earth, formed the physical body of Adam from the clay, and then breathed the breath of lives (plural) into his nostrils.²¹ The breath of lives (plural) carried within it the capacity for both male and female. God then formed the spirit of man within him, and man became a living soul.²² Using the language of the New Testament, Adam became a living soul (*psuche*).

The identity of Adam was in his spirit, and his spirit expressed itself through the faculties of his soul. The soul of man lives and expresses itself through the energy of his fleshly biological life, which is in his blood.²³

It is important to recognise that the creation of man occurred in *two stages*. In the first stage, 'God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; *male and female* He created them'.²⁴ However, the creation of mankind in the image of God was not complete until there was a couple. In the second stage, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, removed a rib from his side, and formed the woman as a helper comparable to him.²⁵

Further to this, it was not until Eve received the word of motherhood that she was able to conceive, and become the mother of all living.²⁶ The word of motherhood enabled her to become the mother of all the races of mankind.

We know that a person receives their physical body, which includes all the genetic characteristics that they have inherited from their parents and forebears, through the biological process of procreation. However, much more than this, the

19 Jas 1:18

23 Lev 17:11

20 2Co 5:17

24 Gen 1:27

21 Gen 2:7

25 Gen 2:20-22

22 Gen 2:7. Zec 12:1

26 Gen 3:20

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spirit and soul of each person were also conceived as a new identity because of the biological union of the sperm from a man, and the egg from a woman.

This is a most remarkable consideration. A person has been given their identity as an eternal possession as the consequence of a biological action. In this way, the spirit of a person has been formed from the flesh. It would be a mistake to assume that God has a multitude of spirits with Him in heaven, one of which He places into the womb of a woman when a new child is conceived. When a child is conceived in the womb, they receive their natural identity from the fatherhood of Adam by the natural procreative process.

When we consider this reality, we realise that it emphasises the truth that a person is not *spiritual* because they possess a spirit. They have identity as an eternal possession because they possess a spirit, but their spirit was brought forth *from the flesh*. This is why Jesus was so emphatic on this point during His discussion with Nicodemus. He said that a person *must be* born again to become spiritual, because ‘that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’.²⁷

The incarnation of Christ

Yahweh Son was begotten by God the Father as His Son, before the beginning of creation. He then became the Son of Man, the last Adam, through incarnation, from whom everything for redemption and new creation comes.²⁸ Christ, forever, is now Yahweh Son, Son of God and Son of Man. Christ is called Immanuel, which means ‘God with us’.²⁹ That is, God is manifest in a human body. He is the new creation humanity.³⁰

When Yahweh Son, who was Spirit, became the Father’s Son, He was birthed spiritually by the word of the Father. The Father declared, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’³¹ Yahweh Son was begotten by the word of the Father to be the first Son and the fullness of a new creation.³² He received a heavenly body from the Father, which was the body of His glory as the Son of God. This happened in the fellowship of the Everlasting Covenant *before* the beginning of the natural creation.

We recognise that the Son had identity before He became a new creation. He was Yahweh the Son before He was begotten as the Son of the Father.³³ Further to this,

27 Joh 3:6

31 Psa 2:7. Heb 1:5

28 Heb 1:5. 1Co 15:45

32 Col 1:15. Rev 3:14

29 Mat 1:23

33 Joh 17:5. Joh 6:62.

30 Joh 1:14

Joh 8:58

the Son was a *new creation* before the *incarnation*. That is, He became the Son of God before He became the Son of Man. In the same way, He possessed a heavenly body before He possessed a physical body.

At the incarnation, the Son of God laid aside His heavenly body and was clothed with His *psuche* and biological body. In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul explained that, even though He existed in the form of God, He emptied Himself to be made in *the likeness of men*.³⁴ The Son's *psuche* body was prepared for Him by the Father for the purpose of fulfilling the Father's will.³⁵ The physical body of Christ was formed in the womb of the virgin Mary once the power of the Most High had overshadowed her by the Holy Spirit.³⁶

The *word* as the seed of God that enabled Yahweh the Son to be born as the Son of God and formed His heavenly body is the *same word* that formed His physical body. The seed of God, in conjunction with the egg of Mary, gave to Christ His human body.³⁷ Christ's human form followed the line and appearance of Mary, and the attributes received from her forefathers.³⁸ The point being emphasised here is that Christ was, in all things, made like His brethren so that He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest.³⁹

Jesus Christ came to give us *zoe* life, and to give it to us *abundantly*.⁴⁰ This is the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham when Christ said to him that He would be his reward – exceedingly abundantly!⁴¹ The *psuche* life of Christ was in His blood.⁴² He said that He laid down His *psuche* life for us. However, His blood contained both His own biological life and Yahweh's *zoe* life. And it is this *zoe* life that He shares with us by offering. We are receiving His *zoe* life when we eat of His flesh and drink of His blood in the fellowship of the communion. Jesus said, 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal [*zoe*] life.'⁴³

Becoming a son of God

Jesus Christ was made *like us* by incarnation. The Word became flesh when He became the Son of Man in a biological body.⁴⁴ However, He already existed as a spiritual, new creation Son of God before His incarnation.⁴⁵ We were predestined to be made *like Him* by new birth.⁴⁶ As He was born of God before the foundation of the world by the word of the Father, we also receive this privilege of becoming a son of God when given a *second birth* by the same word.⁴⁷

34 Php 2:5-8

38 Mat 1:17-18

42 Lev 17:11

46 Rom 8:29

35 Heb 10:5

39 Heb 2:17

43 Joh 6:53-54

47 1Pe 1:23

36 Luk 1:35. Mat 1:20

40 Joh 10:10

44 Joh 1:14

37 Joh 1:14

41 Gen 15:1

45 Col 1:15

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Our first birth was by natural means. We need to be born a second time to become spiritual. Until we are born of God, we cannot confess or proclaim that God is our Father.⁴⁸ It is through the process of being born again that we are made spiritual. It is after we have become spiritual that we receive the Spirit of Christ.⁴⁹ We receive Christ, and are then able to receive His divine nature from Him.

The gospel preached

The gospel is preached to an unsaved person by Christ's messengers, who are full of the Holy Spirit. The gospel that they preach is the same gospel that Paul preached among the Gentiles. It is the gospel of sonship.

Through the preaching of the gospel, the *life* of God is made available to a hearer as *light*. That is, as a person receives the preached message, Jesus Christ, who is the true Light, comes and personally reveals Himself to them so that they can be born as a son of God. Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through Me.'⁵⁰

When the Lord speaks through a messenger to a person who is spiritually dead to God because of their sin, He says to them, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'⁵¹ By this means, the Son pours out upon the hearer a spirit of grace and supplication that allows the hearer to look into the face of Christ who was pierced because of their sin.⁵² That is, if it is not resisted, the prevenient grace of God enables a person to receive the light of the gospel, even though, in themselves, they do not have the capacity to see or receive the things of God.⁵³

As they turn to the Lord, the veil that prevents the light of the gospel from shining on them by the Holy Spirit is taken away.⁵⁴ This veil represents any influence upon a person that affects their capacity to choose the call of sonship that God is offering to them. These influences may include, for example, their sin and its consequences, their personal history, past hurts, depression, addictions, and so on.

As the Holy Spirit convicts them of sin, righteousness and judgement, they become aware of the bankruptcy of their spirit, and begin to mourn for their sin.⁵⁵ They accept the justifying work that Christ accomplished for them as He suffered and died for them on the cross. Because of Christ's acceptable and effective offering, their sins can be forgiven. In answer to their cry for forgiveness, the Father

48 Joh 20:17

52 Zec 12:10

49 Gal 4:6. Eph 3:17

53 1Co 2:14

50 Joh 14:6

54 2Co 3:16

51 Eph 5:13-14

55 Mat 5:3-4

forgives them because Christ's blood was shed for them. Through Christ, they have received redemption and justification.

The adoption

At the same time that the hearer asks for forgiveness, they also cry out to God for help to believe to receive the sonship that the gospel is offering to them. The Father imputes to them the faith of God so that they can believe what God Himself believes about them; that is, that they can be a son of God. With this faith, they believe for sonship and cry out to the Father to make them His son or daughter. The Father hears their cry and receives them as His adopted child. Having already forgiven their sin, the Father reckons righteousness to them because they have believed His word and received His invitation to become His child. This means that the Father considers them a son in His house, even though they are not yet born of God. This is the adoption.

Regeneration and renewing

An adopted son or daughter in the Father's house is entitled to the wealth that belongs to the Father. This is the inheritance of the divine nature. The adopted son then receives the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sends to dwell within them.⁵⁶ They begin to experience the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. This involves them in the regeneration and renewing of their natural identity.⁵⁷ The process of regeneration will continue for the rest of their Christian pilgrimage.⁵⁸

Having received the Holy Spirit, the new believer is able to confess Christ as Lord.⁵⁹ This is most important, because Christ will not direct us to the Father to be born again of His life until we have accepted Him as the Lord of our life. It is Christ who gives a person the right to become a son of God.⁶⁰

Receiving the incorruptible seed

Those who receive the word of Christ are directed to go to the Father to be born a second time.⁶¹ The Father then births them from above by the incorruptible word of God.⁶² This happens when the seed of God's word germinates in the regenerated heart of a hearer. Their regenerated natural identity (or human spirit) is *reborn* and *made spiritual*. They have been born of water.⁶³

56 Joh 14:16

57 Tit 3:5

58 Rom 8:23

59 1Co 12:3

60 Joh 1:12. Joh 14:6

61 Joh 3:3-8. Joh 14:6

62 1Pe 1:23

63 Joh 3:5

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Through this birthing process, God the Father has now become the Father of their spirit.⁶⁴ They are a *new creation* that is spiritual. This makes them a son of God and a spiritual firstfruits of the new creation. For this reason, Jesus taught us to pray, 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name'.⁶⁵ We are able to pray this way because He has become *our* Father, the Father of our identity.

The planting of the Father's seed within the heart of a believer specifically involves the Father writing the name of Yahweh into the believer's natural, regenerated identity. This principle was revealed, in type, when God renamed Abraham and Sarah. He placed His own name within their natural name. By this means, they received a new name and were joined to God's covenant purpose. They were able to bring forth Isaac, the child of promise, whom Paul said was born 'according to the Spirit'.⁶⁶ We will consider this further in chapter four, 'The gospel preached to Abraham'.

When the Father writes the name of Yahweh into the natural identity of a son of man, they are named with the capacities of Yahweh's own nature, causing them to be born of God, and redefined as a spiritual man. These capacities will include love, word, life/light and Spirit. Moreover, the name received by a new son of God contains the works that God predestined for them to do in this age and in the new heavens and earth.

Then, because they are a son, God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their heart. By this means, they are able to express sonship, which is evidenced by their cry of 'Abba! Father!'⁶⁷ This is because the Spirit of the Son is the divine nature of the seed of God. He is the nature of new creation sonship. When this happens, they have been born of the Spirit.⁶⁸ Paul made it clear that unless we have the Spirit of Christ, we are not sons of God.⁶⁹ We are made spiritual when we are born of God. Those who are spiritual have been given the capacity to understand and receive the things that belong to the Spirit of God. This is what Jesus meant when He said, 'That which is born of Spirit is spirit.'⁷⁰

It is helpful to note that, when the Father sends the spirit of the Son into the heart of a believer, it is Christ the Person who comes to *dwell* within them. This is not the same as Christ being *formed* within them. Christ is formed within a person through a *travailing* process.⁷¹ A believer is joined to this travail when they are baptised. Through baptism, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, His life becomes their life.⁷²

64 Heb 12:9

68 Joh 3:5

72 Gal 2:20

65 Mat 6:9

69 Rom 8:9

66 Gal 4:28-29

70 Joh 3:6

67 Gal 4:6

71 Gal 4:19

The nature of the seed

Another important clarification to make is that there is only one seed. In Part 1 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we identified two seeds in the process of new birth. We identified the first seed as the word of the Father, which gives a new believer their name as a son of God. We then proposed that the Person of Christ, the Seed of Abraham, is a second seed that the new believer receives. We made this distinction so that we could distinguish between being 'born of water' and 'born of the Spirit'.

There certainly is a distinction between these two elements of new birth. However, they both come from the Father. In reality, there is only one seed of the Father, which has two dimensions. The seed is the word of God. It contains the *name of Yahweh* from the Father, and the *nature of sonship* from Yahweh Son. Consequently, when a person receives this seed from the Father, they are 'born of water and the Spirit'.⁷³

The cry, 'Abba! Father!'

When the Father sends forth the Spirit of the Son into the heart of a believer, Christ becomes their life. The Spirit of the Son cries out within them, 'Abba! Father!'⁷⁴ Christ is speaking *in them* to the Father. He is also speaking *to them* and illuminating them regarding their sonship. Because a son of God has received the Spirit of Christ, they are able to express their joyous conviction that God is their Father. Every son of God should receive this illumination and know this conviction in their life.

A person who receives the Spirit of Christ is able to express their sonship. They also now belong to Christ.⁷⁵ The acknowledgement of the fatherhood of God in their life can be a point of crisis. This is because the fatherhood of God must take priority in their life over their natural fatherhood. This will involve letting go of the fallen traditions and cultures of their natural fathers and mothers so that they can be established in the culture of God's house. Furthermore, as God is their Father, and they belong to Christ, they must relinquish the right to define their own life and works. This is what it means to put off the deeds of the flesh.⁷⁶ As a son of God, they are to be led by the Spirit of God.⁷⁷

In his letter to the Romans, Paul reiterated that a son of God is a person who has received the Spirit of Christ.⁷⁸ He then encouraged believers by writing, 'You

73 Joh 3:5

77 Rom 8:14

74 Gal 4:6

78 Rom 8:9,14

75 Rom 8:9

76 Rom 8:13

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did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the *spirit of adoption* by whom we cry out, “Abba! Father!”⁷⁹ Paul’s statement is notable because a person receives the adoption before they are born of the Spirit. They are adopted into the Father’s house when they become bankrupt in spirit and receive the faith of God to believe for sonship. With this faith, they personally cry out to the Father to make them a son of God.

In light of Paul’s encouragement, we recognise that the cry, ‘Abba! Father!’, as an adopted son, does not cease once a person has received the inheritance of the divine nature. Instead, because they are a son and belong to Christ, they are personally able to express their acknowledgement of the fatherhood of God in their life. In doing so, they acknowledge that they have been set free from their bondage to sin and have received the faith of the Son that enables them to confidently enter into all that God has prepared for them as His son. In summary, while Christ cries out, ‘Abba! Father!’ within them, they are also personally able to cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’, in Christ.

Invoking the name of the Lord in baptism

Having been born of the Spirit, a newborn son of God will say to the elders, ‘What must I do to be saved?’⁸⁰ Their entreaty of the elders in this way demonstrates that, as one who is born of God, they are already seeking fellowship. The motivation to fellowship is characteristic of God’s nature. *True elders* will call them to be baptised into the fellowship of the offering of Christ, and also into the fellowship of Yahweh’s name as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through baptism, they are joined to the fellowship and offering from which they have been receiving illumination as they have looked into the marred face of Jesus.

In the waters of baptism, the elders invoke the name of the Lord *upon the believer*. They do this by laying their hands upon them and baptising them into Christ. At the same time, the new believer is calling His name *upon themselves*. Paul said that a person *clothes themselves* with Christ when they are baptised.⁸¹ This is their confession, and it joins them to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. They rise to walk in newness of life. Newness of life is accomplished by ‘offering transfer’. Offering transfer happens when a person is joined to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ’s offering delivers them from

79 Rom 8:15

80 Act 2:37. Act 16:30

81 Gal 3:27

their propensity to sin, and they receive the life that He made available through the shedding of His blood. It is transferred to them and becomes their life.

Both elements of invocation are necessary. A person cannot baptise themselves. Moreover, a person has not been baptised into Christ if they do not possess the faith to join the offering of Christ. For this reason, when a person is being baptised, it would be appropriate to say that it is upon their faith as a believer that they are being baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their faith for baptism is their willingness to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The name that is invoked upon a believer is no different from the name that they received in the new birth, by the word of the Father. What, then, is the point of being baptised into the name? Through baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ, the believer's name is being activated and empowered by the love of God as they are joined to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.⁸² This is the context for their sanctification and the expression of their sonship, the outcome of which is eternal life.⁸³ They are joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings so that His life is transferred to them by offering. According to their name, which defines their predestination and ministry, His life is now also able to be transferred through them to others in the body of Christ. The life of Jesus that they have received is also able to be ministered as life and light to those who are in darkness.

We recall from the account of Abraham's life that he received his new name from Yahweh before he received circumcision as the sign of the covenant.⁸⁴ Likewise, we receive our name when we are born again. Then this name is activated through baptism, which Paul called 'the circumcision of Christ'.⁸⁵ Like Abraham, as we receive this circumcision, we are able to walk in resurrection life.

Changing from glory to glory

The life of Jesus is an immortal treasure. Once this treasure is shone into our heart, it also resides in our physical, mortal bodies.⁸⁶ This life has power in it. It joins us to the offering and sufferings of Christ, giving us the capacity to endure in the fellowship of His sufferings and to demonstrate the dying of Jesus in our mortal bodies. This life is also resurrection life. It gives us power to overcome the difficulties that we face in our mortality. Moreover, the life of Jesus enables us to

82 Joh 17:26

86 2Co 4:7

83 Rom 6:22

84 Gen 17:11

85 Col 2:11

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live our lives as sons of God in this world.⁸⁷ Christ is our life. We do not become the Person of Christ; rather, He shares His life with us.

Christ is also the image of our sonship. The apostle John declared this when he wrote, ‘Beloved, now we are the sons of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that *when He is revealed, we shall be like Him*, for we shall *see Him* as He is’.⁸⁸ As a person continues to turn their face to Christ, they are able to receive the light of His word that is spoken by the faithful messengers who are in His hand. By this means, the glory of their sonship will be progressively obtained. Paul was explaining this when he wrote, ‘We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord’.⁸⁹

When a person is born again of the seed of the divine nature, the substance of their new creation sonship has been conceived within their being. However, they are not brought forth to full stature as a son of God through this initial birthing action. Rather, there is a process of gestation and formation that brings a Christian to a firstfruits expression.

This raises the question, ‘What does a firstfruits son of God look like?’ A firstfruits Christian makes offering in the fellowship of the body of Christ. This is because offering is the nature of God’s life. The initiatives that they take as a son of God are in accordance with their name, which is made known as they have fellowship with their brethren. We note that this fruitfulness can be demonstrated by sons of God from an early age. We remember, for example, that Jesus was about His Father’s business in the house of God at the age of twelve.⁹⁰

The priority is sonship

A person’s new creation sonship should take priority over the priorities and goals of their natural humanity once they have been born again. It was for this reason that Jesus said, ‘Do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For after all these things the Gentiles seek [those who have not received the New Covenant]. For *your heavenly Father* knows that you need all these things. But *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness* [seek to live as a son of God], and all these things shall be added to you.’⁹¹

87 2Co 4:7-11

91 Mat 6:31-33

88 1Jn 3:2

89 2Co 3:18

90 Luk 2:49

Regarding the distinction between flesh and Spirit, Paul explained that 'you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you'.⁹² This is true, even though, at times, the fears and priorities that drive our fallen, carnal motivations seem to overwhelm us. The body, in relation to spiritual things, is dead and lifeless because of sin; however, the Spirit is life within us because of righteousness.⁹³

Paul explained that the Spirit of the Father and the Holy Spirit raised Christ from the dead. Jesus Christ suffered the death of our sin in His physical, mortal body. As we are joined to Christ's death, the Spirit of God will give life to our mortal and physical bodies because we are now sons of God.⁹⁴

Through the process of new birth, the reborn spirit of a person receives some new capacities. These capacities are not available to a person who is born only of flesh, even if they are trying to be religious and spiritual. The born-again Christian possesses the Spirit of God and the life of God. Having received the Spirit and life of God, they have the capacity to see and perceive the things that are spiritual and that belong to God.⁹⁵

A spiritual person has received the treasure of God's life in their mortal body. Consequently, in the midst of suffering, they are not destroyed.⁹⁶ Instead, through suffering, the deeds of the flesh are being put to death, and they are able to bear the fruits of the Spirit, which include 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control'.⁹⁷

Children born in covenant houses

In recent years, the Holy Spirit has been restoring to us the wonderful truth that children who are born into covenant households are born of the Spirit in the womb of their mothers. This means that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son come to dwell within them following their conception.

However, the natural human identity that is formed within the womb of a believing mother through procreation is *not* the seed of new creation sonship. Christ was the only Person who was conceived in the flesh with His identity as the new creation Son. This is because Christ's identity was not from the fatherhood of Adam. He already possessed His own identity, and was birthed in the womb of Mary by the word of the Father. Unlike us, Christ did not need to be born a second time to

92 Rom 8:9

96 2Co 4:7-8

93 Rom 8:10

97 Gal 5:22-24

94 Rom 8:11

95 1Co 2:14

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become a spiritual son of God. Moreover, there was no other law within Him that would be susceptible to the manipulations of the law of sin that reside within the fallen, human heart.

Why do the sons and daughters of men need to be born a second time? It is because, as Paul explained, ‘The spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual’.⁹⁸ Every person is first conceived as a natural identity. This natural identity is then born again in the womb of a believing mother by the word of God the Father. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’, He was drawing attention to the distinction between these two dimensions of life.⁹⁹

Let us first consider the conception of the natural man. Conception is the point at which a sperm is joined to an egg in the womb of a woman. As we noted earlier, it is through this process of procreation that an identity is conceived. This child has a soul and spirit that are clothed with a biological body. However, at this point, they have not received anything of God, from above. Their body, soul and spirit come from their natural father and mother. This is what it means to be born of the flesh.

A child who is conceived in a covenant house is then *adopted* by the Father as one of His sons. This occurs immediately following their conception. On account of the faith of at least one of their parents, the Father brings the child into the *position* of a son within His house. As an adopted son in the Father’s house, they are entitled to an inheritance. This inheritance is all the wealth that belongs to the Father. It is the divine nature, which is also described as ‘the riches of His glory’.¹⁰⁰

The Father sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in the heart of the child, and they begin to receive the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. This enables their heart to receive the seed of God’s word from the Father so that their natural identity is *born again* in the womb. When the word of their name as a son of God is planted in their heart, they are born from above as a spiritual son of God. God has become the Father of their spirit.¹⁰¹ The Father also sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their heart. At this point, they have been born of water and the Spirit.¹⁰² They have become a new creation who is ‘of God’.

98 1Co 15:46

102 Joh 3:5

99 Joh 3:6

100 Eph 3:16

101 Heb 12:9

Grace in a New Covenant household

Within a New Covenant household, Christian parents, under the headship of Christ, receive grace from the Lord for the nurture and admonition of their children. The nurture and admonition of the Lord addresses both the regeneration of their child's 'inner man' and the cultivation of their new creation sonship. The grace that parents receive from the Lord is also for the purpose of helping their children to put off 'the old man'. That is, the children receive the circumcision of Christ through the discipline of their parents to deliver them of the other law that is within them.

Because they come from the seed of Adam, children inherit the natural dispositions that belong to their parents. These physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual dispositions have been impacted upon by the fall of mankind. The washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit addresses the inevitable dysfunctions associated with these dimensions of their being. For the whole of their lives, until the day of resurrection, when they receive an immortal body, the process of regeneration is to be at work in their mortal body.¹⁰³

The washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, which children receive through the discipline and instruction of their parents, also addresses the natural identity of the child. This includes the development of their child's abilities that are associated with their identity. It is in relation to these abilities that grace is given to them by God as 'talents'.¹⁰⁴ Through regeneration and renewing, the child is becoming aware of themselves, and is able to clearly recognise and receive the kingdom of God. As they grow, they will begin to present themselves and their capacities for service in the house of the Lord.

The attention of parents to the natural identity of the child must be in harmony with the cultivation of the child's new creation sonship. That is, Christian parents must accept that when their child was born from above in the womb of the mother, the fatherhood of God took priority over their fatherhood and motherhood of the child. They acknowledge this reality by training their children to seek the Father in the secret place; to receive and love the word of God; and to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. By this means, the child is growing up in their sonship and becoming a viable and functioning member of the body of Christ.

103 Rom 8:23

104 Mat 25:15

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Practically, parents will personally be seeking God for grace to instruct and discipline their children in the way of sonship. Furthermore, they will prioritise the culture and activities of the house of God over their own initiatives to develop the child's natural interests and capacities. Prioritising their own fatherhood and motherhood over the fatherhood of God is likely to orientate the child towards 'the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things'. Jesus likened these orientations to thorns that grow up in a person's life and choke the word within them so that it is unfruitful in their life.¹⁰⁵

As they grow and mature, children who have been born with the divine nature must themselves choose the sonship that was gifted to them on account of the faith of their parents. In order to fully possess the blessing of sonship that is rightfully theirs, they must prioritise their sonship over the priorities and goals of a fallen humanity. In this way, they are standing up in their own sonship and getting about their heavenly Father's business.

105 Mar 4:19

CHAPTER 2

Receiving illumination

In the introduction to his Gospel, the apostle John noted that Jesus was in the world, and the world did not know Him.¹ This was because the god of this age had blinded their eyes.² Jesus came to His own – the Jews – and even they did not receive Him. However, as many as did receive Him, ‘to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God’.³

Although the light from Christ’s marred face now shines on every person, not all receive the light. Paul explained that the reason for this is because the gospel is veiled ‘to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them’.⁴

1 Joh 1:10

2 2Co 4:3

3 Joh 1:12-13

4 2Co 4:3-4

A veil upon the heart

Even after a person has been illuminated by the gospel of the glory of Christ, they can place a veil back over their heart. They do this when they stop receiving the word of God that is preached by Christ's messengers. This veil upon their heart refers to anything that substitutes for the illumination that comes from the face of Christ, by the Holy Spirit. It represents a person's unwillingness to turn their face to the Lord and to continue to walk in the light of life that is shining upon them through the preaching of graced messengers.⁵ In essence, the veil is a person's desire to enhance or perfect themselves by pursuing good Christian principles, instead of continuing in the fellowship of Christ's offering, through which the divine nature is formed within them.

We recall, for example, that the apostle Paul admonished the Christians in Galatia for seeking to be made perfect through the efforts of their flesh, having previously been born of the Spirit.⁶ Paul noted that they were returning to the way of life from which they had been delivered when they had been born from above. They were setting aside the grace of God and seeking, instead, to be made righteous by keeping the law through their natural capacities.⁷ There was nothing wrong with the light that was shining on them through Paul's preaching, and neither was there anything wrong with their spiritual eyes. Their problem was a veil that lay over their heart, which was causing them to fall away from the truth.

What will be the indication that a veil lies over the heart of a believer? The first indication will be their inability to understand the word of God and its implications for their life. This is because they have received no illumination. The word is not in their mouth, nor in their heart, as an expression of personal faith.⁸ Consequently, they are unable to know how and where to walk as a son of God. Furthermore, because of the pressures of life, they may become fearful, easily frustrated, reactive, envious, divisive, or beset by sin. Paul described these responses as 'the deeds of the flesh'.⁹ They are the fruit of pursuing righteousness through one's own efforts, instead of walking by the Spirit in the light that the word of God provides.

The veil of intellectualism

Another significant veil that has affected Christians for the whole of the church age is the problem of *intellectualism*. Intellectualism, when engaging with the word

5 2Co 4:1,7

9 Gal 5:19-21

6 Gal 3:3

7 Gal 2:21

8 Rom 10:8

of God, presumes that a person can find enlightenment through the pursuit of knowledge. This is, in fact, the basis of the philosophies and religions of the world. Their many adherents claim that their own system of knowledge is the truth. However, Jesus was clear that this is a broad way that only leads to destruction.¹⁰

Scientific, linguistic principles, upon which these systems of knowledge are based, are not sourced from the Spirit of God. Rather, the science of interpretation finds its origin in the speculations of the human mind. The mind has the capacity for speculation. This is called, in Scripture, 'the law of my mind'.¹¹ When the Scriptures refer to the mind of a person, they are not referring to the brain. That is an organ that belongs to our physical body. The mind is a faculty of a person's soul and is, therefore, an element of their heart. It is for this reason that a person is able to believe with their heart.¹²

The knowledge and thought systems derived from the heart of man are only as sound as the source from which they come. A fallen person's spirit is in darkness. Consequently, their knowledge can only be collected through their natural senses. Truth, for these people, is based on their own perspective. To them, the importance of truth is in understanding how it will affect their lives.

It is evident that a person has received revelation, or insight, when they confess that 'truth' is what God says it is. The apostle John declared, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld [or were able to see] His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'¹³ The 'truth' is referring to the Holy Spirit. As John wrote in his first letter, 'It is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth'.¹⁴ Jesus said that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth.¹⁵

A prominent theological educator once claimed that no-one has the right to say, 'The Spirit has shown me thus and so.' He asserted that this is because the only true interpretation of the Scriptures is the linguistic meaning of the words. However, his assertions imply that a believer does not possess the capacity to discern between the Holy Spirit and a spirit of delusion unless they are skilled in the science of interpretation. To say this insults the Spirit of grace, and places the presumptions of science above the wisdom of God.

The Spirit of God is the source of the Scriptures, for the Spirit is the Truth itself.¹⁶ John taught that it is possible to test whether a spirit is true or not.

10 Mat 7:13

14 1Jn 5:6

11 Rom 7:23

15 Joh 16:13

12 Rom 10:10

16 1Jn 5:6

13 Joh 1:14

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He wrote, 'Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.'¹⁷

The theologians and philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Origen and all those who hold to their teachings, deny that Christ is coming in the flesh of believers by revelation. We know that their hermeneutics are false, because they are not from the Spirit of truth. We learn this from the Scriptures. This is because the Spirit and the word of God are in agreement. The Scriptures themselves tell us that the Spirit is the revelator and guide into all truth, and that the Spirit gives us understanding in relation to what is written.¹⁸

The Spirit of revelation goes beyond the deductive capacities of the human mind, which analyses the information that it receives through the agency of the five senses. The capacity for human reasoning cannot be the final authority or check on revelation. When Christ, the Word, became flesh, people were able to receive of His fullness (grace and truth) and become a spiritual new creation like Him. Moreover, they could be joined to His administration, through which His grace is ministered to others by the Spirit.

The writers of the New Testament teach that it is not what a person believes that saves them but, rather, *knowing Him* in whom they have believed. As He prayed to the Father prior to His passion, Jesus said, 'And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.'¹⁹

The apostle Paul proclaimed this same truth. He explained that the purpose and grace of God has been revealed by the appearing of Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Paul testified that it was for this reason that he suffered many things. Yet, he was not ashamed of the gospel, nor of his fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, for he *knew* the One in whom he believed.²⁰ Likewise, the apostle John concluded his first epistle, writing, 'And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.'²¹

17 1Jn 4:1-3

21 1Jn 5:20

18 Joh 16:13. Joh 7:17.
1Co 2:12-13

19 Joh 17:3

20 2Ti 1:10-12

Do not say in your heart

In his letter to the Romans, Paul summarised two common and significant alternatives to turning our face to the face of Christ. He wrote, ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).’²² To understand how these responses serve as veils upon the eyes of a believer’s heart, it is helpful to consider what happens when a person first receives the light of life.

A person in whom the seed of the Father has germinated will begin to experience suffering ‘because of the word’.²³ Paul noted this principle when he wrote, ‘Recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated [i.e. after the seed germinated in your heart and you were born from above], you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated’.²⁴ Paul was drawing attention to the nature of the travail through which Christ is formed in the heart of a believer.²⁵ Christ’s sufferings were a travail. When a person receives the word of the gospel of sonship and is born of God, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ’s travail. It is through His travail that Christ is formed in their life.

Because of the suffering associated with this travail, the new believer may become weary, and even depressed. Under the pressures that they are experiencing, they may be tempted to seek an *alternative* way to the narrow and difficult pathway of sonship that Christ has pioneered for them. This is what it means to draw back in unbelief. Paul reminded his readers of the words of Jesus, who said, ‘But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’²⁶

A person who draws back from the travail and process through which Christ is being formed within them will have no access to the life of Christ that is available in the fellowship of His sufferings. Furthermore, they will begin to isolate themselves from their brethren in the body of Christ. A believer’s withdrawal from fellowship in the body of Christ, and their unwillingness to join the sufferings of Christ, demonstrate that they are not discerning the elements of the communion. Paul explained that a person’s failure to rightly judge the elements of the body and blood of Christ brings them under the judgement of God. He said that it is for this reason that many are weak, sick and even die before their time.²⁷ Unless they find

22 Rom 10:6-7

26 Heb 10:38

23 Mat 13:21

27 1Co 11:29-30

24 Heb 10:32-33

25 Gal 4:19

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repentance, they will proceed to destruction. The imagery of stony ground that Jesus described in the parable of the sower and the seed teaches us this principle.²⁸

A person who asks, ‘Who will ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above)’ is seeking an alternative to the pathway of sonship. They want a clergy-style leader to ‘ascend into heaven’ on their behalf and bring Christ down to them through doctrinal prescription or patriarchy. In return for their allegiance to the leader and their ministry, the believer assumes that they will be acceptable to God. Their loyalty to the leader becomes a substitute for their own accountability to live as a son of God and to be joined to the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

The outcome of receiving, believing and obeying the word of God should be accountable living. A son of God who lives by the proceeding word that is proclaimed by graced messengers will be illuminated regarding the implications of the word for their life. Furthermore, they will be committed to a fellowship in one Spirit with the Lord and their brethren.²⁹ Only the word that proceeds as light from a functioning presbytery is able to join a believer to the fellowship of the Father and the Son. The word of God that brings illumination does not proceed from independent leadership figures.

A person who asks, ‘Who will descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)’ is seeking to be delivered from their suffering, from their weakness, and from their condemnation, through a miraculous ministry of the Spirit of God. It is clear that they have no faith for participation in the sufferings of Christ. They do not understand that the Spirit has been given to them to help them to join the travail of Christ, through which they are brought to glory as a son of God.

Repentance

A person can receive illumination *if they turn to the Lord*. God is shining upon them as His word is being proclaimed to them. However, they must turn to Him to receive the light. Paul said that ‘when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away’.³⁰ It is the veil upon the face of a person that hinders the light coming to them. We have the opportunity to remove the veil and turn to the light. This is called ‘repentance from dead works’.³¹

If a person desires to know the doctrine of Christ, which is the way of sonship that He has authored, God will reveal it to them through the Spirit.³² For this reason, a

28 Mar 4:16-17

32 Joh 7:16-18

29 1Jn 1:1-3

30 2Co 3:16

31 Heb 6:1

believer needs to continue to set their mind on the Spirit. We do this by praying in the Spirit and accepting that we are to suffer with Christ. Those who suffer with Christ are the sons of God, and the divine nature is being formed in them.³³

Illumination in the breaking of the bread

The interaction of Jesus with Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus provides helpful instruction regarding the way of illumination. These two men were travelling away from Jerusalem following Christ's crucifixion. As they walked, they were discussing the events that had just taken place. Jesus *approached* them and began to travel *with them*; however, their eyes were prevented from recognising Him.³⁴ They were sad, even depressed, because they viewed Christ's crucifixion as the disappointment of their hope.³⁵ They said to Jesus, 'The chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.'³⁶

The inability of Cleopas and his friend to see the risen Son of God demonstrated that a veil lay over their hearts. This veil represented their own expectations regarding the ministry of Christ and their attempts, together, to make sense of, or rationalise, what had happened. In other words, they had their own gospel concerning the work of the Messiah. The impact of this veil upon them was that their hope had been deferred and their hearts were becoming sick with depression.³⁷ Furthermore, they were unable to perceive that which was spiritual, namely Jesus.

Jesus noted their condition and said to them, 'Foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?'³⁸ Then, beginning with Moses and the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures. The impact of Jesus' explanation was that their hearts burned within them.³⁹ This was the evidence that their minds were being opened to perceive something beyond their own comprehension or opinions regarding the meaning of the Scriptures. This is amazing, yet they were still unable to recognise Jesus.

As they supped together, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. It was then that their eyes were opened and they were able to recognise 'the Lord'.⁴⁰ Christ was ministering to them as Melchizedek, the Priest of God

33 Rom 8:17

37 Pro 13:12

34 Luk 24:15-16

38 Luk 24:25-26

35 Luk 24:17,21

39 Luk 24:32

36 Luk 24:20-21

40 Luk 24:30-31,34

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Most High. He was made known to them as He ministered His life to them in the elements of the communion.

The way of illumination is the same for us. Our hearts will burn within us as we receive the word that is ministered by graced messengers. However, this should lead us to the communion, where we eat and drink in faith for participation in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we partake of His life, we are illuminated concerning our sonship. We know that we are sons of God because we know Christ and the Father who sent Him.⁴¹ Moreover, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God.⁴² This is the assurance of eternal life.⁴³

There is a travail and fight of affliction that results from illumination. As Paul observed, 'After you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings'.⁴⁴ This travail joins us to the sufferings that belong to Christ's offering, so that the divine nature can be formed within us. Paul explained this when he wrote that we are 'heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *if indeed we suffer with Him* [in order] that we may also be glorified with Him'.⁴⁵ This is what it means for the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to be a participation, or fellowship.

Prayer is a fundamental element of this travail. The Holy Spirit enables us to participate in the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ Through this fellowship of prayer, and our ongoing participation in the sufferings that belong to Christ's offering, all things are working together for our good.⁴⁷ We are able to see and fulfil the purpose of the Lord for our life as we go through the valley of suffering and death. Like King David, we do not fear evil in these times.⁴⁸ Let's consider this further.

Faith to travail

A believer who has received the faith of the Son will testify that '*we are not* of those *who draw back* to perdition [destruction], but of those who believe to the *saving of the soul*'.⁴⁹ 'The saving of the soul' speaks of the process through which a believer is being transformed as a spiritual son of God from glory to glory.⁵⁰ As sons of God receive the word of faith that is preached to them, they are illuminated by the Spirit. The word, then, is in their mouth and in their heart.⁵¹ Sons of God are not seeking for someone to ascend into heaven or to descend into the abyss, on their behalf.

41 Joh 17:3

42 Rom 8:16

43 1Jn 5:11-13

44 Heb 10:32

45 Rom 8:17

46 Rom 8:26-27

47 Rom 8:28

48 Psa 23:4

49 Heb 10:39

50 2Co 3:18

51 Rom 10:8

Illumination joins a believer to the sufferings of Christ. A person who has received the faith of the Son of God accepts that they have been given a participation in the sufferings of Christ. This is for their benefit. They understand that those who suffer in the flesh cease from sin.⁵² They know that, as they are conformed to the likeness of Christ's death, they will also be found in the likeness of His resurrection.⁵³ Resurrection life is the life that is in Christ's blood, even though it has been poured out. It gives a person the capacity to endure in the midst of suffering. It also gives them the capacity to be the son of God that the Father named them to be. This is what it means for Christ to live in them, and for them to live by the faith of the Son of God.⁵⁴

Because of sin, the whole world is in travail. It is groaning, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God.⁵⁵ The earth is full of pain and suffering because it has been made subject to the conditions of time and chance. A person who has been born of the Spirit and then baptised into Christ is no longer subject to time and chance. They still experience the groanings that result from suffering. However, because they have received the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit, their groanings are no longer an expression of hopelessness, pain and despair. It is the expression of a son of God who is joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. Having been joined to the offering of Christ, sons of God recognise that their sufferings are 'momentary and light afflictions'. These sufferings are working for them an eternal weight of glory.⁵⁶

The Spirit helps us by making our groanings a prayer. They become an intercession for us to the Son - an intercession that is too deep for words. The Son Himself hears our prayer as He searches our heart. Through His own intercession as our High Priest, He then articulates our needs to the Father. Most often, in our distress, we don't know how to pray. However, the outcome of the Spirit and the Son's intercession is that everything we experience each day is contained within its limits by the Father, and is according to His will for our lives. All things, therefore, are working together for our good as sons of God.⁵⁷

Falling away

It is extraordinary to consider that a person who has been born from above could turn and fall away from the high calling of sonship. However, the apostle Paul lamented that, by the end of his ministry, this very thing had happened in the

52 1Pe 4:1

56 2Co 4:17

53 Rom 6:5

57 Rom 8:26-28

54 Gal 2:20

55 Rom 8:22

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churches throughout Asia. He said to Timothy that ‘all who are in Asia turned away from me’.⁵⁸ Although, initially, they had all been born of the Spirit as new creation sons of God, they had turned away from the messenger and his message.

Why did these churches fall away? It was because they began to believe a gospel other than the one that Paul was delivering to them. This alternative gospel was not the gospel of sonship. The Galatian church epitomised this decline. Paul admonished the Christians in Galatia for seeking to be perfected through fleshly principles rather than by continuing to live and walk in the Spirit.

Tellingly, their affections for Paul had waned, and they had begun to withdraw from the ‘first love’ fellowship that he had established with them. Paul reminded them that, when he first preached the gospel of sonship to them, they had received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. He noted that they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him, such was their affection for him.⁵⁹

Paul also needed to call the Christians in Corinth back to the simplicity and purity of fellowship that is in Christ.⁶⁰ Their departure from the gospel of sonship was evident in their cultural degeneration. Paul noted the strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances, impurity, immorality and sensuality that were among them.⁶¹ And yet, because they came behind in no gift, they expected Paul to demonstrate his authority to speak to them through the manifestation of signs. However, Paul explained that *he* was speaking to them *in Christ*.⁶² As he came in the weakness of Christ, the life and power of God was effective towards them.⁶³ He challenged them to prove that Christ was in them by joining and continuing in the fellowship of Christ’s offering with him.⁶⁴ We will develop this point further in chapter eight.

It is no surprise that the gospel of sonship is being restored to Christ’s church as leaders join the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings. Paul had suffered many things to lay the foundation of the gospel, and the administration for its proclamation.⁶⁵ Likewise, those who are building on this foundation are doing so in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and suffering.

58 2Ti 1:15

59 Gal 4:13-15

60 2Co 11:3

61 2Co 12:20-21

62 2Co 12:19

63 2Co 13:3-4

64 2Co 13:5

65 2Co 11:22-29.
1Co 3:10

CHAPTER 3

The God of all grace

The apostle Peter wrote that it is ‘the God of all grace’ who called us to His eternal glory.¹ The grace of God is so much more than God’s willingness to forgive us for our sins. It is far more than the help that He gives to believers who are feeling weak. As we will consider in this chapter, grace is the fullness of God’s own life that He wants every person to receive, and then express, as a son of God. This is what it means to be called as a son of God to His eternal glory.

A son of God is born of God. Just as a natural child receives the life of their natural parents, a person who is born again from above receives the life of God. To truly appreciate what this means, and the implications for how a son of God lives, we need to understand who God is and how He makes His life available to us. King David called this ‘the secret of the Lord’. He wrote, ‘The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant’.²

1 1Pe 5:10

2 Psa 25:14

The revelation of God (Elohim) – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – as Yahweh

God (Elohim) the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three Persons who are, and who possess together, the substance of one Spirit and one life (Gr. *zoe*). They exist and express themselves as one God, by offering. What is the nature of Their offering? Each Person in the Godhead lays down His life to reveal the other two, and the other two lay down Their lives to reveal the one. This demonstrates that there is no self-centredness in God (Elohim). If each Person was seeking to reveal themselves, then Their end would be in Themselves.

As each one, in turn, lays down His life to reveal the other two, and the two reveal the one, Their offering is so complete that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. In other words, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are fully manifest as one God, whose name is Yahweh. As Moses declared to Israel, ‘The Lord our God, the Lord [Yahweh] is one!’³ God said to Moses that ‘Yahweh’ is His memorial name to all generations.⁴ He is Lord of all.

Offering is the means by which the grace of God, and all of Yahweh’s attributes, are revealed. Let us first consider the grace of God. The apostle Paul explained that, in Christ, the *fullness of the Godhead* dwells in bodily form.⁵ The apostle John taught that Christ is *‘full of grace and truth’*, and also described the fullness that we receive from Christ as *‘grace for grace’*.⁶ This means that grace is the fullness of God who is Yahweh. When the Scriptures reveal that God is word, life, Spirit and love, they are describing dimensions of God’s grace that are revealed, multiplied, and given, by offering.

Let us now consider the manifestation of the attributes or capacities of Elohim, which are also revealed through offering. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the sum of all wisdom and diversity. By offering, They multiply and reveal Their capacities together in one Spirit and life as Yahweh. These attributes are expressed in omniscience (all knowing), omnipotence (all, or unlimited, power), omnipresence (present everywhere), and so on. While these Greek concepts provide some explanation of the attributes of God, the Scriptures themselves more fully reveal the attributes of God through variations of the name ‘Yahweh’. For example, Yahweh-Yireh means ‘The Lord Will Provide’; Yahweh-Shalom means ‘The Lord is Peace’; and Yahweh-Sabaoth means ‘The Lord of Hosts’.

3 Deu 6:4

4 Exo 3:15

5 Col 2:9

6 Joh 1:14,16

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The life of offering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit establishes that *God is love*. He is revealed in the giving of Himself without reservation or limit. Their love is seen in all its diversity through Their capacity, by offering, not only to reveal one another, but also to empty Themselves to a beginning and bring forth new creation.

We are exhorted by the apostle John to behold the nature of God's love by which we are called to be sons of God.⁷ In love, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit covenanted together to make man in Their image and likeness.⁸ Sons of God would be created and then birthed in the image and likeness of God, and given a place in Their fellowship. They would become one Spirit with Yahweh and receive of the one life of Yahweh. This would enable each person to be unique in identity and expression as a son of God in the fellowship of Yahweh. Anything less than this predestination for the sons of God would not have been the expression of God's love. This is because God's love is revealed through the perfect giving of Himself without reservation or limit.

Yahweh reveals Himself to the sons of men by declaring 'I AM'. He does this by offering. When Moses turned to see the great light of the burning bush, God called him and spoke to him concerning the works that he was to do. In response to Moses' desire to know who was speaking to him, God revealed His name as I AM from the burning bush.⁹ The burning bush represented the fire of offering. God was saying, 'I AM here to make Myself known to you, by offering, so that you may join Us in the fellowship of Yahweh'.

Why does God reveal Himself as I AM? It is because, as I AM, He is able to meet us and be met by us. Without this initiative of Yahweh to make Himself known to us by revelation, it is impossible for man, who is a finite creature, to know and understand who God is. As we receive Him as I AM, we are able to perceive and receive all that He is as Yahweh.¹⁰

The proclamation of the name of God in Christ revealed that the fullness of the Godhead is in bodily form.¹¹ Jesus Christ, who is also the Word of God, makes Himself known to us as the full revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He does this by saying, 'I AM'.¹² He means that He is the full revelation and expression of Yahweh in the flesh. Jesus said that we would know that He is I AM when He was lifted up as an offering to be crucified on the cross.¹³ He invites us to behold His glory, which is the full revelation of grace and truth.¹⁴ This glory shines from

7 IJn 3:1

8 Gen 1:26

9 Exo3:4-15

10 Eph 3:19

11 Php 2:9.

Eph 1:21-23.
Col 2:9-10

12 Joh 1:1,14.

Joh 8:28,58

13 Joh 8:28

14 Joh 1:14

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His face, which was marred as a consequence of the sufferings He experienced as He offered Himself.¹⁵

As we behold Christ's glory, we receive the substance of who He is, and are born again as sons of God.¹⁶ He then invites us into the fellowship of Yahweh so that we can join the fellowship of Their offering. Christ is the door to the fellowship of Yahweh.¹⁷ When we are baptised into Christ, we are given the privilege of joining the fellowship of Their offering so that we can grow up in Christ and be made complete as sons of God in Him.¹⁸

Receiving the glory of God's grace

Stephen the deacon commenced his gospel message to the Jewish council by stating that the *God of glory* appeared to Abraham to give to him the four elements of the grace of God.¹⁹ As we will detail further in this chapter, these four elements of grace are word, life/light, love and Spirit. They are the four elements of God's corporate identity. Receiving God's grace would make Abraham 'of God'. Indeed, this was the very thing that was being promised to him. God blessed Abraham with the promise that he and his children would be born of the Spirit and partake of the divine nature.²⁰

Why is it significant that it was 'the God of glory' who appeared to 'the father of all who believe'?²¹ The glory of God is the expression and revelation of who God is, and what He does as I AM. The Son received this glory from the Father when the Father brought Him forth as His Son by His word – 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'.²² The Son received the Father's glory *through a birthing process*. The glory of the Son was revealing what it means to be 'of God'. It is notable that Paul called this glory, 'the glory of His grace'.²³ It means that glory is the expression of the fullness of God, which is His grace.

In the same way that the Son received the glory of God's grace when He was begotten as the Son of God, a person's birth as a spiritual son of God *also* depends upon receiving the glory of sonship. This is the glory that the Son received. Paul taught that this glory of sonship is shone from the face of Christ into a believer's heart by the Holy Spirit.²⁴ The word is proclaimed to them, and carries within it the four dimensions of God's grace.

15 2Co 4:6

16 Joh 1:12,14,16

17 Joh 10:9

18 Eph 4:15-16.
Col 2:10

19 Act 7:2

20 Gal 3:14. Joh 3:5-6. 2Pe 1:4

21 Rom 4:11. Gal 3:7

22 Heb 5:5

23 Eph 1:6

24 2Co 4:6. 2Co 3:18

The first effect of this word of grace upon the hearer is that they are able to behold the glory of sonship, and to begin to lay hold of it as the promised blessing of God. The capacity to behold the glory of sonship is described in the Scriptures as a 'blessing'.²⁵ It is the blessing of illumination that comes by the Spirit so that we can see and take hold of what God wants to give to us.

Sons and daughters of men receive the glory of God from the Father when they are born again as sons and daughters of God. The life and nature of their sonship is given to them by the Son when they join Him, through baptism, in the fellowship of His offering. The expression of their sonship is from the initiative of the Holy Spirit. Once they are born again, the Holy Spirit sanctifies them and equips them for the expression of their sonship. That is, He enables them to progressively become the person whom the Father birthed and named them to be. This is what it means to be 'glorified' as a son of God.²⁶

The mortal bodies of believers become a temple of the Holy Spirit when He is given to them by the Father.²⁷ Also, their bodies are made members of Christ's corporate body, the church. The limitations of their mortality confine Christians to manifesting only a firstfruits of their sonship in this world. On the day of resurrection, when mortality is put off and immortality is put on, the resurrection body will become their body of glory – the full expression of all that they will ever be.²⁸ It will be a spiritual body.²⁹ The Holy Spirit dwelling in them will motivate them as they minister and fellowship without limit in the new heavens and new earth.

Receiving of His fullness

When Jesus came in the flesh, He revealed the sonship that we were predestined to receive through the process of being born from above. Not only did He manifest this new creation sonship, but He also authored the pathway upon which a person could be transformed into the image of His sonship. Paul explained that 'it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author [pioneer, trailblazer] of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.'³⁰

25 Luk 10:23.
Mat 16:17

27 1Co 6:19.
Joh 14:16-17

26 Heb 2:10.
2Co 3:17-18

28 1Co 15:43,53

29 1Co 15:44

30 Heb 2:10-11

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The apostle John summarised this process of becoming a son of God by saying that ‘of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace’.³¹ To understand the new birth, we must therefore consider what the fullness of Christ is, and how we receive this fullness. Clearly, the grace of God is fundamental to this process.

The writings of the apostle John

Of the four Gospel writers, only Luke and John refer to ‘grace’ (Gr. *charis*). Although Luke used ‘*charis*’ eight times in his gospel, it is only translated once as ‘grace’. Luke recorded that Joseph and Mary had circumcised Jesus on the eighth day, and then presented Him to the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem. ‘So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the *grace of God* was upon Him.’³²

The apostle John addressed the subject of grace in the opening verses of his Gospel. He then developed this content throughout the rest of the book, as well as in his three letters. While John’s writings on the subject of grace are highly integrated, they are also wholly consistent with the teachings of Paul, Peter, and James, who also addressed this subject.

It is widely accepted that John wrote his Gospel and letters after he had received the Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is significant for at least two reasons. First, his writings were the last statements of the Scripture and were therefore the most advanced and well-developed statements of the gospel message. Second, they were written in the light of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which foretold the events of the time of the end, and included the letters that Christ had written to His own churches to prepare them for His coming at the end of the age.³³

The glory of sonship

The Gospel of John opens with the statement, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’.³⁴ John was explaining how God’s covenant plan to create and bring to glory a multitude of sons of God proceeded from the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. ‘The Word was with God’ when the Son emptied Himself, was begotten by the Father, and

31 Joh 1:16

32 Luk 2:39-40

33 Rev 1-3

34 Joh 1:1

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received the fullness of God. As the Word, He had become the expression of Their fullness as well as the means through which Their purpose would come to pass.

Explaining further, John said that the life of God – all that He is – is in the Word. This is how it was communicated, or shared, from Their covenant fellowship. The Word became flesh and dwelt among men when the Son of God was born to the virgin Mary. The life of God was now in the flesh of a man. Men and women, among whom He dwelt, were able to behold the glory of *a new and unique kind of humanity*.

From the womb, Jesus Christ was a unique son of man because He was *full of grace and truth*.³⁵ The Son of God had been conceived in the womb of Mary as the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Most High (the Father) overshadowed her.³⁶ Jesus was full of grace because He had been born of the Father, whom the apostle Peter referred to as ‘the God of all grace’.³⁷ The grace of God was also upon Jesus after His parents had performed all that was required of them by law concerning the Child.³⁸ Jesus was full of truth because He had been conceived of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The apostle John explained that ‘the Spirit is truth’.⁴⁰ Jesus also received the anointing of the Spirit of God, by the Holy Spirit, when He was baptised by John the Baptist.⁴¹

To be full of grace and truth was to be ‘of God’. Jesus was unique because He was the first Person to be born of God. He was a new creation; a truly spiritual son of God in a mortal body. Paul explained that Christ had come as the last Adam. We all received our natural identity through the fatherhood of the first Adam, who was a living soul. Christ was ‘the last Adam’. He came as a life-giving spirit so that, through the fatherhood that comes through Christ, we would be made spiritual as He is spiritual.⁴²

It was never God’s intention that Christ would remain as the only One of His kind. He was the Firstborn of many sons who were predestined to be made like Him.⁴³ Through a birthing process, the sons of men are born again, as sons of God, in the image of the Son of God. We know this because John wrote, ‘*Of His fullness [grace and truth] we have all received, and grace for grace*’.⁴⁴ Furthermore, John explained that ‘as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’.⁴⁵

35 Joh 1:14

36 Luk 1:35

37 1Pe 5:10

38 Luk 2:40

39 Mat 1:18,20

40 1Jn 5:6

41 Mat 3:16.

Luk 3:22. Joh 1:32

42 1Co 15:45-49

43 Rom 8:29

44 Joh 1:16

45 Joh 1:12-13

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The Son had come in the flesh to reveal the *glory* of the sonship that the Father had predestined for all the sons of men.⁴⁶ He had received this glory from the Father.⁴⁷ This was for the purpose that we would behold the glory of sonship from His face, and begin the process of being born anew as a spiritual son of God.⁴⁸

Four dimensions of grace

Before we consider how we behold the glory of sonship, and its impact upon us, it is important to understand what it meant for the Son to be 'full of grace'. The apostle Paul described the Son of Man's fullness as 'all the fullness of Deity [the Godhead] dwelling in bodily form'.⁴⁹ We note, therefore, that 'grace' is the fullness of the Godhead.

As we considered earlier, the Godhead is three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who are one Spirit and one life. Their name, Yahweh, communicates the reality that They are fully one.⁵⁰ The Scriptures use the term 'seven Spirits' to describe or communicate Their fullness as one Spirit.⁵¹

The apostle John taught that Yahweh (who is one God) is word, life/light, love, and Spirit. Specifically, he stated that:

- God is word⁵²
- God is life and light⁵³
- God is love⁵⁴
- God is Spirit.⁵⁵

These four statements are not merely descriptions of what God is like. They are the four elements of Elohim's *corporate identity* as Yahweh. This is His fullness. They are, therefore, four dimensions of the *grace of God*. God's grace is not separate from Himself. God's grace is who He is.

The Greek word that is translated 'grace' in the Scriptures is *charis*. This word means 'favour' or 'gift'. The unmerited favour of God is by no means limited to the reconciliation that was achieved through the offering of the Son while we were yet enemies of God.⁵⁶ The favour of God was revealed in His covenant desire to create and bring to glory many sons.⁵⁷ This favour was declared and provided for *before* the heavens and the earth were even created.⁵⁸ God's favour is realised

46 Rom 8:29.
Joh 17:1,4

47 Joh 17:24

48 2Co 4:6

49 Col 2:9

50 Deu 6:4

51 Rev 5:6

52 Joh 1:1

53 Joh 1:5. 1Jn 1:5

54 1Jn 4:16

55 Joh 4:24

56 Rom 5:10

57 Gen 1:26. Heb 2:10

58 Joh 17:24. Eph 1:4

because His love, word, life and Spirit are given to us by the Spirit, and result in our transformation in glory from one degree of sonship to another, into the image of the Son.

The four faces of Christ

How does a person behold the glory of sonship and begin to receive Christ's fullness? Paul taught that it is from the face of Jesus Christ. He wrote, 'For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God *in the face of Christ*.'⁵⁹ More specifically, it is the *glory of God's grace* that shines from the face of Christ.⁶⁰

Just as there are four dimensions of the glory of God's grace, there are four corresponding dimensions of Christ's face. These four faces are an administration of the Son, through which the four dimensions of God's grace are expressed. They include the face of a lion, the face of an ox/calf, the face of a man, and the face of an eagle. Later in this book we will discuss the details and implications of these faces and their expression of grace in more detail. However, we can summarise their association in this way:

- the priority of the face of the lion is Spirit
- the priority of the face of the ox is Yahweh's life
- the priority of the face of the man is the word
- the priority of the face of the eagle is the love of God.

As we begin to understand the four faces, their operation becomes readily apparent throughout Scripture. For example, we recognise the four faces of Christ in the four primary encounters that Abraham had with the Lord as he received the gospel of sonship that the Lord was preaching to him.⁶¹ The four faces are particularly notable in the ministry of Moses and in the administrations that he established within the nation of Israel under the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant, they are readily evident as the four ascension gift ministries in the body of Christ. Recognising these four faces and their specific ministry of grace has profound implications for how we read the Scriptures and understand God's purpose for us, and how He is bringing His purpose to pass.

59 2Co 4:6 Gen 17:1-11.

60 Eph 1:6 Gal 3:8

61 Gen 12:1-3.
Gen 14:18-20.
Gen 15:1-21.

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The first *specific* mention of these four faces is in the book of Ezekiel. The prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of four living creatures. Each creature had the face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle.⁶² The four living creatures represented an angelic administration that was *under the throne*. Notably, in his vision, Ezekiel saw a figure with the appearance of a man on the throne.⁶³ This was a pre-incarnate revelation of the Son of God, and demonstrated that the four living creatures were expressing what was proceeding from Him who was on the throne.

The second specific scriptural reference concerning these four administrations is in the book of Revelation. John observed four living creatures – a lion, an ox, a man and an eagle – that were in the *midst of the throne and around the throne*.⁶⁴ The living creatures were full of eyes around them and within them. Day and night they do not cease to proclaim, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come.’⁶⁵ Evidently, they are completely engaged in the work of revealing the fullness of Yahweh who is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ – the One who was, who is and who is to come.⁶⁶

In contrast to the angelic administration that was under the throne, the living creatures in the Revelation scene are in the midst of the throne and around the throne. Paul reminded his readers that the Father has raised up the sons of God and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.⁶⁷ This is far above the principalities and powers of the angelic realm.⁶⁸ Evidently, these living creatures are an administration of Christ, consisting of sons of God. The imagery of eyes that are around them and within them conveys the point that these are people who are full of illumination by the Spirit of God.

More specifically, this picture of the four living creatures in and around the throne represents the four ministry graces that Christ has given to His church for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. In summary, we note:

- *The face of the lion* represents the ministry of ascension gift apostles. Apostles receive the authority of Christ’s kingship to oversee the administrations of the body of Christ and to shepherd the Lord’s flock. They oversee the church as bondslaves of Christ.
- *The face of the calf* represents the ministry of ascension gift prophets. Prophets illuminate the word of present truth so that it is a lamp to the feet, and a

62 Eze 1:10

63 Eze 1:22,26

64 Rev 4:6

65 Rev 4:8

66 Rev 1:8. Col 2:9

67 Eph 2:6

68 Eph 1:21

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light to the path, of every believer. Their ministry calls every son of God, as a priest, to present their body as a living sacrifice in order to prove the will of God by offering.

- *The face of the man* represents the ministry of ascension gift teachers. Teachers make disciples through the articulation of the word of present truth. The outcome of teaching is that disciples find rest for their souls, and are able to disciple others.
- *The face of the eagle* represents the ministry of ascension gift evangelists. Evangelists preach and proclaim the gospel of sonship that has been laid down in the presbytery by apostles. Their work is to establish identity and headship so that the divine nature can be established and revealed from every house by fatherhood and motherhood, and fostered by an administration of eldership.

In the chapters that follow, we will consider the operation of these four faces as they function to bring to pass the covenant will of God. The evidence of receiving the grace that comes from the Lord through these four administrations is that a believer stands in and expresses the grace of God as a son. This has implications for every aspect of our Christian life, including the capacity to multiply grace in and beyond our houses.

CHAPTER 4

The gospel preached to Abraham

The apostle Paul was appointed by the Lord as an apostle to the Gentiles.¹ The Lord commanded him, saying, 'I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'² Paul received the gospel that he preached in every place, directly from Jesus Christ. It was the same gospel that Christ had preached during His earthly ministry. It was the gospel of sonship. Paul recognised that the gospel that he had received from Christ and preached among all the Gentile nations had first been preached to Abraham.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul said that 'the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham'. When Paul referred to the Scripture, he meant the word of the Everlasting Covenant that was forever settled in the heavens before the foundation of the

1 Act 22:21

2 Act 13:47

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world.³ The word is the foreknown and immutable counsel of God, from which all the prophecy of Scripture has been written.⁴ Even though the written Scriptures had not yet been recorded, Christ, who is the full revelation of the word of God, preached the gospel of sonship to Abraham. He proclaimed, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.'⁵

Paul continued by saying that those who are 'of faith are blessed with Abraham the believer'.⁶ He defined the blessing of Abraham that is available to all believers in Christ as the promise of the Spirit.⁷ This promise is fulfilled in the life of a believer when they are born again as a son of God. During the process of new birth, a believer will receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son.⁸ All three Members of the Godhead are integrally involved in the birthing process, and come, personally, to take up residence in the heart of a son of God.

The gospel preached to Abraham is the gospel of sonship that must be preached in all nations. Every believer is called to receive the same faith that Abraham received, and to walk in the same steps of faith that he walked as the father of all who believe.⁹ The gospel that was preached to Abraham has significant implications for every individual son of God, but it also has significant implications for how sonship is received and appropriated in every covenant household.

The glory in the face of Christ

The book of Genesis recorded that the Son of God appeared to Abraham on a number of occasions. Stephen referred to the first of these interactions when he said that 'the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia'.¹⁰ 'The God of glory' is one of the many names that belongs to the Son of God. He is the full revelation and manifestation of the glory of the Father. The apostle John declared, concerning Jesus Christ, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and *we beheld His glory*, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'¹¹

At the conclusion of Stephen's sermon on the relationship between the God of glory and the nation of Israel throughout its history, he looked into the heavenly places and beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus, who was standing at the right hand of God.¹² In this same way, every Christian must behold the glory of the Son of God by illumination. When John declared that Christ is 'full of grace', he

3	Psa 119:89	7	Gal 3:14	11	Joh 1:14
4	2Pe 1:20-21. Rom 9:17	8	Joh 14:16-17,23. Eph 3:17	12	Act 7:55-56
5	Gal 3:8	9	Rom 4:12,16		
6	Gal 3:9	10	Act 7:2		

was referring to the four dimensions of grace that belong to Yahweh – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Scriptures teach us that God is Spirit, God is life/light, God is word, and God is love.¹³ These four dimensions of grace are fully revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, who is full of grace and truth.

As we discussed in our previous chapter on ‘The God of all grace’, the Scriptures use the symbolism of *four faces* to convey this important point.¹⁴ The face of the lion reveals the kingship of Christ, and the grace of Yahweh, who is Spirit. The face of the ox reveals the prophetic-priesthood of Christ, and the grace of Yahweh, who is Life and Light. The face of the man reveals Christ as the Teacher of the covenant, and the grace of Yahweh, who is Word. The face of the eagle reveals the fatherhood of God in Christ, and the grace of Yahweh, who is Love.

These four dimensions of the grace of Yahweh are ministered from the face of Jesus Christ into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul explained that ‘it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’.¹⁵ He likened the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the work of a ‘mirror’ that reflects and focuses the light that shines from the face of Christ into our hearts.¹⁶ Because of the effective ministry of the Holy Spirit, the apostle John could testify that we have beheld the glory of the Son of God and ‘of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace’.¹⁷

Overview of Christ appearing to Abraham

Our particular focus in this chapter is that the Son of God revealed these four dimensions of grace to Abraham *in four progressive stages*, when He appeared to him as the God of glory, Melchizedek, the Word of Yahweh, and God Almighty (*El-Shaddai*).¹⁸ The God of glory manifested the face of the lion to Abraham. Melchizedek manifested the face of the ox. The Word of Yahweh manifested the face of the man. And God Almighty manifested the face of the eagle to Abraham, his household, and all his descendants.

In these interactions, Christ gave the promise of becoming a son of God to Abraham by the promise of the Spirit, by the blessing of the life, by the covenant of the word, and then, to him and his household, by the process of circumcision and the inheritance of the name of God. We will observe that Abraham appropriated

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

14 Eze 1:10. Rev 4:7

15 2Co 4:6

16 2Co 3:18

17 Joh 1:16

18 Act 7:2. Gen 12:1.

Gen 14:18.

Gen 15:1. Gen 17:1

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the grace that he received from Christ in each of these interactions by becoming a king of kings by faith; a co-heir with Christ of all things in heaven and on earth by fellowship; a participant in the Everlasting Covenant by offering; and the father of a great multitude by the love of God and resurrection power.

By way of summary, in the first encounter, the God of glory manifested the face of the lion to Abram, and gave him the sevenfold promise of sonship and the Spirit.¹⁹ Abram began to appropriate the promises of God by becoming a king of kings by faith, because of the power of the Spirit of God upon him.²⁰

In the second encounter, Melchizedek manifested the face of the ox to Abram, and gave him the blessing of the life of Christ in the bread and the wine of the communion meal.²¹ This included Abram in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He appropriated the blessing of this life as a co-heir with Christ as both a son and priest, with a ministry in this life and in the age to come.

In the third encounter, the Word of Yahweh manifested the face of the man to Abram, and gave him the covenant of sonship.²² Abram understood that this covenant would be ratified and cut between Christ and all mankind by His offering on Calvary. He appropriated this covenant by receiving the faith of the Son of God to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

In the fourth encounter, God Almighty (*El-Shaddai*) manifested the face of the eagle to Abram. He gave him an inheritance in His name and established the covenant in his flesh by circumcision.²³ When the name of Yahweh was given to Abram as an inheritance, his name was changed to Abraham, which means 'the father of a multitude'.²⁴ In the name of Yahweh, he and his wife received the love of God and resurrection power to become the father and mother of a multitude of nations.²⁵

This inheritance was made sure to all generations and families of the earth because of the faith-obedience that Abraham demonstrated on Mount Moriah.²⁶ God confirmed and ratified the promises to him and all the families of the earth, by the word of the oath. He declared to Abraham, 'In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed because you have obeyed My voice.'²⁷

When a Christian has fully appropriated the blessing of Abraham in the New Covenant, they will be living by faith in the promises of God; living by the life of Christ as a son and priest in the kingdom of God; living and participating in the fellowship of the covenant by offering; and living in the fellowship of the name and

19 Gen 12:1-3

20 Gen 14:1-17

21 Gen 14:18-20

22 Gen 15

23 Gen 17

24 Gen 17:5

25 Rom 4:19-20.
Heb 11:11-12

26 Gen 22

27 Gen 22:18

love of God as a firstfruits son of God. This should be true for every individual son of God and every covenant house. When a child is conceived in a covenant house that possesses the blessing of Abraham, the child is brought forth as a son of God who has already been blessed with the inheritance of the divine nature.²⁸

The God of glory - the promise of sonship

We will now consider these stages in more detail. The first interaction between Christ and Abram is recorded in Genesis chapter twelve. In this interaction, Christ appeared to Abram as the God of glory, and gave him a sevenfold promise. He said, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and so you shall be a blessing, and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'²⁹

This sevenfold promise contained all the blessings that God had predestined for mankind to receive from His grace. When Christ gave Abram this sevenfold promise, He also gave him the grace of the Spirit of God. This was the outcome of the ministry of the face of the lion toward him. The Spirit of God upon him gave him illumination and power. He was able to lift up his eyes and behold, by illumination, the land that God had promised to give his descendants as an inheritance.³⁰ The Lord told him to walk the length and breadth of this land.³¹

Abram began to possess this land when he defeated the four kings who had conquered five other kings and taken his nephew captive. With only three hundred and eighteen of his own men, he pursued these four kings and their armies all the way from the plains of the Jordan in the south to Damascus in the north. He defeated them in one night. This superhuman feat was only possible because of the Spirit of God upon him.³²

When Melchizedek met Abram as he returned from this great victory, he confirmed that it was God who had delivered all of Abram's enemies into his hand.³³ This miraculous victory demonstrated that the promised land was Abram's inheritance and was going to be the possession of his descendants. No-one could touch him to do him harm because he was the inheritor of the promises of God. This was

28 Act 2:39. Gal 4:28. Isa 61:9. Isa 65:23. 1Co 7:14
29 Gen 12:1-3
30 Gen 13:14-16

31	Gen 13:17
32	Gen 14:1-16
33	Gen 14:20

the fulfilment of God's promise that He would make his name great. Abram had become the king of kings of the ancient world by faith.

Melchizedek - the blessing of sonship

The second interaction between the Son of God and Abram is recorded in the latter part of Genesis chapter fourteen. When Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, Christ met him as Melchizedek, who manifested the face of the ox to him.³⁴ When Yahweh the Son was begotten as the Son of God before the foundation of the world, the Father declared that He would be a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.³⁵ The writer to the Hebrews recorded that Melchizedek was 'without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the *Son of God*, He remains a priest perpetually'.³⁶

The ministry of Jesus Christ, as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, is to share His life with us by offering. Life that is multiplied and shared by offering is 'the power of an endless life'.³⁷ Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, which symbolised the life of Christ in His body and blood, and blessed Abram. Abram had already received the promises of God, and his name had been made great. In this encounter, Melchizedek blessed the one who already had the promises.³⁸ The blessing was the life of Christ in the fellowship of the communion meal. As he ate and drank with Melchizedek, Abram was given a participation in the life and fellowship of Yahweh. He was invited into a fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Becoming a co-heir with Christ

Melchizedek shared the bread and wine with Abram, and then prophesied, 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth'.³⁹ The statement 'possessor of heaven and earth' can and should be applied to both God Most High *and Abram*. We know that Abram recognised that God is the possessor of heaven and earth, because he paid Melchizedek a tithe of all the spoils that he had collected during his conquest of the four kings.⁴⁰ Later, he also testified to the king of Sodom that he had 'sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth'.⁴¹ It is easy for us to understand that God is the possessor of heaven and earth, but how could Melchizedek say this about Abram?

34 Gen 14:18-20

35 Psa 110:4. Heb 5:6.
Heb 6:20.
Heb 7:17,21

36 Heb 1:3

37 Heb 7:16

38 Heb 7:6

39 Gen 14:19

40 Heb 7:4

41 Gen 14:23

We can only imagine how startled Abram must have been to receive such a word from Melchizedek while he was eating the bread and wine. God had already promised him that he would possess the length and breadth of the promised land – from the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west.⁴² He had begun to miraculously inherit this promise and had become the king of kings in the ancient world by faith. Abram was able to comprehend how he could become the possessor of an inheritance in the earth, but how could he possibly become the possessor of an inheritance in the heavens?

It is important that we understand the full significance of this interaction between Christ and Abram. Jesus Christ, who is our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, is *the heir of all things* in heaven and on the earth.⁴³ As He brought out the bread and wine, Christ offered to *share His inheritance* with Abram in the fellowship of the communion meal. As Abram ate and drank in faith, he became a *co-heir* with Christ of everything that belongs to Him. This is also one of the elements that belongs to us as Christians, as we participate in the communion meal. The apostle Paul proclaimed that we are *joint heirs* with Christ if we continue to participate in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.⁴⁴

The possessor of heaven and earth

We'll now consider in a little more detail the nature of the inheritance that was promised to Abram. What did it mean for him to become the possessor of heaven and earth? As we consider this, it is helpful to remember that Abram was earthly and Melchizedek was heavenly. In his letter to the Hebrews, the writer declared that there is no dispute on this particular point – the lesser was blessed by the greater!⁴⁵ Abram was blessed because he was invited by Melchizedek to join the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the heavenly places, and to inherit the substance of everything that belongs to the Son of God, who is heavenly. With this in view, we can identify at least four dimensions of the *heavenly inheritance* that was promised to Abram.

The first dimension of the promise was that Abram would become the possessor of a *heavenly body*.⁴⁶ We know that he already possessed his identity and an earthly body as a descendant of Adam. In contrast to this, the Scripture is clear that Melchizedek did not receive his identity in the lineage of man.⁴⁷ He was Yahweh the Son who was begotten as the Son of God before the foundation of the world.⁴⁸ Even though He met Abram prior to his incarnation as the Son of Man, Christ

42 Gen 13:14-17

46 1Co 15:40.

43 Heb 1:2. Psa 2:7-8

Joh 14:1-3.
2Co 5:1-4

44 Rom 8:17.
Gal 3:29. Rev 21:7

47 Heb 7:3

45 Heb 7:7

48 Heb 5:5-6

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already possessed His heavenly body, which was *His glory* as the Son of God. He promised to share the substance of His life and glory with Abram, by offering, so that Abram and his descendants would bear this same image. Paul declared, 'The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven ... and as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.'⁴⁹

The second dimension of the promise was that Abram would be the father of an innumerable number of spiritual descendants who would populate the heavenly places. God had already promised Abram that his natural descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth.⁵⁰ However, soon after his meeting with Melchizedek, Christ also revealed to him that his spiritual descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven.⁵¹ This means that each of his spiritual descendants would be a citizen of heaven and possess a heavenly body. This heavenly body would carry within it the capacity for their own unique expression and glory as a son of God. We recall that Paul used the differing glory of the stars to illustrate that each son of God will have their own unique glory.⁵²

The third dimension of the promise was that Abram's spiritual descendants would possess a kingdom in the heavenly places. Abram had begun to possess an earthly kingdom in the promised land, but Christ revealed to him that he and his sons would enter and possess a heavenly kingdom.⁵³ His spiritual descendants would be a kingdom of sons of God who would also become priests to their God and Father. Abram understood that his descendants would be a kingdom of priests in the heavenly places. He also understood that Jesus Christ would rule this kingdom from His throne in the heavenly Jerusalem in this age, and from His throne in the New Jerusalem in the age to come.⁵⁴ After receiving Melchizedek's blessing, Abram 'lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city whose architect and builder is God'.⁵⁵

The fourth dimension of the promise was that Abram and his spiritual descendants would inherit the new heavens and new earth.⁵⁶ Also, as part of this promise, they would be given a body that would possess eternal spiritual attributes. It will be immortal and incorruptible.⁵⁷ Christ has promised that our resurrection body will be created from the dust by His word, and then clothed with the glory of our heavenly body, forming it into a spiritual body.⁵⁸ The apostle Paul taught, clearly,

49 1Co 15:47-49

50 Gen 13:16

51 Gen 15:5

52 1Co 15:41

53 Heb 11:16. 2Ti 4:18

54 Zec 6:13. Heb 8:1.

Heb 12:22-29.
Rev 21:1-2,5

55 Heb 11:9-10

56 Rev 21:1

57 1Co 15:53-54

58 Joh 5:28. Jer 22:29

that there is a natural body and there will also be a spiritual body.⁵⁹ Our spiritual body will be the same as Christ's resurrection body, which is both physical and spiritual.⁶⁰ It will be the body of our eternal expression as both sons of God and priests according to the order of Melchizedek.

When the apostle Paul declared that Abraham became 'the heir of the world' by faith, he was primarily referring to the world to come.⁶¹ In a parallel passage from his letter to the Hebrews, he explained that God will not put 'the world to come' in subjection to angels.⁶² However, He will subject the new heavens and earth to the spiritual descendants of Abraham. The new heavens and new earth will be administered from the New Jerusalem and will be the context for the priestly expression of a great multitude of sons of God.⁶³ The capacity by which this eternal and perpetual priesthood operates is the power of an endless life.⁶⁴ Through offering, there will be an everlasting increase of the life of God. Because of this increase, the righteousness of God will increase forever and ever.⁶⁵ Peter proclaimed, 'According to His promise, we look for a new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.'⁶⁶

The Word of Yahweh – the covenant of sonship

The third encounter between Christ and Abram is recorded in Genesis chapter fifteen. We read that *the Word of Yahweh* appeared to Abram in a vision. 'The Word of Yahweh' is a title that belongs to the Son of God. He is the Word who was 'in the beginning with God'.⁶⁷ The Son of God is our Teacher and the Messenger of the covenant.⁶⁸ In this interaction, Christ came to explain to Abram *how* he would inherit everything that had already been given to him in the fellowship of the communion meal. This was the manifestation of the glory of *the face of the man* to Abram.

Do not fear

The Word of Yahweh came to Abram and said, 'Do not [fear], Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward'.⁶⁹ In this way, the Lord identified three specific elements of the gospel that would be outcomes of Christ's ministerial work on the cross that would be given to Abraham and all of his descendants when received by faith.

59 1Co 15:44

60 Luk 24:39

61 Rom 4:13

62 Heb 2:5

63 Rev 21. Rev 22:3

64 Heb 7:16

65 Isa 9:7

66 2Pe 3:13

67 Joh 1:1-2

68 Isa 30:20. Mal 3:1

69 Gen 15:1

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He began by addressing Abram's humanity, in order to deliver him from anxiety and fear. What was the nature of Abram's fear? It is unlikely that Abram was gripped by the fear of man or the fear of physical death. He had just returned from one of the most amazing military conquests in history. He had become the king of kings of the ancient world, yet his heart was gripped by fear and depression.⁷⁰

The source of Abram's depression was his inability, through the strength of his own flesh, to lay hold of what Melchizedek had given to him in the fellowship of the bread and wine.⁷¹ He didn't even have the capacity to *believe* that such a high calling was possible for him to inherit. Abram also knew that he and his wife were incapable of having children.⁷² How could he, then, possibly believe that he would become the father of natural descendants, not to mention becoming the father of a great multitude of spiritual sons who would also be sons of God. The seemingly unbridgeable gap between the Lord's high and lofty calling and the reality of his situation led him to depression.

The Lord addressed Abram's depression with a simple command, 'Do not fear.'⁷³ When Abram received this command and turned to the Lord in the vanity of his position, the veil of his fear and depression was removed from his heart at the Lord's request.⁷⁴ Once Abram began to look to the Lord, as someone who was bankrupt in spirit, the Word of Yahweh took him outside and told him to look into the heavens.⁷⁵ When Abram obeyed this command, he was able to look into the heavenly places and see, by revelation, a great multitude of sons of God who were as innumerable as the stars of heaven.⁷⁶ Even though Abram could not count the number of them, he nevertheless understood that God had predestined and called every one of these sons of God by name.⁷⁷

I am your shield

Following this revelation, Abram 'believed in the Lord [Yahweh], and He reckoned it to him as righteousness'.⁷⁸ Abram was able to believe because He received the faith of Yahweh as a gift. We recall that the Word of Yahweh had said to him, 'I am your shield.' This simply means 'I am your faith'. When the apostle Paul described the armour of the Lord, in his letter to the Ephesians, he identified that the shield is 'the shield of faith'.⁷⁹ As with all the armour of God, the shield of faith belongs to Him. It is *His faith* that is given to us as a gift, to become our faith. We know that the Scripture exhorts us to have the faith of our father Abraham.⁸⁰ The only reason

70 Pro 12:25

71 Gen 14:18-19.
Pro 13:12

72 Gen 17:17

73 Gen 15:1

74 2Co 3:16

75 Mat 5:3. Gen 15:5

76 Heb 11:12

77 Isa 40:26

78 Gen 15:6

79 Eph 6:16

80 Rom 4:11-12,16.
Gal 3:7,9

that this is possible is because Abraham received the faith of the Son of God - and we are able to receive this very same faith.

This is a most remarkable and significant point. Every Christian must recognise that Jesus Christ is the Author and the Perfecter of all faith.⁸¹ We cannot believe to become a son of God without first receiving the faith of *the* Son of God! Jude explained that this is the faith that was 'once for all handed down to all the saints'.⁸² It is the faith that was given to Abraham, and to all the heroes of faith noted in the Old Testament.⁸³ It is the same faith that was given to the apostles and is available for every New Covenant believer. The apostle Peter wrote to all those who had obtained this 'like precious faith'.⁸⁴ Paul testified, '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.'⁸⁵

Having said in his letter to the Ephesians that we must take up the shield of the Lord's faith, Paul added a further element in his letter to the Thessalonians by saying that we must put on 'the breastplate of faith *and* love'.⁸⁶ When the faith of the Son of God has been given to us, and is working by the love of God that has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we can believe to be a son of God and live as a son of God.⁸⁷ It is 'faith working by love' that compels us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice so that we can do the works of our sonship that have been prepared by the Father for us to do.⁸⁸

I am your reward – exceedingly abundantly

The Word of Yahweh said to Abram, 'Do not [fear], Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward'.⁸⁹ This is better translated as 'I am your reward – exceedingly abundantly'. We are reminded of the words of Jesus, 'I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly'.⁹⁰ In the same way that the Son of God promised to be Abram's *faith*, He also promised to be his *life*. He promised to give him the divine nature as his eternal inheritance. We know that Abram did not possess the divine nature in his lifetime, but that he died in the faith of receiving this promise.⁹¹

In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul identified this as the central focus of all the promises to Abraham. He defined the blessing of Abraham as 'the promise of the Spirit'.⁹² This is more than the promise of receiving the Holy Spirit. It is the promise of receiving the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the

81 Heb 12:2

85 Gal 2:20

89 Gen 15:1

82 Jud 1:3

86 1Th 5:8

90 Joh 10:10

83 Heb 11

87 Rom 5:5

91 Heb 11:13,39-40

84 2Pe 1:1

88 Gal 5:6. Rom 12:1

92 Gal 3:14

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Son. A person has been born of the Spirit once all three Members of the Godhead have come and taken up residence in their heart. Jesus said to His disciples, concerning the Holy Spirit, that He dwelt with them and would be in them. He also said, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'⁹³

In the process of new birth, we are born again of the incorruptible seed of the Father; then, Jesus Christ, personally, comes to take up residence in our heart by faith.⁹⁴ The parable of the sower teaches us, however, that if we do not proceed to join the fellowship of Christ's offering, the seed of our eternal life from the Father will die.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Jesus Christ will cease to reside within our heart. We know that this is possible, because Christ addressed the whole church of Laodicea by saying that He was standing on the outside and knocking on the door of their hearts.⁹⁶ We need Christ to reside within our heart but, more than this, we need to join the fellowship of His offering so that His life is formed within us to become the substance of our eternal inheritance.⁹⁷

Jesus Christ is our reward – exceedingly abundantly – when His divine nature is formed in us as we participate in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This is the outcome of the process that is best described as an 'offering transfer'.⁹⁸ Our sin and iniquity has been transferred to Christ so that it can be removed from us in the fellowship of His sufferings. And, in this same fellowship, His life has been transferred to us so that it can be formed in us.

The covenant established through offering

Having received all the promises from the Word of Yahweh, Abram proceeded to ask, 'O Lord God, how may I know that I may inherit it?'⁹⁹ This was not a statement of unbelief. Abram was not asking the Lord to give him a sign before he would believe.¹⁰⁰ We know that Abram had already believed in the Lord and it had been reckoned to him for righteousness.¹⁰¹ He was asking the Lord for illumination regarding *the process* of receiving the inheritance. He wanted to know *how* he would personally inherit and, also, how his descendants would inherit the promises.

The Lord immediately revealed to Abram that all of the covenant promises would be inherited by participating in the fellowship of Christ's offering. He asked Abram to bring an offering that symbolically represented the offering of Christ on Calvary.¹⁰² Abram prepared the offering by cutting the three animals in half,

93 Joh 14:23

97 Gal 4:19

101 Gen 15:6

94 Eph 3:17. Gal 4:6

98 2Co 5:21. Isa 53:11

102 Gen 15:9-10

95 Mat 13:3-9

99 Gen 15:8

96 Rev 3:20

100 Joh 6:30

and then, with the turtledove and pigeon, he placed the parts of the offering on the wood. Yahweh examined the offering by the light of His lamp, and ignited the offering with His fire. He then confirmed His covenant with Abram through His prophetic word. The animals, when cut in two, represented the numeric of '666', signifying that Christ would bear all the sin and iniquity of man in His physical body. We recall that the book of Revelation nominates this as the number of man.¹⁰³

This offering revealed to Abram that Christ would condemn sin in His flesh; judge the iniquity of mankind; and become the mediator of a new covenant with man, which would minister life and peace. However, the major lesson for Abram was that he and his descendants would need to *participate* in the fellowship of Christ's offering. The Word of Yahweh asked Abram to bring this offering so that He could teach him this fundamental principle. We recall that Abram was required to drive all the vultures away from the offering throughout the course of the day. When the sun went down, horror and great darkness came upon him.¹⁰⁴

Abram endured the horror of great darkness until the Word of Yahweh returned and made a covenant with him in the fellowship of his offering. As we have noted, the covenant was ratified when a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the two sides of the sacrifice. The smoking furnace came to ignite Abram's sacrifice to make it an acceptable offering. It signified that there would be a sanctifying, refining, and perfecting process for Abram and all of his descendants as they joined the fellowship of Christ's offering. Paul confirmed this for all New Covenant believers when he said that we must present our bodies as a living sacrifice to prove what the good, acceptable and perfect will of God is for our lives.

The burning lamp came to inspect Abram's sacrifice but, more than that, it came to inspect the one who was making the sacrifice. It came to inspect Abram's heart! We are reminded that the apostle John described the eyes of Christ as being 'like a flame of fire'.¹⁰⁵ When Jesus addressed the church of Thyatira, He said, 'I am He who searches the minds and hearts.'¹⁰⁶ As the burning lamp passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, the eyes of Christ searched the depths of Abram's heart and brought illumination to him. Paul explained that this is the experience for all New Covenant believers when we pray in the Holy Spirit. Christ searches our heart and then intercedes for us according to the will of God. The Father answers the intercessory prayer of Christ by causing all things to work together for our good.¹⁰⁷

103 Rev 13:18

107 Rom 8:27-28

104 Gen 15:12

105 Rev 1:14

106 Rev 2:23

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As Abram participated in the fellowship of Christ's offering and the travail of prayer, the Word of Yahweh revealed to him how all things were going to work together for the good of his descendants. He explained that they would be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years in Egypt, but that, after this time, they would be delivered with an abundance of possessions and given the promised land as their inheritance.¹⁰⁸ This miraculous deliverance and provision was guaranteed for the sons of Israel because their father Abram had entered into the travail of offering and prayer for their sake. When God heard their groaning in Egypt, He remembered the covenant that He had made with Abram.¹⁰⁹

God Almighty - the inheritance of sonship

The fourth encounter between Christ and Abram is recorded in Genesis chapter seventeen. When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, and said, 'I am God Almighty [*El Shaddai*]; walk before Me, and be blameless'.¹¹⁰ In this interaction, the Son of God manifested the glory of *the face of the eagle*, which is the revelation of the fatherhood of God. God Almighty began by confirming Abram's personal discipleship and sanctification. However, He immediately proceeded to identify the covenant that He was making with Abram and *his household*. This covenant had significant implications for his marriage and family.

A new name

The Lord began by saying, 'Behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham.'¹¹¹ We know that the biblical meaning of a name is much more than a title. It defines who God has called a person to be. For this reason, there are many examples in the Scripture where God changed a person's name so that it was consistent with His call and predestination for their life. In this case, the Lord changed the name of Abram, which means 'exalted father', to Abraham, which means the 'father of a multitude'.

When we consider all of the promises that God had made to Abraham, we immediately recognise the significance of this new name. However, the most remarkable characteristic of his new name was how it was given to him. Yahweh gave him the new name of Abraham by embedding a portion of His own name (YHWH) into the name of Abram. The significance of this is twofold. In the first case, it signifies that Yahweh gave Abraham an inheritance in His own name.

108 Gen 15:13-16

109 Exo 2:24

110 Gen 17:1

111 Gen 17:4-5

In the second case, it signifies that Abraham received a portion of the capacity that belongs to the name of Yahweh, in order to fulfil the mandate that belonged to his new name as the father of many nations.

Further to this, the Lord said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.’¹¹² In this way, the Lord instructed Abram to give Sarai the *same portion* of the name of Yahweh that he had already received so that her new name would be Sarah. This inheritance in the name of Yahweh was given to them as a couple, and they were to fulfil, as a couple, the predestination that belonged to their new names. The Lord gave Abraham the mandate of recognising his wife’s predestination in relation to their house, and he was told to name her so that she would receive the capacity to fulfil her predestination. The Lord declared to Abraham, ‘I will bless her and she shall be a mother of nations.’¹¹³

Abraham’s cry

We recall that the Word of Yahweh had already addressed the veil of fear and depression over Abraham’s heart in relation to his own incapacity to have children. Abraham had already received the faith of the Son of God in relation to his own predestination to become the father of a multitude of nations. The major crisis for Abraham in this interaction with God Almighty was his incapacity to believe *in relation to his wife*. When he turned away from the Lord and began to look at his wife’s incapacity to bear children, and at his own weakness *in relation to her*, he became susceptible again to a veil of unbelief and fear. This veil caused him to laugh at the Lord’s promise that they would have a son in their old age.¹¹⁴

Abraham’s unbelief in relation to his wife’s new name prompted him to say to the Lord, ‘Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!’¹¹⁵ It is important to recognise the difference between Abraham’s earlier prayer concerning Eliezar of Damascus and this latter prayer concerning Ishmael.¹¹⁶ In the earlier prayer, we know that Abraham was struggling with depression concerning the magnitude of the Lord’s promises and the weakness of his own physical body. In this latter prayer, Abraham was struggling with the incapacity of his wife, who was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and his own inability to call her to the faith of her name. He even prayed that the Lord would accommodate the carnal mode that she had introduced into their household.¹¹⁷ Abraham was reticent to call his wife to the

112 Gen 17:15

116 Gen 15:2-3

113 Gen 17:16

117 Gen 17:18

114 Gen 17:17

115 Gen 17:18

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faith that God wanted to give them as co-heirs of the grace of life in their marriage and family.

The covenant of circumcision

The answer to this predicament for both Abraham and Sarah was in *the covenant of circumcision* that God Almighty established with Abraham for his own sake, the sake of his household, and all his descendants.¹¹⁸ We know that the Lord had already made a covenant with Abraham when the smoking oven and burning lamp passed between the pieces of his offering.¹¹⁹ However, this covenant was not in Abraham's physical flesh until he was circumcised as the sign of the covenant.¹²⁰ Circumcision was given to Abraham as a symbol of the cross. It is the work of the cross of Christ to cut the propensity to sin from the flesh of mankind, and to cut the flesh of mankind into the Everlasting Covenant.

When Abraham was circumcised in the flesh, the capacity of Yahweh that belonged to his new name was activated and made available to him in his physical body. Further to this, the cross of Christ was established as the foundation of his marriage covenant. The capacity of Yahweh that had been activated in his flesh, and in his marriage, was the power of the love of God. We recall the words of the apostle John, 'God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him'.¹²¹ We know that the name of Yahweh is endued with the love of Yahweh. In His prayer as High Priest, Jesus declared that He had made the Father's name known to the disciples so that His love would be in them.¹²²

The mandate to fulfil the will of God in their flesh and to bring forth the promised seed was resident in the new names that had been given to Abraham and Sarah.¹²³ However, the grace to fulfil this mandate was not *activated* until Abraham joined the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ in his flesh, and joined his wife to the fellowship of the cross of Christ in their marriage. In this fellowship, the love of God was given to them. The love of God cast out all their anxieties and fears concerning their own inadequacies, and made the grace of life available to them in their marriage.¹²⁴ The divine power, given to Abraham and Sarah by the love of God, was manifest in the weakness of their mortality as resurrection power. Even though they had no physical capacity to conceive a child in their old age, they were quickened in their mortality, and the promised seed was brought forth.¹²⁵

118 Gen 17:9-10

119 Gen 15:18

120 Gen 17:11

121 1Jn 4:8,16

122 Joh 17:26

123 Gen 17:5.
Gen 17:15-16

124 1Jn 4:18

125 Rom 4:19.
Heb 11:11-12

Children of the promise

When Isaac was born as the promised seed and the heir of all the promises of the covenant, the promise of the adoption was established in the house of Abraham. Isaac was brought forth in a covenant house as a son of God. God had promised him, 'In Isaac, your seed shall be called'.¹²⁶ Paul continued, 'It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise who are counted as the seed'.¹²⁷ Paul was comparing Ishmael, who was brought forth by Hagar, with Isaac, who was brought forth by Sarah. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul went further by likening these two motherhoods to two different covenants that produce two different kinds of offspring.¹²⁸

As he reflected on the household of Abraham to illustrate his point, Paul identified the reality that he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit.¹²⁹ We recall that Ishmael mocked Isaac on the day that Isaac was weaned.¹³⁰ However, by this time, both Abraham and Sarah were committed to the cross of Christ in their marriage. Having previously been compelled by his wife to embrace the carnality that she had introduced into their house, Abraham was now compelled by his wife to remove it.¹³¹ We note that there had been a miraculous change in Sarah's mindset during this time. Despite his own personal grief and pain in removing Ishmael from his house, Abraham had the capacity to do this by the love and power of God that had been given to him.¹³²

Much more significantly, Abraham and Sarah had the capacity, by the love and power of God that had been given to them, to nurture Isaac and bring him up in the training and admonition of the Lord.¹³³ Abraham's household was no longer governed by a spirit of fear; rather it was a God-fearing house. Abraham possessed love, power and a sound mind.¹³⁴ The Lord testified concerning Abraham, 'I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken of him'.¹³⁵

When Christian parents have been named by Yahweh and empowered by the love that comes from Him in the fellowship of His name, they will be able to nurture the divine nature that has been given to their children according to the promise of God. They will have the grace to train and admonish their children in the way that they should go.¹³⁶ The children will learn obedience from their parents, and the blessing of Abraham will be established in their house. The evidence that

126 Rom 9:7

130 Gen 21:8-9

134 2Ti 1:7

127 Rom 9:8

131 Gen 21:10

135 Gen 18:19

128 Gal 4:24-31

132 Gen 21:11-14

136 Pro 22:6. Eph 6:4

129 Gal 4:29

133 Eph 6:4

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Isaac had learned obedience from his parents during his formative years was his willingness to join his father in the fellowship of offering on Mt Moriah.¹³⁷

The blessing made sure to all generations

On the basis of Abraham's faith and obedience on Mount Moriah, the sevenfold promise of God was confirmed to him, his household, and his descendants, by the word of the oath.¹³⁸ The writer to the Hebrews was referring to this specific interaction on Mount Moriah when he said, 'When God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you".'¹³⁹

The blessing of Abraham was made sure to all generations and all the families of the earth because of Abraham's faith and obedience. The Lord proclaimed to him, 'By Myself I have sworn ... in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.'¹⁴⁰ The book of Hebrews tells us that God confirmed His covenant to Abraham by the word of the oath, because He wanted to demonstrate the immutability of His purpose to the heirs of the promise.¹⁴¹ The purpose of God has been unchangeable since before the foundation of the world. The gospel of sonship that was preached to Abraham is the same gospel that was preached by Christ and the apostle Paul, and must be preached in every age and generation of the church. It is the gospel of sonship that must be proclaimed in all nations.

137 Gen 22:6-8

141 Heb 6:17

138 Gen 22

139 Heb 6:13-14.
Gen 22:16-18

140 Gen 22:16,18

CHAPTER 5

The four faces in Jesus Christ

Prior to Christ's appearing, the four faces of the administration through which God's covenant purposes were being facilitated on earth, resided in the realm of the angels.¹ When Christ came in the flesh, He was made lower than the angels; yet He was 'crowned with glory and honour'.² The glory of sonship, which the apostle John described as being full of grace and truth, was able to be seen, or beheld, by others.³ This means that Jesus Himself was expressing, or communicating, the glory of God's grace as He personally ministered on the earth for three and a half years. The operation of the four faces had moved from the angelic administration and was now embodied in the Son of Man.

Indeed, this fourfold expression of grace in Christ was prophesied by Isaiah. With respect to Immanuel, the Child who would be born to the virgin Mary, Isaiah declared, 'His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.'⁴ These four names correspond to the four dimensions

1 Eze 1:4-28

2 Heb 2:9

3 Joh 1:14

4 Isa 9:6. Isa 7:14

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of grace that men beheld from His face. He was Yahweh, who was revealing the fullness of God's grace to the world.

Wonderful Counsellor refers to the ministry of *the word of God*. A counsellor is a person who gives instruction. Jesus revealed Himself in this way to His disciples when He said to them, 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and *learn from Me*, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find *rest for your souls*. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'⁵ Jesus teaches us the knowledge that He learnt through the things that He suffered during His passion from Gethsemane to Calvary.⁶ This is the knowledge through which Christ justified many.⁷

Mighty God refers to the ministry of *the Spirit of God*. The Son had come to reveal the glory of the Father. King David prophesied that those who look into the face of the King of glory (who is Yahweh, 'strong and mighty') receive blessing and righteousness from the Father.⁸ It is the Holy Spirit who shines the light of the glory of God from the face of the King of glory (Christ) into our hearts. By this means, we are being blessed with illumination to see that which is spiritual, and are being transformed into the image of Christ's sonship 'from glory to glory'.⁹

Eternal Father refers to the ministry of *the love of God*. The call to sonship, and the travail of fatherhood to bring forth sons of God, reveal the grace of love.¹⁰ God the Father has named every fatherhood in heaven and on earth.¹¹ He named the fatherhood of Adam, which brings forth what the Scriptures call 'the natural man' through the process of procreation.¹² The Father also named the fatherhood of heaven (or that which is from above). This is the fatherhood of Christ, who was the first of a new creation. As such, He is the father of a new species of humanity that is spiritual. He, through the travail of offering, sees His life multiplied and formed in others through the ministry of His body, the church. He, as the last Adam, sees His own seed.¹³

Prince of Peace refers to the ministry of *the life of God as the light of the world*. Christ, the great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, gave His disciples the bread and wine of the Everlasting Covenant.¹⁴ This was His own life, given to them as their life, through participation in the fellowship of His offering. Through the priestly action of offering Himself, He 'abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace'.¹⁵ Furthermore, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem

5 Mat 11:28-30

6 Heb 5:8

7 Isa 53:11

8 Psa 24:5-8

9 2Co 3:18

10 1Jn 3:1

11 Eph 3:14-15

12 1Co 2:14.

1Co 15:44-46

13 Isa 53:10.

1Co 15:45

14 Heb 5:10.

Luk 22:19-20

15 Eph 2:15

on a donkey, prior to His crucifixion, the people cried out, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’, and called Him ‘the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee’.¹⁶ As the Prophet-Priest, Christ cleansed the temple, saying, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer.’¹⁷

The prayer of our great High Priest

Just prior to the commencement of His passion from Gethsemane to Calvary, Jesus prayed to the Father. In His prayer, recorded in John chapter seventeen, Jesus noted that the hour had come for the Son to be glorified on the cross.¹⁸ By this means, the glory of the Father (which is the glory of sonship) would be revealed from His beaten and marred face as light that would illuminate the hearts of those who would turn to Him and receive the light. Isaiah prophesied, ‘Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance [visage] was marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle many nations, kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand.’¹⁹

Jesus was also specifically praying that, through His offering, a corporate body would be created.²⁰ By this means, the operation of the four faces, which had been revealed through the works that He had done in His own physical body, would be manifest in His corporate body.²¹ Jesus testified that He had given His disciples the four graces that belong to the identity and relationship of Yahweh. At the same time, He specified what the fruit of this grace would be in His disciples. That is, having received grace from Him, they would then stand in and express this grace as those who were born of God, and made one Spirit with Him as members of His corporate body.²²

The face of the ox

Jesus had come to give His disciples *zoe* life. He prayed, ‘As You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should *give eternal life* to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’²³ Christ was establishing them in a relationship with Himself, and with the Father, through the word that He had delivered to them.

16 Mat 21:9,11

17 Mat 21:13

18 Joh 17:1

19 Isa 52:13-15

20 Eph 2:15-22

21 Joh 17:22-23

22 1Co 12:13

23 Joh 17:2-3

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As the Prophet-Priest, spoken of by Moses, Christ had made Himself known to the world as Yahweh when He *priested Himself* as an offering on the cross of Calvary.²⁴ He was the Lamb of God, and the light of life was shining from His face to give to the world the knowledge of the glory of God.²⁵ That is, through offering, He had opened a way for the sons of men to know Him, and to know the Father as sons of God. Later in this chapter we will consider this priestly-prophetic work in further detail.

Christ was inviting those who would receive Him to join the fellowship of His offering. In this fellowship, they would be partakers of the divine nature.²⁶ Moreover, as they were joined to the death and suffering of Christ's offering, they would be able to minister the life of Christ to others. As Paul testified, '[We are] always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.'²⁷

The face of the eagle

Jesus had given them their name from the Father so that the love of God would be in them. He prayed, 'I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. *They were Yours* [named by You], You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.'²⁸ He also prayed, 'I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, *that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*'²⁹ What did Jesus mean by this?

Jesus declares the word of God to an unsaved person through His messengers.³⁰ This word is from God the Father. Jesus likened the word of God to a seed.³¹ He said that, through the preaching of the word, the Father does His works.³² That is, the seed germinates in the heart of a hearer and they are born from above as a son of the Father.

Through His prayer, Jesus provided further clarification regarding His message. He said that He had *declared* the name of the Father to His disciples.³³ This means that receiving the seed is the same as receiving the name of Yahweh from the Father. When a person receives the name of Yahweh, they are given a fellowship, or participation, in His name. The Father does this by taking the name of Yahweh and making it a part of the believer's name.

24 Joh 8:28. Heb 9:11-14	28 Joh 17:6 29 Joh 17:26	32 Joh 14:10 33 Joh 17:26
25 Rev 21:23. 2Co 4:6	30 Joh 13:20. Rom 10:15	
26 2Pe 1:4		
27 2Co 4:10-12	31 Luk 8:11	

The four faces in Jesus Christ

When a person receives the name of Yahweh from the Father, they are born of God and receive the capacity for love.³⁴ As the apostle John wrote, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for *love is from God*; and *everyone who loves is born of God* and knows God'. This is why Jesus said, 'I have declared to them Your name ... that the love with which You loved Me may be in them.'³⁵

Significantly, we note that joining this 'fellowship in the name' corresponds with receiving the dimension of God's grace that is love. In fact, the four dimensions of God's grace correspond with four dimensions of the fellowship of Yahweh. It is a fellowship of one life, one Spirit, one covenant (word), and one name (love).

Having been redefined by the name of Yahweh, a believer is empowered to be the son that the Father named them to be. This is because they have received the love of God by which they are *called* as a son of God.³⁶ His love is able to motivate their faith, which is the faith of the Son of God that became theirs when they heard and received the gospel of sonship.³⁷ The faith of the Son begins to work by love in a son of God as they are named by the Father, and are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Christ's suffering from the garden of Gethsemane until He cried, 'It is finished!', on the cross, was a travail to see many sons brought to glory.³⁸ A person is joined to Christ's travail, as an event of history, through baptism and an ongoing participation in the communion. We recall the words of Paul, who said, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [fellowship] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [fellowship] of the body of Christ?'³⁹

The communion elements join us to the offering of Yahweh. Christ was revealed as 'I AM' through offering.⁴⁰ I AM is not bound by the past or the present. These two dimensions of time – past and present – are gathered up into His revelation as I AM. A person is connected to His offering when they partake of the elements of His body and blood, which He made available to us by offering. This is why, when Melchizedek gave bread and wine to Abraham, he saw Christ's day and was glad.⁴¹ By partaking of the communion elements that Melchizedek gave to him, Abraham was connecting forward to the offering of Christ on Calvary. Similarly, as we partake of the bread and wine, which are the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are joined, through fellowship, to that historical event.

34 1Jn 4:7

35 Joh 17:26

36 1Jn 3:1

37 Gal 2:20.
Rom 10:17.
Rom 5:5

38 Heb 2:10

39 1Co 10:16

40 Joh 8:28

41 Joh 8:56

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When a person who has been born of the Spirit continues in the fellowship of Christ's travail, Christ is formed within them. He becomes their life.⁴² It was for this reason that Jesus prayed, 'That the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and *I in them*.'⁴³ As Christ is formed within a son of God, they are able to travail to see Christ formed in others. This is the work of fatherhood and motherhood in the body of Christ.⁴⁴

The face of the man

Jesus had given His disciples the word. He did this so that they could be sanctified, and taught by Him as their Master and Teacher. Jesus prayed, 'I have given them Your word; and *the world has hated them* because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.'⁴⁵

Their sufferings at the hands of the men who hated them were an indication that they were yoked to Christ as His disciples. Jesus had said to them, 'If anyone desires to come after Me [as a disciple], let him deny himself [cease pursuing self-definition], and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'⁴⁶ They were to follow their Lord and Master who would instruct and lead them in the way, or culture, of righteousness.⁴⁷ This would include being led with Him through 'the valley of the shadow of death'. However, they would fear no evil.⁴⁸ This is because, through His instruction, they would learn the knowledge that He learnt on the pathway of suffering, and would find *rest for their souls*.⁴⁹

At the last supper, Jesus specifically instructed His disciples regarding their fellowship with one another. This was a highpoint of His instruction. Jesus laid aside His garments, girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet. Once He had finished, He said to them, 'You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.'⁵⁰

Jesus also prayed, 'Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have *sent them into the world*.'⁵¹ We recall that, before He ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus commanded His disciples to '*make disciples* of all the nations, *baptising them* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching them* to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'.⁵²

42 Gal 2:20

43 Joh 17:26

44 Gal 4:19

45 Joh 17:14

46 Luk 9:23

47 Joh 10:11.

Psa 23:2-3

48 Psa 23:4

49 Isa 53:11. Heb 5:8.

Mat 11:29

50 Joh 13:13-15

51 Joh 17:17-18

52 Mat 28:19-20

The four faces in Jesus Christ

Those who have received and been ‘discipled’ by the commands of Jesus are able to disciple others so that they can also find rest for their souls.

The face of the lion

Jesus had given them the glory of sonship that He had also received from the Father. He prayed, ‘And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.’⁵³

The apostle Paul taught that the glory of sonship that is in the face of Christ is shone into a person’s heart by the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴ Through the agency of the Lord, the Spirit, they receive the glory of sonship – grace and Spirit – from the face of Christ. In other words, it is through the face of the lion (the ministry of the Spirit) that the glory of sonship is shone in their heart. As they continue to live and walk in the Spirit, they are progressively being changed from one degree of glory to another, into the image of Christ’s sonship.⁵⁵

The outcome of the ministry of the Spirit toward them is that they have the treasure of this glory within them.⁵⁶ Paul called this treasure ‘the exceeding riches of His grace’.⁵⁷ He testified that this treasure was within his own weak and earthly body so that the power and glory revealed through him would be from God and not from himself.⁵⁸ Paul called himself a *slave* of Christ.⁵⁹ As an apostle according to the gifting of Christ, his slavehood specifically involved the preaching of the gospel of the glory of Christ.⁶⁰ This was the ministry of the Lord, the Spirit, according to Paul’s specific name and grace.⁶¹

Jesus’ prayer, ‘That they may be one just as We are one’, further reveals the face of the Spirit.⁶² The Holy Spirit is the fellowship of Yahweh. Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one Spirit together, the Holy Spirit enables a person to be one Spirit with the Lord and with others in the body of Christ.⁶³

When Jesus prayed, ‘Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be *with Me where I am*, that *they may behold My glory which You have given Me*’, He was referring to the work of the Spirit to reveal the glory of being one Spirit in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁶⁴ Jesus is now in heavenly places with God. When a person is baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they are hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father (where He is).⁶⁵ The Holy Spirit is given to them to be the expression of their sonship in this age, in a firstfruits measure.⁶⁶ By this means, they are able to multiply the life of Christ by doing the

53 Joh 17:22

57 Eph 2:7

61 2Co 4:1

65 Col 3:3

54 2Co 3:17-18

58 2Co 4:7

62 Joh 17:22

66 Eph 1:13-14.

55 2Co 3:18

59 2Co 4:5

63 Eph 2:18. 1Co 12:13

Rom 8:23

56 2Co 4:7

60 2Co 4:5

64 Joh 17:24

works of sonship that belong to their name, even though their sonship remains hidden with Christ in God.

A prophet among His brethren

Moses prophesied of the administration of the New Covenant that would be established through the ministry of Christ. He declared, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your [brothers], you shall listen to Him. This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, “Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die”.’⁶⁷ Moses continued, ‘The Lord said to me, “They have spoken well. I will raise up a Prophet from among their [brothers] like you, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him”.’⁶⁸

The Lord was explaining to Moses that the word would not proceed from heaven to the peoples of the earth as it had done from Mt Sinai, when all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking so that they trembled and ‘stood afar off’.⁶⁹ The administration would be through the hand of Christ. He was the Prophet like Moses, who would be raised up from among His brethren.⁷⁰

The Gospels record that there was much speculation regarding the fulfilment of this prophecy in the days of Jesus. The priests and Levites asked John the Baptist if he was ‘the Prophet’.⁷¹ John replied that he was not. When Jesus fed the five thousand, the crowd that witnessed the miracle said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’⁷² In his second sermon, recorded in the book of Acts, the apostle Peter confirmed that Jesus was the ‘Prophet’ of whom Moses had spoken.⁷³

When Jesus taught in the temple, He spoke of Himself as the Light of the world. He was speaking as the Prophet. The Pharisees instantly challenged His credibility. They inferred that He was not speaking on behalf of God as a prophet, but that He was bearing witness of Himself; thus, His witness could not be true. Jesus replied to them by declaring, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’⁷⁴ This was the same revelation that He had given to Moses when He spoke to him from the midst of the burning bush.⁷⁵ Jesus Christ was Immanuel, which means ‘God in the flesh’. He told the Jews that

67 Deu 18:15-16

71 Joh 1:19-27

75 Exo 3:14

68 Deu 18:17-18

72 Joh 6:14

69 Exo 20:18

73 Act 3:19-26

70 Deu 18:18

74 Joh 8:18,24,28

if they did not receive Him as Immanuel, the Son of Man, and the Prophet like Moses, they would die in their sins.⁷⁶

Light from the face of the King-Priest

Jesus continued by saying, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I [AM] He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.'⁷⁷ He would be revealed to them as I AM, the King-Priest who offered Himself as the Lamb of God. When Christ was crucified on Mount Calvary, He was raised up as the standard to all nations.⁷⁸ He had conquered Satan, sin and death, and had redeemed mankind from the curse of the law.⁷⁹ As the standard, He was now the gathering point for all nations to come to Him and find deliverance. This is what Jacob prophesied when he said, 'Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.'⁸⁰

The Spirit of Christ spoke through the prophet Zechariah when he prophesied of the crucifixion of Christ.⁸¹ It was the Spirit of Christ who said, 'I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son.'⁸²

The spirit of grace and supplication was ministered from the cross by Christ Himself, as the King-Priest. It was poured out upon those who looked upon Christ and sought to understand what His death meant. They received the capacity to see the glory of Christ. Christ's glory was the light and revelation of the grace of God that was being made available to all men through His offering.

As Jesus Christ sought to reconcile the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the whole Jewish nation to Himself, God's favour was being poured out upon them as grace and supplication. It enabled them to mourn in repentance for crucifying the Lord of glory. They were cut to the heart and cried out, on the Day of Pentecost, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'⁸³

The glory of God shone from the marred face of Christ into the hearts of many who looked upon Him on the day that He was crucified. Christ came and shone a new covenant upon the human race from the cross. As a parallel to His coming from Mount Paran, the Lord came and dawned as light from Mount Calvary.

76 Joh 8:24	80 Gen 49:10
77 Joh 8:28	81 1Pe 1:11
78 Isa 5:26	82 Zec 12:10
79 Col 2:15. 1Co 15:57. Gal 3:13	83 Act 2:37

Grace flowing from Christ

The prophet Zechariah prophesied concerning the grace of God that would be revealed and ministered from the headship of Christ, saying, ‘And he shall bring forth the capstone [headstone] with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”’⁸⁴ This passage refers to Christ. He is both the foundation stone and the capstone, or head, of the temple of His body, the church.⁸⁵ John specifically connected this work to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ when he recounted the words of Jesus, who said, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’⁸⁶

Christ Himself proclaimed that He was the stone that the builders had rejected; yet He is, indeed, the capstone and chief cornerstone of the true temple of God.⁸⁷ Through His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus destroyed the Old Covenant with its temple. He established a new covenant and raised up a new temple, which is His body, the church.⁸⁸ This congregation of people, comprising Jews and Gentiles in one body, replaced natural Israel as God’s covenant people. This was the Lord’s doing. The church became the centre of a kingdom that would bring forth the fruits of sonship.⁸⁹

The shouts of ‘*Grace, grace*’ to the Head of the body correspond with the apostle John’s statement that men had beheld the glory of the only begotten Son who was full of grace and truth.⁹⁰ This is the fullness of grace that God is, as love, life, Spirit and word. Moreover, John explained that the sons of God are those who receive of this fullness, as *grace for grace*.⁹¹ Zechariah’s prophecy reiterates the point that the grace of God comes from the face, or headship, of Christ.

The offering of God, through which their Everlasting Covenant was inaugurated, established an order by which God’s grace would be made available to the sons of men so that they could be born as sons of God. This offering occurred before the creation of the heavens and the earth. It established both the beginning of Their unfolding covenant plan and the order by which it would come to pass. Through offering, the Father became the Head of the Son.⁹² It pleased the Father for all the fullness of God to dwell in the Son.⁹³ The Son became the Head of a corporate body of sons of God.⁹⁴ The grace of life flows from the headship of Christ to every believer by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Access to grace depends upon a believer honouring and remaining within the order of headship that God has established.⁹⁵

84 Zec 4:7	88 Joh 2:21	92 Php 2:5-7. 1Co 11:3
85 1Pe 2:7. Zec 4:7. Joh 2:21	89 Mat 21:43	93 Col 1:19
86 Joh 2:19	90 Joh 1:14	94 Col 1:18
87 Mat 21:43	91 Joh 1:16	95 1Pe 3:7. 1Co 11:3

Grace for grace

Let us now consider the four faces in relation to the proclamation of the gospel to those who are unsaved and far from God. The first point to note is that the expression of grace from the four faces of Christ is fundamental to the process of new birth. Jesus revealed to His disciples the four dimensions of grace, and their contribution to the process through which the fullness of Christ would be formed in them. He declared, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no-one comes to the Father but through Me.'⁹⁶

In summary, we note:

'I am the *way*' refers to the dimension of Yahweh who 'is word'. The Scriptures teach, for example, that 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path [way]'.⁹⁷ The word reveals the Father's desire to birth a person as a son of God, and initiates this process in those who respond to the word. Jesus said, 'Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.'⁹⁸

'I am the *truth*' refers to the dimension of Yahweh who 'is Spirit'. We recall the words of Jesus, who said, 'God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'⁹⁹ Jesus told the woman at the well that He was able to give her living water that would become a well of water springing up to eternal life within her.¹⁰⁰ Later in His ministry, Jesus again declared, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who *believes in Me*, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water".'¹⁰¹ The apostle John explained that Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit who would be given to those who believed in Jesus once He had been glorified on the cross. As the word of the cross illuminates a person regarding the bankruptcy of their spirit, and they cry out for help, the Son asks the Father to send them the Helper, the Holy Spirit. He is called 'the Spirit of truth', and He comes to abide with them and in them.¹⁰²

'I am the *life*' refers to the dimension of Yahweh who 'is life and light'. Jesus made His life available to us to be our life, when He priested Himself as an offering. To partake of this life, we must be joined to the fellowship of His offering and suffering. He said to His disciples, 'After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.'¹⁰³ The world is no

96 Joh 14:6 100 Joh 4:10,14

97 Psa 119:105 101 Joh 7:37-38

98 Joh 14:10 102 Joh 14:16-17

99 Joh 4:24 103 Joh 14:19

longer able to see Christ, because He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. However, those who have been born from above and have a share in Christ's life are able to see Him as He is coming in their flesh and in the flesh of their brethren.¹⁰⁴

'I am the way to the *Father*' refers to the dimension of Yahweh who 'is love'. For example, we read, 'Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.'¹⁰⁵ Jesus proclaimed that 'he who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him'.¹⁰⁶ The Father loves those who keep the commands of the Son. The Son and the Father come to them and make Their abode with them, and they are born of water and the Spirit.¹⁰⁷

The preaching of the word

The grace of God brings salvation to those who are unsaved and far from God.¹⁰⁸ As we learn from John's vision of the four living creatures, and from Paul's instruction regarding the administration of the body of Christ, there is an order to the ministry of grace from the throne. This order is the face of the lion, the face of the ox, the face of the man, and the face of the eagle. What does this mean, practically, for the ministry of the gospel on the earth?

The word from the beginning

Paul made it clear that 'the grace of God that brings salvation *has appeared to all men*'.¹⁰⁹ John further clarified the truth that this grace was manifest when the Word became flesh and *dwelt among men*. As we have been considering, when the Word became flesh, the glory of sonship – that which is full of grace and truth – was able to be seen.¹¹⁰ The point to note is that 'the word' is a dimension of God's grace. However, through this one dimension, all four dimensions of grace are revealed from the four faces of Christ's administration in the order that John and Paul nominated.

The beginning point of the ministry of the gospel is the proclamation of 'the word of life from the beginning'.¹¹¹ This is the word of grace that is first ministered by the Spirit from the face of the *lion*.¹¹² We recall that, on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter, who was full of the Holy Spirit, stood up and proclaimed the gospel to the Jews. In the authority of Christ, he said to them, 'Let this be known to you,

104 2Jn 7

105 1Jn 3:1

106 Joh 14:21

107 Joh 14:23. Joh 3:5

108 Tit 2:11

109 Tit 2:11

110 Joh 1:14

111 1Jn 1:1,3

112 Act 14:3.

Act 20:24,32

and heed my words.¹¹³ In his second letter, Peter affirmed that the preaching of the gospel was *by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven*.¹¹⁴ This reiterates the point that the ministry of the gospel is first from the face of the lion.

The gospel that brings salvation is the word of present truth that is ministered in the presbytery by those with apostolic grace from Christ. John explained that the message that he and his fellow presbyters were declaring was *the Word of life that was from the beginning*. Specifically, he wrote, ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, *concerning the Word of life ... we declare to you*’.¹¹⁵

Other than John, this group of brethren had not personally interacted with Jesus during the three and a half years of His ministry on earth. By the time that John was writing his letter, he was the only disciple still alive who had actually seen and engaged with Christ in this way. How, then, could John testify that his fellow presbyters had also heard, seen, looked on, and handled, that which was from the beginning?

The answer is that they were receiving Christ, the Word, *as He was coming in the flesh of their brethren*.¹¹⁶ These presbyters heard and received the word that was laid down to them in offering, from those with apostolic grace.¹¹⁷ In response to the word, they turned in repentance to *look into the face of Christ*. This mode of repentance had become a foundation in their lives.¹¹⁸ By this means, they *continued* to receive *illumination by the Spirit* concerning the gospel of sonship.¹¹⁹ They were able to see clearly the things of the Spirit and to rightly divide, or *handle*, the word of truth.¹²⁰ These brethren were abiding in the fellowship of the Father and the Son. The word was in their mouths and in their hearts, and could be declared to others so that their hearers could also be joined to this fellowship.¹²¹

The light of life

We learn from John that the Word is full of the life of God, and the life is the light of men.¹²² The life/light of God is the second dimension of grace that brings salvation through the word as it proceeds from the face of the ox.

Jesus declared that He would draw all men to Himself if He was ‘lifted up from the earth’.¹²³ Through offering, the life that Jesus was giving to the world was manifest as a great light that shone from His severely marred face. The life, which was expressed as light, was made available through His offering. Paul explained

113 Act 2:14

114 1Pe 1:12

115 1Jn 1:1,3

116 2Jn 8-9

117 Rom 10:8

118 Heb 6:1

119 Eph 1:18-20.
2Co 3:18

120 2Ti 2:15.

1Co 2:13-14

121 Rom 10:8. 1Jn 1:3

122 Joh 1:4

123 Joh 12:32

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that this is the same principle by which Christ's messengers minister the life of God to others. He testified that, as he was made weak in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the power and life of God was given to those who heard and received the gospel that he preached.¹²⁴ Life was being transferred to his hearers.

Addressing the relationship between life and light, King David wrote, 'For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light'.¹²⁵ In this statement, David was conveying the point that the life of Yahweh was expressed as light from Them to us. The first effect of Their light upon us is illumination; that is, we are able to see light.

John explained that Christ (the Word in whom is life) is the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.¹²⁶ Christ is the expression of the life of Yahweh. When the true Light comes and enlightens a person, they begin to receive of the fullness of God. That is, the light expresses the fullness of God to them. This is why John said that 'of His *fullness* we have all received, and grace for grace'.¹²⁷ The light of this glory is being shone from the face of Christ into the believer's heart by the Holy Spirit.

Receiving the fullness of Christ requires grace for grace. In the first instance, the grace of God preveniently grants to an unsaved person the capacity to see and hear the word of God. Prevenient grace is simply God's grace that comes to an unsaved person before they choose to receive it. 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. Prevenient grace enables every person to receive the light of the gospel.¹²⁸ This is because it frees a person from any influence that may otherwise affect their capacity to choose the call of sonship that God is offering to them. However, the grace of God is not irresistible. A person can still choose to close their ears and harden their heart to the word.

Through grace, the entrance of God's word gives *light*; it gives *understanding* to those who have not known Him before.¹²⁹ By this means, the unsaved hearer begins to receive the blessing of God. We learn through the example of Peter that the *first blessing* is sight, or illumination, that comes from above. Jesus said to Peter, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven'.¹³⁰

Through sight, a person is able to look into the face of Christ and become aware of their spiritual bankruptcy. This is the *second dimension of blessing*. Jesus said, 'Blessed

124 2Co 13:3-4

128 Tit 2:11

125 Psa 36:9

129 Psa 119:130

126 Joh 1:9

130 Mat 16:17

127 Joh 1:16

are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹³¹ This blessing leads to the next dimension of blessing, which is the capacity to *mourn*.¹³² Through the travail of mourning, a person is able to repent, and then cry out to God for help to believe for the sonship that the gospel promises them. The Father gives them the Holy Spirit, as well as the faith of the Son, so that they are able to believe to receive the seed of His word, and be born of water as a new creation.¹³³ The Father sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their heart and they are born of the Spirit.¹³⁴

Having been born from above, they are urged by the Spirit to come into Christ through baptism. The desire to be baptised is the response of a person who has touched the blessing of meekness.¹³⁵ A person is yoked with Christ through baptism as they are joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. They are taking Christ's yoke upon themselves to learn from Him.¹³⁶ As we will explain in the next section, this yoke, and the instruction that Christ gives to the meek, reveal that He is making them His disciples as He teaches them the culture of the kingdom of God.

Continuing steadfastly

The third dimension of grace is the word that comes from the face of the *man*. This is the work of discipling believers in the culture of the household of God.

Following Peter's Pentecost sermon, the three thousand converts 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship'.¹³⁷ The believers had been baptised into Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. They were now learning the culture of God's household by receiving and obeying the teaching of those whom the Lord had appointed over them for their care.

When Paul established new believers in the gospel, he 'discipled' them through teaching. Paul's ministry to the church in Ephesus is a particularly helpful example of this ministry of grace. In the initial stages of Paul's ministry, the proclamation of the word precipitated a distinction between those who were willing to receive the word, and those who refused to believe, and spoke evil of the Way. Luke called those who received the word, 'disciples'. To avoid unnecessary conflict, Paul moved them from the synagogue to the school of Tyrannus, where he taught daily. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.¹³⁸

131 Mat 5:3

135 Mat 5:5

132 Mat 5:4

136 Mat 11:29

133 1Pe 1:23

137 Act 2:42

134 Gal 4:6. Joh 3:3-5

138 Act 19:9-10

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As he was departing from Ephesus, Paul testified to the discipling work that he had initiated among them. He called them to remain faithful to the word that had been delivered to them and to shepherd the church in the same manner that he had done. In particular, he said that he had:

- served the Lord with all humility, and with tears and with trials that had come upon him¹³⁹
- declared to them all that was profitable for their Christian pilgrimage, teaching publically and from house to house¹⁴⁰
- laid down his life for the sheep to fulfil the ministry that he had received from Christ. This was to 'testify solemnly of the *gospel of the grace of God*'¹⁴¹
- declared to them whole purpose and counsel of God.¹⁴²

Finally, he said to them, 'I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.'¹⁴³

Breaking bread house to house

The love of God is the fourth dimension of God's grace. It is ministered from the face of the *eagle*. Returning to the account of the first church in Jerusalem, we read that 'continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved'.¹⁴⁴

The face of the eagle reveals the ministry of evangelism. It is notable that the church grew in number on account of the life in the households. These houses were established in the culture of the love of God. This was evident because they broke the bread of the word with each other; they were of one heart and one soul; and they cared for the needs of each other through offering.¹⁴⁵

It is evident that the word was in them because they received and lived by the word of God with gladness and simplicity of heart. They had favour with all the people in the broader community, 'and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved'.¹⁴⁶ As a congregation that continued in the fellowship of the

139 Act 20:19

143 Act 20:32

140 Act 20:20

144 Act 2:46-47

141 Act 20:24

145 Act 2:46,
Act 4:32,34

142 Act 20:27

146 Act 2:46-47

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word, they had become a ministering and evangelistic community that operated from house to house. Luke, the author of the book of Acts, notably recorded that *'great grace was upon them all'*.¹⁴⁷

147 Act 4:33

CHAPTER 6

The administration in the body of Christ

In this season, the Holy Spirit has been restoring the gospel of sonship to us. Central to this restoration has been a call to turn, receive and join an administration through which the light of the gospel of the glory of God is shone into the heart of a believer.¹ It is through this administration that the gospel is proclaimed and made effective in the life of every believer, in every covenant household, and in every local congregation that is part of the body of Christ.

We know that Jesus Christ has been raised, seated, and glorified at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places.² However, this does not mean that He is no longer speaking from heaven or actively engaged in the work of building of His church. The book of Revelation clearly reveals that Christ is still speaking from heaven.³ In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul declared that we must not refuse Him

1 2Co 4:4

2 Eph 1:20. Col 3:1.
Heb 8:1

3 Rev 1-3

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who is still speaking. Comparing the nation of Israel in the wilderness with the church in the heavenly places, he said, 'If those did not escape (from judgement) when they refused him who spoke on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.'⁴

Jesus Christ continues to speak from heaven, and to minister on earth through those to whom He has given specific ministry grace. The Scriptures tell us that when Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts to men.⁵ He gave *specific gifts of grace* to certain slaves within His administration. Paul declared, 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men ... He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.'⁶ These gifts are the ministry graces of Christ. In a similar way, Paul explained to the Corinthians that God has appointed in the church 'first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles'.⁷

The ministry of apostles, prophets, teachers, and evangelists reveals and ministers the fullness of grace that belongs to Jesus Christ. The first work of those with this kind of ministry grace is to proclaim what Christ is saying to His church, by the Holy Spirit, as the word of present truth in every generation. The second work is to supply the grace of God to every member of the body of Christ. The third work of those with ministry grace is to adjust each member of the body of Christ so that they can fulfil their particular ministry in the body according to the sanctification of their own name.⁸ The outcome of this ministry will be that the body of Christ will be able to build itself up in love and the grace of God will abound to the fullest measure.⁹

The vision in Revelation chapter one

The administration that Jesus Christ initiated from heaven when He gave gifts to men was established by the apostle Paul on earth when he proclaimed the gospel and established lampstand churches among the Gentile nations. Paul brought this administration to light and laid its foundation in every place.¹⁰ He described this administration as 'suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth'.¹¹

Some years later, Jesus Christ revealed to the apostle John that the administration of lampstand churches established by Paul was the pattern of administration for

4 Heb 12:25

5 Eph 4:8

6 Eph 4:8,11

7 1Co 12:28

8 Eph 4:12

9 2Co 9:8. 1Pe 1:2

10 Eph 3:9. 1Co 3:10

11 Eph 1:10

the church age and the time of the end. John recorded that He was in the Spirit on the Lord's day when he heard the voice of a great trumpet behind him.¹² As he turned to see the voice, he beheld Jesus Christ standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands with seven stars in His right hand. John declared that the face of Christ was 'like the sun shining in its strength'.¹³ As we have considered many times in this book, this was the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.¹⁴

John beheld the radiance of Christ's glory shining from His face, but he also beheld the rays of this same glory shining from His right hand. This was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Habakkuk, who declared, 'His radiance is like the sunlight, He has rays flashing from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power.'¹⁵ Christ called the seven stars in His right hand 'the angels of the churches'.¹⁶ The word 'angels', in this instance, simply means 'messengers'. They are the messengers, or living ones, in the administration of God.

This is a significant point. The light in the face of Christ is now shining from the ascension gift messengers whom He holds in His right hand. Christ has ordained these messengers to be 'light-bearers'. They are likened to 'stars' and their work is to reveal the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ and give illumination to all those who receive their ministry. Christ continues His ministry on earth through them, for it is Christ who is speaking in them to reveal His own glory. When this light is received, reflected and focused by lampstand churches, it is 'the light of the world'.

The vision in Revelation chapter four

In chapter four of the book of Revelation, John recorded that he was caught up in the Spirit to behold the administration of the throne of the Son in the heavenly places. It is important to recognise that this is the same administration that John described in the first chapter of the book of Revelation. The only new element of the vision in chapter four is the addition of the twenty-four thrones which have been set up for judgement.¹⁷ These thrones will be set up immediately before the beginning of the time of the end when the Lamb stands to open the seven-sealed book.¹⁸

12 Rev 1:10

13 Rev 1:16

14 2Co 4:6

15 Hab 3:4

16 Rev 1:16,20

17 Psa 122:5. Dan 7:9

18 Dan 12:4.

Rev 5:1-2

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The beginning of the time of the end is a major waypoint in the culmination of God's purpose in heaven and on the earth. The administration that God will use to fulfil His purpose in the end of the age will be the same administration that was established when Jesus Christ ascended on high and gave gifts to men. The primary initiative of Christ from His throne will continue to be through the ministry of the living ones who are in and around the throne. We note that the command of the living ones will initiate and activate the events to be fulfilled in heaven and on earth when the first four seals are opened by Christ, who is the Lamb of God.¹⁹

The vision of John reveals that the four living ones belong to Christ, the Lamb of God, who is in the midst of the throne.²⁰ In contrast to the angelic administration that was under the throne, the living ones are in the midst of the throne and around the throne.²¹ The apostle Paul declared that every member of the body of Christ has been raised to sit with Christ in the heavenly places.²² This is far above the principalities and powers of the angelic realm.²³ Evidently, the living ones are part of the administration that has been established by God in the body of Christ.

John said that each living creature had six wings and was full of eyes 'around and within'.²⁴ We recall that the number six is the number of man. The grace of each living one is fully revealed in the administration of Christ in the flesh of man. The imagery of eyes that are around them and within them conveys the point that these are people who are full of illumination by the Spirit of God. More than this, it signifies that they are fully engaged in revealing the fullness of Yahweh in Jesus Christ, who is the One who sits on the throne. Day and night they do not cease to proclaim, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.'²⁵

In and around the throne

Most significantly, John observed that the living ones were 'in and around' the throne. This signifies the *dynamic nature* of the administration of Christ. It cannot be understood from a static perspective. In the first case, the four living ones belong to Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God in the midst of the throne.²⁶ The living ones are in the midst of the throne because they are in the right hand of Christ. Christ Himself speaks in and through apostles, prophets, evangelists

19 Rev 1:1,3,5,7

20 Rev 4:2

21 Rev 4:6. Rev 5:6

22 Eph 2:6

23 Eph 1:21

24 Rev 4:8

25 Rev 4:8

26 Rev 5:6

and teachers. The glory of the face of Christ is fully revealed through these four ministry graces in His right hand.

When Christ speaks in and through the four ministry graces, the light of His glory shines forth from His right hand. John beheld the four living ones in the midst of the throne, but also saw them proceeding from the throne like flashes of lightning.²⁷ In this regard, we are reminded of the prophecy of Moses, '[From] His right hand there was flashing lightning'.²⁸ The four living ones proceed from the throne like flashing lightning 'in and through' the lampstand administration that is before the throne.²⁹ This ministry of light from the throne is the outcome of a dynamic fellowship of offering, not of a static hierarchy or pattern of church governance. The Scripture uses the term 'in and around' to convey the dynamic nature of this fellowship.

We recall from Revelation chapter one that John beheld Jesus Christ standing *in the midst* of seven golden lampstands.³⁰ Another way of describing this picture would be to say that the seven golden lampstands were *around* Jesus Christ. We note that the stars were in the right hand of Christ and, hence, *in the midst* of the lampstands.³¹ However, they were also *around* Jesus Christ because one star belonged to each lampstand. Further to this, the stars could move from lampstand to lampstand as Christ walked among all seven lampstands with all seven stars in His right hand.³² This is most certainly a dynamic picture.

We observe the same dynamic picture in Revelation chapter four. The worldwide administration of lampstand churches is represented by seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.³³ The phrase 'before the throne' is better translated as 'in the face of the throne'. This better conveys the truth that lampstand churches reveal the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that is in the face of Jesus Christ.³⁴ By reflecting and focusing the light of the living ones in the right hand of Christ, lampstand churches manifest the fullness of the sevenfold Spirit of God.³⁵ In this way, the four living ones are seen in the midst of the throne, and then proceed from the throne to be around the throne, in and through the lampstand administration which manifests the fullness of the sevenfold Spirit of God to the world.³⁶

It is important to recognise that the lampstand is more than *one* piece of furniture in the heavenly tabernacle. We know that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of every piece of furniture. For example, John saw His face 'shining like the sun in its strength' as the full expression of the ark of the covenant, and 'His feet like

27 Rev 4:5

31 Rev 1:16

35 Rev 4:5

28 Deu 33:2

32 Rev 3:1

36 Rev 4:6, Rev 5:6

29 Rev 4:5

33 Rev 4:5

30 Rev 1:12-13

34 2Co 4:6

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burnished brass' as the full expression of the altar of sacrifice.³⁷ Every personal attribute and administration that belongs to Christ is ministered to lampstand churches through the seven stars that He holds in His right hand.³⁸ It is the ministry of lampstand churches to reveal all the personal attributes and administrations of Christ to the world.

The faces of the four living ones

We will now consider this vision of the living ones in more detail. The apostle John identified the truth that each living one had a particular face. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third like a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle.³⁹ These four faces reveal the four dimensions of grace that are ministered from the face of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. This has been one of the major points of focus in this book. The vision of John adds another vital layer to our study. That is, we observe that each living one reveals and ministers a particular dimension of grace that belongs to the fullness of Christ.

The four living creatures represent the four ministry graces that Jesus Christ gave to the body of Christ when He ascended on high.⁴⁰ We will refer to the operation of these four ministry graces as an 'apostolic administration'. When we use the term 'apostolic administration', we are not referring to a group of apostles. It is true that an ascension gift apostle is able to function in any of the ministry graces. However, for an apostolic administration to be fully functional, it requires apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists. The apostle John beheld the full and complete picture when he saw all four living creatures in and around the throne.

Apostles

The living creature that is like a *lion* represents the ministry of ascension gift apostles. Apostles carry the authority of Christ's kingship to proclaim the word of present truth, and to shepherd the church of God. Those with apostolic grace have received a revelatory capacity from Christ to reveal, from the Scriptures, what the Spirit is saying to the church in every generation. They have also received an authority from Christ to establish and oversee all the various administrations within the body of Christ. Apostles must lay down the word and insight that they have received from Christ in the fellowship of a presbytery. This is the word of present truth that gives light to the body of Christ.⁴¹

37 Rev 1:15-16

41 2Pe 1:12

38 Rev 1-3

39 Rev 4:7

40 Eph 4:8,11

The apostle Paul is the most obvious example of an ascension gift apostle in the Scriptures.⁴² Later in this chapter, we will discuss how his apostolic mandate was unique and different from all other ascension gift apostles. Another example of an ascension gift apostle is Barnabas. We know that Barnabas did not have the same mandate as Paul, but he also was sanctified by the Holy Spirit for an apostolic work.⁴³ Timothy and Titus were men whom Paul trained and mentored as part of an apostolic administration.⁴⁴ The pattern for all those who have received apostolic grace throughout the church age is found in Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus.

Prophets

The living one that is like a *calf* represents the ministry of ascension gift prophets. We know that this face has often been associated with priesthood. It is true that ascension gift prophets have a particular priestly mandate. The prophet calls all men who have been born again as sons of God to become king-priests to God.⁴⁵ Prophets exhort all men to present themselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God.⁴⁶ Like the prophet-priests of old who possessed the Urim and Thummim, ascension gift prophets will need to exercise spiritual wisdom and discernment to oversee the offerings, worship, and ministry of a whole kingdom of priests.⁴⁷

There are a number of examples of ascension gift prophets in the New Testament. It is evident that Agabus was such a prophet. In Antioch, he stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout the world. In response to his word, the disciples at Antioch determined to make offering, according to their ability, for the care of the saints who were dwelling in Judea.⁴⁸ It was also Agabus who prophesied regarding the specific sufferings that Paul would encounter during the latter part of his ministry as a priest of the gospel among the Gentile nations.⁴⁹ Another example of an ascension gift prophet is Silas, who travelled with Paul as part of an apostolic company on his second missionary journey.⁵⁰

Teachers

The living one that is like a *man* represents ascension gift teachers. The face of the man has historically been associated with the ministry of the prophet. However, as we have noted, the ministry of the prophet is better aligned to the face of

42 Rom 1:1. Rom 11:13. 1Co 1:1	46 Rom 12:1-3	50 Act 15:32,40
43 Act 13:2	47 Exo 28:30. Ezr 2:63	
44 1Co 4:17. 2Co 8:23	48 Act 11:27-29	
45 Rev 1:6	49 Act 21:10-11,13	

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the ox or calf.⁵¹ Teachers will articulate the word of present truth and instruct disciples in the culture of sound doctrine. They will call all believers to submit to the lordship of Christ and to become His disciples. We recall the words of Jesus, 'If you continue in My word, you are truly disciples of Mine'.⁵² Ascension gift teachers will train and equip disciples in the word of Christ so that they will be able to teach and disciple others.⁵³

The ministry of Apollos provides a particularly helpful example of the work of an ascension gift teacher. He was described by Luke as an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. Importantly, Apollos was easily entreated. He received instruction from Aquila and Priscilla, who explained to him the way of God more accurately. Subsequently, he became a great help to the disciples who had believed through grace.⁵⁴ It is significant that Paul likened the ministry of Apollos to the watering of a seed that had already been planted. He wrote, 'I planted, *Apollos watered*, but God gave the increase'.⁵⁵ The ministry of teaching is likened in the Scriptures to the rain and the dew of heaven that brings rest and refreshing.⁵⁶

Evangelists

The living one with the face like a flying *eagle* represents the ministry of ascension gift evangelists. Evangelists have a ministry of fatherhood that is able to establish every believer and every household in the gospel of sonship. The work of fatherhood involves a travail so that Christ is formed in the heart of every son of God who has been born of the Spirit.⁵⁷ Testifying to this dimension of Christ's ministry, Paul said to the Corinthian church, 'For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel'.⁵⁸

Evangelists will initiate and oversee an administration of eldership that is able to nurture the divine nature in every household. They will also be able to equip every household for the work of proclaiming the everlasting gospel of sonship from house to house. We know that the gospel of sonship must be proclaimed to all those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue and people.⁵⁹ Households that receive grace from the face of the eagle will be equipped to preach the gospel and to minister healing and help to friends, families, neighbours and work colleagues, from their houses.

51 Exo 7:1

55 1Co 3:6

59 Rev 14:6

52 Joh 8:31

56 Deu 32:2. Isa 28:12

53 2Ti 2:2

57 Gal 4:19

54 Act 18:26-28

58 1Co 4:15

By way of example, one of the seven deacons who were appointed by the twelve apostles was called 'Philip the evangelist'.⁶⁰ Philip preached the gospel to large crowds and his ministry was accompanied by miracles and gifts of healing.⁶¹ He also evangelised 'house to house'. We recall that he personally shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch.⁶² Interestingly, the Ethiopian was reading about the Lamb who was slain. As Philip sat with him and spoke to him, the light from the marred face of Christ began to shine into his heart by the Holy Spirit. He was born from above, and immediately desired to be baptised into the very offering from which the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ had come. Philip's own house was a place of refreshing for the saints. We recall that Paul and his companions stayed many days with Philip on their way to Jerusalem.⁶³

An order of priority

The apostle John identified the four living creatures in a specific order.⁶⁴ He did this to signify that there is an order of initiative when it comes to how these ministry graces operate and proceed from the throne of the Son in a lampstand administration. This order of authority and initiative is particularly relevant when it comes to how the word of Christ is ministered in the midst of a presbytery and proclaimed to the church. An apostle has the grace to reveal, from the Scriptures, what Christ is saying to the church as the word of present truth. A prophet has grace to illuminate all of the implications of the word of present truth for a kingdom of priests. A teacher has grace to articulate the word of present truth so that every household can 'continue in the word' as disciples of Christ. An evangelist has grace to proclaim the word and exhort as a father so that the life of Christ is formed in a multitude of sons of God.

Notably, the apostle Paul nominated the *same specific order* when he outlined the administration that God has established in the body of Christ. He said, 'Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: *first* apostles, *second* prophets, *third* teachers, *after that* miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.'⁶⁵ We note that miracles and gifts of healing are associated with the grace of the evangelist. The ministry of an evangelist will often be accompanied by miraculous physical healings and deliverances from various oppressions and addictions. However, it is important to recognise that the greatest miracle of all is the new birth of a son of God. This is the primary focus of all evangelism.

60 Act 21:8

64 Rev 4:7

61 Act 8:5-8

65 1Co 12:27-28

62 Act 8:26-40

63 Act 21:10

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Recognising ministry grace

It is important to recognise that the gift of Christ is a grace for a particular ministry work. The gift belongs to Christ and has been given to the individual for the sake of the body of Christ. The gift does not become part of the identity of the son of God to whom it has been given, even though the fruit of the talent that they have received becomes part of their eternal reward in the new heavens and new earth. The moment that a person uses the gift that they have received from Christ to define themselves, validate their position, or lord it over another, they have taken the gift to themselves and it has begun to corrupt them. It is for this reason that the gift of Christ should never be used as a title or a position.

While recognising that the gift of Christ is not a position, we still know that specific ministry grace is given to particular people. The four administrations of grace are not indiscriminate expressions of gift that operate randomly or through any person at any time. Paul explained that the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.⁶⁶ The gift of Christ is given to certain individuals according to the sanctification of their name from the Father. We recall that Paul had been set apart from his mother's womb for the particular ministry grace that was given to him by Christ.⁶⁷ We all need to know the grace that Christ has given to us according to our sanctified place and function in the body of Christ, and be able to readily recognise and submit to the grace that Christ has given to others.⁶⁸

The work of shepherding or pastoring

In the past, we have often referred to five ascension gift ministry graces. This teaching was based on Paul's statement that Christ has given 'some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers'.⁶⁹ The notion of five ministry graces was sometimes reinforced by likening the ministry graces to the five fingers on the hand of Christ. Using this illustration, the ministry of the apostle was often likened to the thumb to illustrate that the apostolic grace touches each of the other ministry graces. These kinds of illustrations have had some merit but, in more recent times, we have become aware of some significant points of clarification.

The first point of clarification is that the ascension gift ministry graces are not the right hand of Christ; they are *in* the right hand of Christ.⁷⁰ This means that

66 Rom 11:29

70 Rev 1:16-17

67 Gal 1:15-16

68 Rom 12:3-4,
Gal 2:9, Phm 1:6

69 Eph 4:11

the ministry graces are not holding the seven stars; they are an integral part of the seven stars. This point of clarification is significant because it means that those with ministry grace need to function in and through the presbytery of a lampstand church. A person with a gift of ministry grace from Christ is not free to function independently, with their own itinerant ministry.⁷¹ For their grace to be effective in equipping the saints for the work of ministry in the body of Christ, they need to be submitted to the fellowship of offering that is found in a presbytery.

The second point of clarification is that there are not five ministry graces. There are only four ministry graces. This is consistent with the rest of the Scriptures that reveal the four dimensions of grace that belong to Jesus Christ. This conclusion is supported by the language that Paul used to nominate the ministry graces in his letter to the Ephesians. It is apparent that he has combined ‘pastors and teachers’.⁷² Paul did not intend for these to be read as separate ministry graces. He was referring to a pastoring teacher or a teaching pastor.

This raises a third point of clarification. The work of pastoring, or shepherding, is not a ministry grace in its own right. There is a unique dimension of pastoring that belongs to each of the four ministry graces. That is, there is a feeding and tending work that is associated with each ministry grace. In this regard, an apostle is a shepherd with authority from Christ to lead the whole congregation in and out; a prophet is a priesting pastor; a teacher is a discipling pastor; and an evangelist is a nurturing pastor. The work of a nurturing pastor is to establish identity and headship so that the divine nature can be established and revealed from every house by fatherhood and motherhood, and fostered by an administration of eldership.

This is an important clarification because many have confused the work of firstfruits brethren, who are ‘addicted to the care of saints’, with the work of shepherding, or pastoring. Paul named Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus as ministers among the Corinthians, and urged the church to submit to such men.⁷³ However, throughout church history, this role has been taken beyond its mandate so that men have called themselves or been called ‘shepherds, or pastors’.

The work of shepherding the church of God is the province of the ascension gift ministries, who carry the authority of Christ as part of their mandate. If firstfruits brethren presume upon this kind of mandate, they will end up trying to control and ‘lord it over’ the flock.⁷⁴ Those who are novices are at risk of being trapped in this presumption and falling into the condemnation of the devil.⁷⁵ A man who

71 Jud 1:13

75 1Ti 3:6

72 Eph 4:11

73 1Co 16:15-17

74 1Pe 5:3

claims to be the ‘pastor’ of his own flock has presumed to establish a surrogate presbytery of his own. A scriptural example of this is Diotrephes, who claimed to have a priority in the local congregation and resisted the authority of the apostle John and the presbytery.⁷⁶

The beginning of Christ’s administration

We will now consider the beginning of Christ’s administration in His church in more detail. It is recorded in the Scriptures that after Christ had ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, ‘He gave gifts to men’.⁷⁷ The first gift that the church received was the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸ The second gift that Christ gave to His church was the four ministry graces. He gave ministry grace to certain individuals; but, more than this, He gave these individuals as gifts to the body of Christ. He gave apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists to the church. It is through these ministry graces that Christ gives grace to every member of the body of Christ. Paul declared, ‘To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift’.⁷⁹

When did the ministry graces of apostle, prophet, teacher and evangelist, which Christ gave *after* His ascension, begin to be seen in the early church? We know that the early church in Jerusalem was led by the apostles whom Christ had appointed during His earthly ministry, and commissioned *before* His ascension. We often refer to these men as ‘the apostles of the Lamb’. They are the foundation upon which the church is built.⁸⁰ In the book of Revelation, we learn that they will be the foundation of the New Jerusalem, which is the administrative headquarters of the new heavens and new earth.⁸¹

When the apostle Peter stood on the day of Pentecost and proclaimed that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ, three thousand people found repentance, were born again as sons of God, and were baptised into Christ.⁸² Following this day, the church continued to grow rapidly.⁸³ We read that the people were devoted to the word that was proclaimed and taught by the twelve apostles. They continually met together with one mind in the temple and broke bread from house to house. They ate their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.⁸⁴

Further to this, it is clear that the early church was committed, practically, to a fellowship of offering. Offerings were continually brought to the feet of the apostles.⁸⁵ These offerings were administered by the apostles and distributed

76 3Jn 1:9

77 Eph 4:8

78 Act 2:38

79 Eph 4:7

80 Eph 2:20

81 Rev 21:14

82 Act 2:41-42

83 Act 2:47

84 Act 2:46

85 Act 4:35,37.

Act 5:2

to those who had need among the congregation. It is evident that the apostles were able to manage this task effectively for a while because ‘there was not a needy person among them’.⁸⁶ However, as the church continued to grow, the task of receiving and distributing the offerings became increasingly difficult for the apostles.

The Hellenistic Jews began to complain that their widows were being overlooked when the offerings were being distributed.⁸⁷ The apostles were accused of giving undue preference to their native brethren. There was great upset in the early church over this issue. The apostles recognised that the work of managing all the offerings had caused them to become distracted from their primary mandate of prayer and the ministry of the word.⁸⁸ They also recognised that they needed to establish administrations so that the church could continue to grow.

The apostles instructed the congregation to recommend seven men from among them, whom they knew to be of good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.⁸⁹ The Christian character and spiritual capacity of these seven men must have already been evident to the congregation. The apostles then laid hands on them and appointed them to serve as deacons.⁹⁰ As they gave themselves to the work that had been committed to them as deacons, it quickly became apparent that some (if not all) of these men had been given specific ministry grace by Christ. Following their appointment, the word of God kept spreading and the church in Jerusalem continued to grow rapidly.⁹¹ We observe the clear principle here that, whenever there is division or difficulty in the church, administrations need to be established. When men and women serve in administrations, the grace that each person has received from Christ will become evident to all.

One of the seven deacons was a man named Stephen. Before he was appointed, he was known to be a man who was ‘full of faith and the Holy Spirit’.⁹² However, as he began to serve as a deacon, it became evident that he was also a man who was ‘full of grace and power’.⁹³ We will suggest that Stephen is the first example of an ascension gift apostle in the Scriptures. He performed great wonders and signs among the people.⁹⁴ When he was brought before the Jewish council, they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.⁹⁵ That is, it shone with the glory of God as a messenger of Jesus Christ.

Phillip was also one of the seven deacons. In contrast to Stephen, who had apostolic grace, it is evident that Philip had evangelistic grace.⁹⁶ When he proclaimed the

86 Act 4:34-35

90 Act 6:6

94 Act 6:8

87 Act 6:1

91 Act 6:7

95 Act 6:15

88 Act 6:2

92 Act 6:5

96 Act 21:8

89 Act 6:3

93 Act 6:8

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gospel of the kingdom of God in the city of Samaria, it was accompanied by miracles, gifts of healing, and deliverance from demonic oppression. Large crowds of people received his word and were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus.⁹⁷ It was also Philip who personally preached the gospel to the Ethiopian on the road to Gaza.⁹⁸ The Scripture does not record the nature of the grace that became evident in the other five deacons, but we certainly see the beginnings of an apostolic administration in Stephen and Philip.

Offering transfer from Stephen to Paul

The ministry of Stephen only lasted for a short time. However, his martyrdom had a greater impact upon the early church than any other event. His death initiated a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem so that everyone, except the twelve apostles, was scattered into the regions of Judea and Samaria.⁹⁹ This meant that the word of God began to be preached in the regions beyond Jerusalem. However, the greatest impact of Stephen's death was upon a young man named Saul (later changed to Paul).

When the angry crowd dragged Stephen outside the city to stone him to death, they laid their robes at the feet of Paul.¹⁰⁰ Paul was not a direct participant in the stoning of Stephen, but he was in 'hearty agreement with putting him to death'.¹⁰¹ Two things happened to Paul in this situation. In the first case, as he stood by and approved the killing of Stephen, the demonic spirit that had driven this crowd into such a murderous frenzy began to grip his heart also. From that day, Paul began to breathe threats and murders against the disciples of the Lord. He became a fierce persecutor of the church.¹⁰²

However, more significantly, as Stephen laid down his life as a faithful witness of Christ, the power of God for salvation was directed toward Paul. Before Stephen was dragged out of the city to be stoned, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.¹⁰³ This glory had been reflected into his heart by the Holy Spirit so that he was able to reveal this same glory of God as a messenger of Jesus Christ. As Stephen joined the sufferings of Christ and died in weakness, the glory of God was revealed, and the power of God's life was directed toward anyone who was willing to turn to the Lord and receive it.¹⁰⁴ This is the principle of 'offering transfer' that was established by Christ Himself

97 Act 8:12

101 Act 8:1

98 Act 8:35

102 Act 9:1. Php 3:6

99 Act 8:1

103 Act 7:55-56

100 Act 7:58

104 2Co 13:4

when He died in weakness, but was raised by the power of God as the Firstfruits of a great multitude of sons of God.

When the coats of those who killed Stephen were laid at the feet of Paul, the apostolic mantle that had been given to Stephen as a messenger of Christ was transferred to Paul.¹⁰⁵ This does not mean that Paul became Stephen's replacement. We know that God had set Paul apart for a unique apostleship while he was still in his mother's womb.¹⁰⁶ However, the death of Stephen ensured that Christ would lay hold of Paul for this purpose. We could say that the fruit of Stephen's death was seen in Paul's conversion and in his subsequent ministry to the Gentiles. Even though Paul's apostleship was unique, he ministered in the *same mode* as Stephen. He ministered in weakness, so that the power of God could be directed toward his hearers.

The apostle Paul

When Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, Paul later testified, 'I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who journeyed with me'.¹⁰⁷ This was the same light of the glory of God in the face of Christ that Stephen saw when he looked into heaven. It was the same light that had been directed toward Paul as he stood by and observed the death of Stephen. He had resisted the illumination of the light on that day, and then continued to flee from it. He evidently loved the darkness of his own self-righteousness more than the light. However, Christ confronted him and said, 'Why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'¹⁰⁸

Jesus appeared to Paul to appoint him as a minister and a witness to the Gentile nations. He was appointed by Christ to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Jesus explained that Paul's mandate was 'to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me'.¹⁰⁹ The apostle Paul proclaimed the gospel of sonship as 'the mystery of Christ' in every place. However, he also brought to light and established 'the administration of the mystery', which is the administration of lampstand churches that is suitable to bring many sons to glory.¹¹⁰

105 Act 7:58

109 Act 26:18

106 Gal 1:15

110 Eph 3:9

107 Act 26:13

108 Act 26:14

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Paul was unique in his ministry as an apostle, preacher and teacher. His writings were part of the Scriptures, and his work was to establish the church in the Gentile world.¹¹¹ In his letter to the Corinthians, he testified that he was a wise master builder who laid the foundation of the administration of Jesus Christ in every place. This was a unique mandate. Since that time, the work of all those with ascension gift grace has been to build on the foundation that has already been laid by Paul. The apostolic administration that is being restored in the church in our day must not presume to take Paul's place. Instead, they must receive his instructions as the Scriptures and ensure that they are building according to the pattern of administration which Paul established.¹¹²

The book of Acts recorded that Paul was sanctified by the Holy Spirit for his unique apostolic work and sent on his first missionary journey from Antioch.¹¹³ He travelled with Barnabas and John Mark.¹¹⁴ John Mark turned back, but Barnabas continued to travel with Paul. It is apparent that Barnabas was an apostle, but he did not have the same revelatory grace and mandate as the apostle Paul. On this first missionary journey, they preached the gospel of sonship and established churches in a number of cities throughout the Galatian region.

Paul was pursued and severely persecuted by a group of religious zealots on this missionary journey.¹¹⁵ When he was converted, Paul had been completely delivered from the murderous spirit that had energised him as a 'persecutor of the church' and 'violent aggressor' toward all those who held the testimony of Christ.¹¹⁶ Following Paul's conversion, this same spirit turned around and became a thorn in his flesh. It was a messenger of Satan that tormented him by continually stirring up the Jews against him. However, it had been sent by the Lord to keep him from exalting himself because of the abundance of his revelations.¹¹⁷ And, more than this, it had been sent to buffet him so that his ministry would always be in the mode of weakness.¹¹⁸ This was the apostolic mantle of weakness that he had received from Stephen. This mode of weakness was firmly established in the life of Paul during his first missionary journey. In one place, he was stoned (like Stephen) and dragged outside the city because the people thought he was dead.¹¹⁹

In the midst of this suffering, the power of God for salvation was directed toward all those who received the word of Paul. Having established a church in each city, Paul and Barnabas revisited each of these churches on their return journey to strengthen the souls of the disciples. They encouraged them to continue in

111	2Pe 3:16. Rom 11:13. Gal 2:8	114	Act 13:5	118	2Co 12:9. Co 13:4
112	2Pe 3:15-16. Php 3:17	115	Act 13:45,50. Act 14:2,5,19	119	Act 14:19
113	Act 13:2	116	1Ti 1:13		
		117	2Co 12:7		

the faith by saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’¹²⁰ These churches had already begun to experience persecution. This meant that a number of firstfruits believers, who were devoted to serving the saints and nurturing the life that had been received in each household, quickly became evident.¹²¹ Paul recognised this and appointed such men as the beginning of a presbytery in each place.

On his second missionary journey, Paul revisited these churches to see what further grace had emerged among them.¹²² It was on this journey that he found Timothy. Recognising the grace of God that had been given to Timothy, Paul decided to take him along as a travelling companion.¹²³ He began to train and mentor Timothy as part of an apostolic administration.¹²⁴ By the time Paul undertook his third missionary journey, this apostolic administration included many men.¹²⁵ Paul not only travelled with these men; he was also able to leave them in certain places or send them to specific places for a period of time to establish believers in the Christian faith and to raise up administrations.

We recall that, in the early part of his ministry, Paul personally established the believers; waited for the grace of firstfruits believers to emerge; appointed elders; and raised up administrations. However, by the end of his ministry, he had committed this work to an apostolic administration. Paul wrote to Titus, ‘For this reason I left you in Crete, that you set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you’.¹²⁶ Paul trained and mentored an apostolic administration that was to replace him and continue its ministry for the whole of the church age.¹²⁷

In his letters to Timothy and Titus, we find Paul’s instructions on how this apostolic administration should function for the church age. He explained to them how to establish administrations and the qualities that they were looking for in overseers and deacons. He encouraged them not to ‘lay hands on any man too hastily’.¹²⁸ The pattern that Paul committed to an apostolic administration was to leave room for firstfruits Christians to demonstrate, through offering, the nature of their ministry grace. He was looking for those who were approved by offering to begin serving with the ‘grace talents’ that they had received from Christ.¹²⁹ In this way, elders and deacons could be identified, and administrations established.

120 Act 14:22

124 1Co 4:17

128 1Ti 5:22

121 Col 1:10. 1Co 16:1

125 Act 20:4

129 1Co 16:15-17

122 Act 15:36

126 Tit 1:5

123 Act 16:1-3

127 2Ti 1:13. 2Ti 2:1-2.
2Ti 3:14-15

The foundation and fellowship of a presbytery

Jesus Christ will sovereignly lay hold of men to be ascension gift apostles in every generation of the church. These men are called to receive the instruction of the apostle Paul and to walk in the stead of men such as Timothy and Titus.¹³⁰ Their mandate is to proclaim the word of present truth to the church and to establish administrations in the church so that grace is ministered to every member of the body of Christ. Even though Christ has given to apostles the grace to preach and teach the word, and the authority to establish and oversee administrations, He has not called them to function independently.¹³¹ Christ has called all ascension gift apostles to function as part of an apostolic administration, and to minister the word in the midst of a presbytery of overseers, elders and deacons.¹³²

An apostolic administration includes the ministry graces of apostle, prophet, teacher and evangelist.¹³³ The ministry grace that Christ has given to apostles is unique. It can be distinguished from the other three ministry graces because it is a 'revelatory' grace.¹³⁴ The apostolic grace is also unique in the sense that an apostle can function with the other three ministry graces. An apostle will be able to prophesy with the prophets, teach with the teachers, and be a father to sons of God with the evangelists. Even though Timothy was an apostle, Paul was able to instruct him to do the work of an evangelist.¹³⁵ We could consider the apostolic grace to be the sum of the four graces. It is clear that an apostolic administration needs an apostle. However, an apostolic administration needs more than an apostle who is able to function with all four graces. A fully functional apostolic administration requires all four ministry graces to be operating in the midst of a presbytery.

A presbytery is a fellowship of firstfruits brethren who have been proven among the flock and have been given an eldering or deaconing work by Jesus Christ.¹³⁶ An overseer is an elder and a deacon who has received authority from Christ to rule over His household and to give all those who are in His house their 'food' at the proper time.¹³⁷ In this way, a presbytery is a fellowship of overseers, elders and deacons.¹³⁸ Paul addressed the Ephesian presbytery when he called all the elders down to Miletus and instructed them to 'take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood'.¹³⁹

130 Php 3:17

131 1Jn 1:1-3

132 Rev 1:20.
Rev 2:1,4-5

133 Eph 4:11

134 Eph 3:4-5

135 2Ti 4:5

136 Mar 13:34

137 Mat 24:45.

Heb 13:17. 1Ti 3:1

138 Php 1:1

139 Act 20:28

The first work of an apostolic administration is to preach and teach the word of Christ in the midst of a presbytery. As we have already noted, Jesus Christ continues to speak from heaven and address His church through the four ministry graces that He has given to the body of Christ. Each man with this kind of ministry grace will need to speak according to the authority and grace that he has been given by Christ. We are reminded of the words of Paul, 'I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you'.¹⁴⁰ Those with ministry grace are joining the offering of Christ when they speak in this way, because Christ has given them to the body of Christ for this purpose.¹⁴¹

When Christ speaks through those with ministry grace, it establishes the ground of fellowship in the midst of a presbytery.¹⁴² It is an *invitation* to join the fellowship of the word by having fellowship with those who are bringing the word. Speaking as part of an apostolic administration, John declared, 'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.'¹⁴³ The word of Christ is ministered by His apostolic administration in the midst of a presbytery as an invitation to join the fellowship of first love that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For this reason, the word of Christ will always include a call to return to first love and to maintain first love as the foundation for all fellowship among brethren.¹⁴⁴

The invitation of Christ to join this fellowship of first love is received when each person turns to the Lord by receiving His word with humility and repentance. When the word of Christ is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit will bring conviction to the heart of every person. When a person turns in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, any veil that has been covering the eyes of their heart will be removed.¹⁴⁵ This may be a veil that is based in their own insecurities or imagination concerning who God has called them to be. It may also be the veil of their own theological or ideological views. Whatever the case, the veil will be removed, and illumination and grace will come to them as they turn to the word of Christ in the fellowship of the presbytery.

What is the nature of the illumination that comes when a person turns to the Lord by joining the fellowship of the word in a spirit of repentance?¹⁴⁶ It will be more than an illumination regarding the theology of the word and its implications for those they are caring for in a local congregation. It will be an illumination

140 Rom 12:3

141 Eph 4:11

142 2Co 13:3

143 1Jn 1:3

144 Rev 2:4-5.

Joh 15:13. 1Th 4:9

145 2Co 3:14. 2Co 4:3

146 2Co 4:6

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regarding the name that they have received from the Father; the grace they have received from Christ; and the work they have received from the Holy Spirit. The Scripture often uses the term 'sanctification' to describe these three elements.¹⁴⁷ Each member of a presbytery needs to be willing to receive the testimony of their brethren as part of the process of receiving illumination regarding their own sanctification. They need to know and accept their own sanctification from God so that they can properly join the fellowship of the presbytery.

Christ speaks in and through apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists to establish the ground of fellowship in a presbytery; to give illumination; *and to give a unique portion of grace to every member of His body*. We know that it is the work of Christ's four ministry graces to equip the saints for the work of their ministry.¹⁴⁸ Christ gives a specific measure of grace to all those who receive the word of His grace.¹⁴⁹ However, the nature of the grace that has been given to each member of the body of Christ may not be immediately apparent. It will become clear as each person presents their body as a living sacrifice to serve their brethren and to serve in the administrations of the church.¹⁵⁰ We recall that the grace of the seven deacons became evident when they were appointed to serve tables in the early church.¹⁵¹

Overseers, elders, and deacons join a *fellowship of offering* when they *speak* in the presbytery and *serve* in the administrations of the church according to the name that they have received from the Father; the grace that they have received from Christ; and the work that has been committed to them by the Holy Spirit. When the fellowship of Yahweh is manifest in a presbytery, no-one will be seeking to reveal themselves or to be empowered for the expression of their own ministry. Their preoccupation will be to reveal the life and grace that Christ has given to their brethren. In such a fellowship, the life of Christ will be multiplied, and each person will be commended, by their brethren, to the grace of God for their unique work and service in the body of Christ.¹⁵²

Having been commended to the grace of God by their brethren, elders and deacons should not proceed from the fellowship of the presbytery to speak and serve on behalf of the presbytery. Nor should they presume to speak and function with the authority of Christ as though Christ is speaking in them in the same way that He speaks in an apostolic administration.¹⁵³ Elders and deacons will speak and function as sons of God who have received grace from Christ to function as unique

147 1Th 4:3. 2Th 2:13. 151 Act 6:2,8
1Jn 5:7 152 Act 14:26
148 Eph 4:12 153 2Co 13:3
149 Act 20:3
150 Rom 12:1

members of His body. The apostle Paul described this mode of ministry when he testified to the Corinthians, 'It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved'.¹⁵⁴ This is the mode of ministry that enables the body of Christ to build itself up in love. We will consider this in more detail in chapter eight, 'The mode of Christ's administration'.

Four administrations in a lampstand church

When an apostolic administration is functional as the foundation of a presbytery, and the presbytery has been restored to a fellowship of first love and offering, there will be four visible and effective administrations in a lampstand church. The first will be the apostle's administration of the word and church governance. The second will be a kingdom of priests who are devoted to offering, prayer, worship, and ministering to one another as members of the body of Christ. The third will be an administration of teachers who are committed to making disciples of the word of present truth. The fourth will be an administration of fathering elders who are able to nurture the divine nature in a multitude of sons of God and to mobilise evangelistic households.

Ascension gift apostles will reveal and proclaim the word of present truth, from the Scriptures, in every generation of the church. They will preach and teach this word in the fellowship of a presbytery and directly to the head of every household. Apostles carry the authority of Christ's kingship to lead, shepherd, and oversee the whole flock of God. Christ has given them authority to lead His church in and out to find pasture; to lead in times of warfare; and to initiate and oversee all administrations in the broader community of the church within a region or country. This authority has been committed to them by Christ, who is the Shepherd and Overseer of the church.¹⁵⁵

We are reminded that the administration of the seven deacons was initiated by the twelve apostles; and the deacons served under the apostolic authority of the twelve. As each deacon served in this administration, the particular grace that Christ had given to each man became evident to all. In a similar way, ascension gift apostles will initiate administrations in the church. They will be looking for those who have received ministry grace from Christ, so that they can train and mentor them as part of an apostolic administration. They will also be looking for firstfruits

154 2Co 12:19

155 1Pe 2:25

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Christians who have received an eldering or deaconing work from Christ, so that they can include them in the fellowship of a presbytery.

Apostles will initiate many administrations in the church. They will establish the *priesting* administration with the prophets, the *teaching* administration with the teachers, and the *fathering* administration with the evangelists. Once these administrations have been established, apostles will commit the primary oversight of these administrations to the other three ministry graces. However, apostles will personally retain the oversight of the administration of the word of present truth, the administration of church finance and government, and the general oversight of the fellowship of the presbytery.

Ascension gift prophets will illuminate the word of present truth in the midst of the presbytery and as a lamp to the feet of every son of God. They will compel every believer to present their body as a living sacrifice so that they can prove the will of God by offering.¹⁵⁶ The ministry of those with prophetic grace will motivate and equip all believers in the work of their priesthood so that they can effectively pray, worship, function with spiritual gifts, and make offering to the Lord. Ascension gift prophets will also equip and train an administration of deacons. This will include the deacons who are responsible for ordering the spiritual worship of each congregation, and those who are responsible for hosting and ordering the function of every member of the body of Christ with the gifts of the Spirit.¹⁵⁷

Ascension gift teachers will articulate the word of present truth in the midst of the presbytery and teach every household. They will train and equip an administration of Bible teachers who are able to teach the word of present truth and the culture of sound doctrine to every family in the church. Even though Timothy was an ascension gift apostle, Paul commended him to this work when he said, ‘The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.’¹⁵⁸ The ministry of ascension gift teachers will produce those who have the ear of a disciple, who then become teachers with the tongue of a disciple.¹⁵⁹ That is, those with teaching grace will make disciples who are able to make more disciples. The evidence of this administration will be seen in the public program of the church and in a vibrant fellowship of the word from house to house.

Ascension gift evangelists will be motivated by the love of God, and equipped by the grace of Christ, to proclaim the gospel of sonship. They will be motivated to

156 Rom 12:1

157 1Co 14:32

158 2Ti 2:2

159 Isa 50:4

The administration in the body of Christ

see sons of men become sons of God and bear the fruit of their sonship as mature firstfruits Christians. They may proclaim the gospel in large public gatherings. However, their primary work in the midst of a presbytery is to nurture and oversee an administration of elders who are able to fully establish every household in the gospel of sonship. Along with apostles and evangelists, elders have been given the ministry of fatherhood that is able to nurture and tend the divine nature in every house. This kind of eldership will promote house to house fellowship. Evangelists and elders will equip, train and mobilise evangelistic households that are able to labour and travail to see sons of men become sons of God.

CHAPTER 7

The administration under the Old Covenant

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John recounted seeing the Son of Man standing among seven lampstands.¹ This was a picture of Christ's administration for the church age. As we discussed in chapter six, Christ has seven stars in His right hand. These seven stars are the messengers, or living ones, of the seven lampstand churches.² They are light-bearers who minister the light of the glory of God that shines from the face of Christ. Through their ministry of the word of God, this light is shone by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who receive their message. It is through this administration that God's Everlasting Covenant desire for many sons is coming to pass.

God first revealed this administration to His servant, Moses. Speaking of the meeting of Israel with Yahweh in the Sinai desert, Moses said, 'The Lord came from Sinai and dawned on them [as light] from Seir; He shone forth from Mount

1 Rev 1:12-13

2 Rev 1:16,20

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Paran and He came from the midst of ten thousand [of His] holy ones. At [in] His right hand there was flashing lightning for them [a fiery law that He provided for them]. Indeed, He loves the people; all Your holy ones are *in Your hand* and they followed in Your steps [and sit down at Your feet]; everyone receives of Your words [from those in His hand; they are taught by God through them]. Moses charged us with a law, [it was] a possession for the assembly of Jacob. And he [Moses] was king [having the authority of Yahweh that was administered from His hand] in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people [elders] were gathered, the tribes of Israel together.³

The prophet Habakkuk, in his prayerful psalm, spoke of the meeting of Israel with Yahweh in the Sinai desert. Habakkuk prayed for the restoration of God's people and said, 'Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.'⁴ Habakkuk understood that the restoration of the people to God's covenant would occur only through the administration that Moses had described in the book of Deuteronomy.

Speaking of how God visits His people, Habakkuk further said, 'God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendour covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise. His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power.'⁵ Habakkuk then prophesied in his psalm about how God will again come (in the same mode in which He came through Moses) to save, restore and perfect His people. He spoke also of the administration of God and the final judgement of the nations.

The four faces in Moses

As God's messenger, Moses *carried in himself* all four faces of the Son's administration of grace. God's grace was outraged from Yahweh as life and light, through the words that Moses spoke as the messenger of Yahweh. We will now discuss these four administrations of grace as they were revealed through the ministry of Moses.

The face of the lion

Moses was a king with authority to lead and to judge the covenant nation of Israel.⁶ Moses was also the servant (bondslave) of the Lord, who brought God's people up to the land of promise.⁷ This was the kingdom that they were to inherit

3 Deu 33:2-5

7 Deu 34:5

4 Hab 3:2-3

5 Hab 3:3-4

6 Deu 33:5

according to the covenant that God had made with Abraham. Joshua highlighted this when he said to the children of Israel, ‘Remember the word which Moses the servant [bondslave] of the Lord commanded you, saying, “The Lord your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land”’.⁸ As a king-slave, Moses functioned with the authority of the face of the lion.

Moses ministered the word of God from the face of the lion as *the shepherd of the Lord’s flock*.⁹ He led the children of Israel through the wilderness to the land that God had given by covenant to Abraham and his descendants as an everlasting possession.¹⁰ Moses fed them with bread from heaven and quenched their thirst with water from the rock. This food and drink was from the Father to sustain the children of Israel on their journey to the land of promise.

The face of the ox

Moses was the prophet-priest with the capacity, through prayer, to make offering on behalf of Israel, and to reconcile them to God.¹¹ He was also able to establish the whole nation as a kingdom of priests to God.¹²

The word of God that Moses ministered as the prophet-priest, according to the face of the ox, was able to bring illumination to the head of every house. His word showed them the pathway of reconciliation with God and one another, taught them offering and worship, and delivered them from idolatry.

The word of Moses revealed what was ahead for the whole nation of Israel. It was a lamp to their feet and a light to their path by showing them how they were to walk as a kingdom of priests to God.¹³ The word was able to restore the people when they deviated from the culture of the covenant, and it revived them when they suffered various trials and tribulations. It enabled them to be recovered to the way of offering.¹⁴

The face of the man

Moses was the teacher of Israel, a master who taught them the culture of godliness. For example, he said to the nation, ‘Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgements *which I teach you* to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you.’¹⁵ He also said to them, ‘Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the

8	Jos 1:13	12	Exo 19:3-6
9	Isa 63:11. Psa 77:20	13	Psa 119:105
10	Gen 13:15. Gen 15:18-21	14	Psa 119:107-110
11	Exo 32:30-32	15	Deu 4:1

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tender herb, and as showers on the grass.¹⁶ This ministry revealed the face of the man.

The Lord described Moses as ‘My servant [bondslave]’ who ‘is faithful in all My house’.¹⁷ The word of God, as Moses taught it in the authority of the face of the man, was ‘line on line and precept upon precept’. Those who received this *instruction* were being *discipled* in the culture of God’s house. They were learning how to live and walk as God’s people in every circumstance of life. The prophet Isaiah explained that, through this teaching, a learner would enter into rest and be refreshed.¹⁸

A primary objective of Moses’ teaching was to establish the people in the fear of the Lord so that they would not forget the Lord’s covenant, and would keep themselves from idolatry.¹⁹ Moses said to the people, ‘The Lord commanded me at that time to *teach you statutes and judgements*, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it ... so watch yourselves, that you *do not forget the covenant* of the Lord your God which He made with you, and *make for yourselves a graven image* in the form of anything against which the Lord your God has commanded you.’²⁰

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord warned that, if the covenant people failed to receive the word of the Lord line on line and precept upon precept, the word would not give to them rest and refreshing. Instead, the word itself would cause them to ‘stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive’.²¹ That is, they would be given over to their idolatry.

The relationship between instruction and discipleship in the authority of the face of the man is exemplified in the description of Christ by the prophet Isaiah. Christ, the disciple of the Father, was given the tongue of a disciple so that He would be able to teach the way of obedience and offering. On behalf of Christ, Isaiah wrote, ‘The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back. 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.’²²

16 Deu 32:2

20 Deu 4:14,23

17 Num 12:7

21 Isa 28:13

18 Isa 28:10,12

22 Isa 50:4-6

19 Deu 4:10,15-19

The face of the eagle

Moses was a father to the firstborn nation of Israel. Yahweh gave him the responsibility of carrying the nation in his bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant. He was to carry them to the land that Yahweh had sworn to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.²³ This was the ministry of the face of the eagle.

Yahweh described His own fatherhood of the nation of Israel as like the fatherhood of a great eagle. He bore the nation on His wings and brought them to Himself as His firstborn.²⁴ Moses' ministry of the word, in the authority of the face of the eagle, was to establish the nation as the Lord's firstborn. This involved ministering the sincere milk of the word to them so that they would grow up as sons of God.²⁵

Moses understood that this ministry of the milk of the word to the nursing infant nation involved a *travail*. This same ministry was exemplified by Paul, who said to the Thessalonian Christians, 'We proved to be gentle among you, *as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children*. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to *impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives*, because you had become very dear to us. For you recall, brethren, *our labour and hardship*, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God ... we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you *as a father would his own children*, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you [as sons of God] into His own kingdom and glory.'²⁶

The hand of Christ

When Moses went to the tent of meeting, Yahweh spoke to him from the pillar of cloud that descended and stood at the entrance of the tent. The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.²⁷ However, in response to Moses' desire to see the glory of Yahweh, the Lord said to him, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.'²⁸ This seems like a contradiction. How was Moses able to speak to the Lord face to face, when no man could see Yahweh's face and live?

When Yahweh conceded to Moses' request to see the glory and goodness of God, He said to Moses that there was a place *with Him* where he was to stand *on the rock*.²⁹ As Yahweh descended in the cloud and stood there with him, Moses called upon the name of the Lord.³⁰ Yahweh placed Moses in His hand, putting him in the

23 Num 11:12 26 1Th 2:7-9,11-12 30 Exo 34:5
24 Exo 4:22. 27 Exo 33:7-11
Exo 19:4. 28 Exo 33:20
Deu 32:11 29 Exo 33:21
25 1Pe 2:2

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cleft of the rock and covering him with His hand.³¹ From there, Moses was able to behold the glory of Yahweh.³² The hand of Christ *always* covered Moses when he spoke to the Lord face to face, as when a man speaks to a friend.

In the hand of the Son, Moses received the royal law and was able to communicate it to the nation. This was the 'flashing lightning' from the hand of the Lord to the children of Israel.³³ Interestingly, when Moses came down from Mt Sinai, having spoken with Yahweh from the covering of His hand, Moses' face shone. For this reason, Aaron and the sons of Israel were afraid to come near Moses.³⁴ Every time that Moses spoke to the Lord at the tent of meeting, his face would shine. He would come out to speak to the people and then place a veil over his face until the glory subsided. However, he never wore the veil while he spoke with the Lord.³⁵

The dual dimension of Yahweh's hand, as both a place of protection for Moses and as the instrument from which the light of His word proceeded, was summarised by the prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk first described the hand of Yahweh as a part of His body from which rays, or horns, of light flashed. He then said that in Yahweh's hand 'there is the hiding of His power'.³⁶ In this regard, the hand of Yahweh is both a place of protection and a member of His physical body from which He reveals His power and glory.

The ministry of Moses from the right hand of Yahweh is the same ministry that is depicted in the book of Revelation. Mortal man can only behold the glory of Yahweh from the safety of Christ's nail-scarred hand. Ascension gift messengers are able to reveal the glory of Christ from His hand once they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. How do they come to be in the hand of Christ?

As Moses did, all believers must come into 'the cleft of the rock'. The cleft of the rock is a type of the body of Christ, which was pierced for our sake. Every son of God must be baptised into Christ so that their life is hidden with Christ in God. It is important to recognise that the Father places every believer in the body of Christ just as it pleases Him.³⁷ We know that there are many members in the one body, but all the members do not have the same function.³⁸ Some have been appointed by God the Father to be in the hand of Christ as ascension gift overseers, to minister the glory of Christ as the light and revelation of God's grace.³⁹

31	Exo 33:22	35	Exo 34:34-35	39	1Co 12:28. Eph 4:7-12
32	Exo 34:6-7	36	Hab 3:4		
33	Deu 33:2. Hab 3:4	37	1Co 12:13,18		
34	Exo 34:29-30	38	Rom 12:4		

Four administrations in Israel

As we have been considering, Moses carried the authority of the four faces in himself. However, during the course of his ministry, these four faces were also established as distinct administrations that were to continue to function until the Son of God came in the flesh. To further understand the operation of these administrations of grace, it is helpful to consider how the Lord, with Moses, established these four administrations of grace in the nation of Israel.

The face of the ox – the ministry of the prophet in Christ’s administration

The authority of the face of the ox as a prophetic priesthood was established with Aaron and his sons. This was first initiated when God *appointed* Aaron as the spokesperson for Moses. The Lord said to Moses, ‘[Aaron] *shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.*’⁴⁰ Following Moses’ first interaction with Pharaoh, the Lord said to him, ‘See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and *Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.*’⁴¹

Aaron and his sons were then appointed by the Lord to serve as priests in the tabernacle. This appointment was made before the failure of Aaron with respect to the golden calf. When Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the law for the first time, the Lord said to him, ‘Bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, *to minister as priest to Me.*’⁴² Moses then received instructions from the Lord regarding the garments of the priests, their consecration, and the nature of their service.

This priestly, prophetic dimension of the face of the ox was later confirmed to Aaron through the budding of his rod following the rebellion of Korah. Aaron and the heads of each tribe were to write their names on their rods and deposit them in the tent of meeting, in front of the ark of the covenant. The Lord said that ‘the rod of the man *whom I choose will blossom.*’⁴³ The next morning, the rod of Aaron had sprouted, produced blossoms and yielded ripe *almonds.*⁴⁴

The fruiting rod of Aaron confirmed his authority within the administration of the face of the ox. Significantly, his rod had sprouted, blossomed and yielded fruit as *an almond branch*. The lampstand of the tabernacle was crafted in the form of a blossoming almond branch. The implication of this association is that the

40 Exo 4:16

44 Num 17:8

41 Exo 7:1

42 Exo 28:1

43 Num 17:5

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administration of the ox has the authority and responsibility for illuminating the sons of God through offering. This dimension of the authority of the ox was epitomised by the function of the Urim and Thummin.

The Urim and Thummin

The administration of the Urim and Thummim was the province of the prophetic priests.⁴⁵ It was part of the mandate that gave them insight as they facilitated the ministry of offering. The words 'urim' and 'thummim' mean 'lights' and 'perfections'. This administration of light and perfection was an oracle that gave the prophetic priest insight regarding the will of God for individuals and for the nation. For example, when Joshua was appointed as the shepherd over Israel, the Lord said that he was to 'stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the Lord for him by the judgement of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him – all the congregation.'⁴⁶

As a prophet-priest, Paul wrote to the Philippian church concerning their need to mature in love, which is offering, so that their ministry to one another as priests came from true insight. Paul's exhortation resembled the ministry of the Urim and Thummin. He said, 'I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.'⁴⁷ Paul was explaining that, as their love grew and they were perfected in the work of their priesthood, they would receive spiritual insight so that they could discern the best from the better.

This principle of the Urim and Thummim was exemplified by the offering that the Lord commanded Abram to make in response to Abram's request to know how God's will for his life would come to pass.⁴⁸ The burning lamp examined Abram's offering, and the smoking furnace sanctified the offering by igniting it so that it became an acceptable incense to God. By this means, God's will was made known to Abram as a covenant.⁴⁹ The burning lamp and smoking furnace are the two elements of offering that belong to the oracle of the Urim and Thummim. Reiterating the point, the light examines the offering, and perfection is the result of the sanctifying work of fire so that the offering is acceptable to God. Through offering, the will of God is proven.⁵⁰

45 Exo 28:30.
Deu 33:8

46 Num 27:21

47 Php 1:9

48 Gen 15:8

49 Gen 15:17-18

50 Rom 12:1-2

Taking hold of the people by the heart

The work of the prophetic priest is exemplified in the ministry of Ezekiel. Ezekiel introduced himself by writing, 'The word of the Lord came expressly to *Ezekiel the priest*, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the *hand of the Lord came upon him*'.⁵¹ In his writings, Ezekiel noted an interaction between himself and a particular group of elders in Israel. The Lord revealed to Ezekiel that these elders *had set up idols in their hearts*, which they had placed before their faces, causing them to stumble in iniquity.⁵²

'Idols in the heart' are the identity definitions that people create, hold onto and pursue for themselves. They may even claim that these images are the will of God for their lives. 'Putting an image before their face' means that they are expecting everyone to accept and interact with them according to that image. It is a rejection of the word of their name and of the Father who named them. When a person turns their heart away from receiving and obeying the word of God, they are turning to idolatry.

In response, the Lord declared, 'Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols, *in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from Me through all their idols*'.⁵³ In order to lay hold of the hearts of the people regarding the multitude of their idols, the Lord said that He, Himself, would answer them. This is a key for us to understand.

Through the prophetic priest, the Lord called the children of Israel to repent and turn away from their idols, and to turn their faces away from all their abominations.⁵⁴ A warning accompanied this word of deliverance. The Lord declared that He would destroy the prophet who accommodated those people who had set the idols of their heart before their face and before the face of the messenger. Both the person presenting themselves and the prophet who received them would be destroyed by God. For what purpose? So that Israel would be the people of God and that He would be their God.⁵⁵ That is, so that God's covenant purpose would come to pass.

51 Eze 1:3

55 Eze 14:10-12

52 Eze 14:2-3

53 Eze 14:4-5

54 Eze 14:6

The face of the eagle – the ministry of the evangelist in Christ’s administration

The administration of the face of the eagle was established when Yahweh asked Moses to gather seventy men of the elders of Israel to Him. These were men whom *Moses knew to be elders and overseers of the people*. We note that Paul and Barnabas, as New Testament apostles, also appointed elders in every church that they established.⁵⁶ These appointments were made with a clear understanding of the qualification of elders.⁵⁷

Moses brought the men to the tabernacle, where they were to *stand with Moses*. The Lord then came down to *speak to Moses*. He took of the Spirit that was upon Moses and placed the same Spirit upon the seventy elders. The Scriptures record that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied; although they never did so again.⁵⁸

The Lord said to Moses that these seventy elders were to bear the burden of the people with him.⁵⁹ To ‘bear the burden’ means that they were to ‘carry’ the people. We recall that God called Israel His firstborn son.⁶⁰ He said that He had brought them to Himself by carrying them on the wings of an eagle.⁶¹ By receiving of the Spirit that was upon Moses, the elders were receiving the capacity to carry and nurture the firstborn nation. This was to be through the ministry of fatherhood and motherhood.

The face of the lion – the ministry of the apostle in Christ’s administration

The administration of the face of the lion was established when Joshua was appointed as the shepherd of the nation of Israel to ‘go out before them and go in before them’ and ‘lead them out and bring them in’.⁶²

It was Yahweh who set Joshua apart for the work of this administration. As we have been considering, the face of the lion is the administration of grace that is Spirit. The Lord identified Joshua as a man in whom was the Spirit.⁶³ This was the same Spirit that was upon Moses. We could liken the fellowship of Moses and Joshua to being in one Spirit.

56 Act 14:23

57 Tit 1:5-9

58 Num 11:25

59 Num 11:17

60 Exo 4:22

61 Exo 19:4

62 Num 27:17

63 Num 27:18

Indeed, across the course of Israel's wilderness journey, Joshua showed himself to be a faithful servant of Moses. When the Lord called Moses to go up to Mount Sinai to receive the law, Joshua went with him.⁶⁴ Furthermore, when Moses spoke to Yahweh at the doorway of the tent of meeting, Joshua was also in the tent. After Moses returned from the tent to the camp, 'his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent'.⁶⁵

Regarding Joshua's appointment to the administration of the lion, Yahweh directed Moses, saying, '*Lay your hand on him; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. "You shall put some of your authority [lit: majesty] on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him"*'.⁶⁶

King David epitomised the face of the lion in the administration under the Old Covenant. The Lord anointed David and appointed him to be commander over His people. He said that David was a man after His own heart.⁶⁷ David, the shepherd of Israel, established administrations within the nation of Israel for worship, teaching, and the maintenance of the house of the Lord.⁶⁸ Furthermore, we note that David, as the face of the lion in Israel, was able to function in relation to the other administrations of grace. This was particularly notable in relation to the face of the ox. David worshipped before the Lord in a linen ephod and penned his prophetic psalms, foretelling the ministry of the Son of God.

The face of the man – the ministry of the teacher in Christ's administration

Moses taught the Israelites with the authority of the face of the man. He called *the whole of Israel* to learn from him. He said, '*Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgements which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you.*'⁶⁹ *Every person* was being called to discipleship through the teaching of Moses. This was for the purpose that they would take heed to themselves, walk in the fear of the Lord, keep His covenant, and keep themselves from idols.

Moses encouraged the people to teach the word that they were receiving from him to their children and grandchildren.⁷⁰ This was according to the instruction of the Lord, who said, '*Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may*

64 Exo 24:13

68 1Ch 23:3-5

65 Exo 33:11

69 Deu 4:1

66 Num 27:18-20

70 Deu 4:9

67 1Sa 13:14

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*teach their children.*⁷¹ Importantly, we note that households were to teach the *steps of salvation* that the children of Israel experienced throughout the course of their journey from Egypt to the promised land.⁷²

Inherent in the Lord's command was the instruction to teach the word 'house to house'. We note this in the words of Moses, who said, 'These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.'⁷³

The appointment of the Levites to teach the law to the children of Israel was the second dimension of the administration of the face of the man that Moses established. Through a prophetic blessing, Moses said of the tribe of Levi, 'They have observed Your word and kept Your covenant. *They shall teach Jacob Your judgements, and Israel Your law.*'⁷⁴

Teaching was part of the responsibility of the priests, who were the sons of Aaron.⁷⁵ However, it was also a work that was given to the broader tribe of Levi. Following the incident of the golden calf, the Lord replaced the firstborn of every house with the tribe of Levi. They were set apart by the Lord for the service of the sanctuary.⁷⁶ We note that, in the New Covenant, the role of the Levite has been returned to the head of every household among God's firstborn people.

The responsibility for teaching was formalised as part of the Levitical service under the kingship of David. He allocated the men of the tribe into four classes – those who were to oversee the work of the house of the Lord; officers and judges; gatekeepers; musicians to praise the Lord with instruments.⁷⁷ The officers and judges were particularly responsible for teaching the law to the nation of Israel.

This work of teaching was crucial during the reign of the great reformer, King Jehoshaphat. In the third year of his reign, he sent his officials to teach in the cities of Judah. With them, he sent a group of Levites and two priests. 'They taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the Lord with them; and they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among the people. Now [the fear] of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands which were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.'⁷⁸

71 Deu 4:10

75 Lev 10:6-11

72 Deu 6:20-25

76 Num 3:6-12

73 Deu 6:6-9

77 1Ch 23:3-5

74 Deu 33:9-10

78 2Ch 17:9-10

CHAPTER 8

The mode of Christ's administration

The apostle Paul summarised the gospel that he had received from the Father as 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'.¹ Through Paul's gospel, a person could be born of God and then joined to a process through which Christ would be formed in them. Paul had not received this understanding from men. He had received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.² God the Father had called Paul 'through His grace'. He made it clear to Paul that it was His desire and pleasure to reveal His Son in him. This was so that Paul could preach and reveal Christ to the Gentiles.³

Paul was startled by this revelation. As a result, he went away to Arabia. After he was resolved and converted in relation to God's call upon his life, he returned once more to Damascus. Then, after three years, he went up to Jerusalem and stayed with the apostle Peter for fifteen days. There he shared with Peter and with James, the Lord's brother, the content of the gospel that he had received.

1 Col 1:27

2 Gal 1:12

3 Gal 1:15-16

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After this, Paul went preaching *his gospel* in the regions of Syria and Cilicia. The impact of his ministry was that believers were born of God and joined to a process through which Christ would be formed in them. Christ was being revealed in Paul, and Paul was speaking in Christ. Those around him who witnessed his ministry were glorifying God in him.⁴

Paul's ministry to the Corinthians

The proof that Christ was speaking in a disciple-messenger became an issue in the early church. Some in the Corinthian church began to challenge Paul, demanding that he prove that Christ was speaking to them through him.⁵ Paul told the Corinthians that he was not just another instructor. He had been sent to them as a father in Christ Jesus. Although *Christ was speaking in him*, Paul was also able to *speak in Christ* to them. In this particular mode of ministry, he was able to beget them through the gospel.⁶

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul also stated that he did not presume to minister outside of the sphere that God had apportioned to him. Paul and his fellow workers had been the first ministers of the gospel to the Corinthians. For this reason, they were not overextending themselves when they came again to minister to the Christians at Corinth.⁷

Paul explained to the Corinthians how a son of God who is in Christ speaks and ministers as one of His disciple-messengers. In summary, they are to minister in the same manner as Christ did when He was on the earth. The full expression of Christ's ministry had been revealed from the last Passover meal until He proclaimed His work finished, just before He died on the cross. Jesus instructed His disciples, throughout the church age, to take up their cross, follow His example of ministry, and follow Him in the way of the cross that He has established.⁸ They would be effective ministers of His life if they continued in the fellowship of His sufferings.

A thorn in the flesh

Paul spoke of his own ministry profile as a messenger of Christ, and how he was personally connected to Christ's weakness and dying. Because of his participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, he was also connected to the power of God that sustained Christ and raised Him from the dead. To understand the mode

4 Gal 1:11-24

8 Luk 9:23-24

5 2Co 13:3

6 1Co 4:15

7 2Co 10:13-18

and outcome of this ministry, it is helpful to consider the lessons that Paul learnt through the thorn in the flesh that he received from the Lord.⁹

The Lord taught Paul that weakness was necessary in his life to protect him from pride. Before Paul became an apostle of Christ, motivated by love, he was known as Saul. The familiar spirit of envy that motivated Saul caused him to persecute and kill the members of the newly formed Christian church. This spirit took hold of Saul because he participated in sympathy, as an onlooker, in the death of Stephen, one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles to take care of the needs of the early church.¹⁰

Following Paul's conversion, the familiar spirit of envy then turned on him because he had persecuted the church.¹¹ This spirit, which he once had used to persecute others, had now turned on him through those who persecuted him. He called this persecuting spirit 'a thorn in my flesh'.¹² Paul acknowledged that the Lord had given it to him so that he would remain weak, instead of being lifted up in pride. The Lord's power would be perfected in his weakness. Paul then would be able to overcome the persecuting spirit of envy by the power of God.

The Lord made it clear to Paul that he must only minister from grace, and that the grace of God would be sufficient for Paul's effective ministry as a messenger of Christ. Further to this, Christ showed Paul that it must be the same for him as it was for Christ – power is perfected in weakness.¹³

When Paul was weak, sinful passions and ambitions that were aroused by the law remained dead within him.¹⁴ In faith, he relied totally upon the grace of God. He was dead, through weakness, to the attitudes that had formerly bound him and motivated him. He was no longer motivated by pride and other associated spiritual malignancies. Accordingly, Paul was able to serve God in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.¹⁵

This was the same process that God introduced to the first man, Adam. Because Adam had heeded and obeyed the voice of Eve after she had been deceived by the voice of Satan, *God cursed the ground for his sake*.¹⁶ Adam, in his mandate over creation, was afflicted with rebellion in nature that warred against his headship. He was constantly undermined in his toil, and humiliated by nature as he was extended to physical exhaustion in his efforts to grow his food.¹⁷ He could only find relief and blessing through offering as he laboured according to his sanctification.

9 2Co 12:7

10 Act 7:58-8:3

11 Gal 1:13.
1Co 15:9-10.
Act 26:9-11

12 2Co 12:7

13 2Co 12:9

14 1Pe 4:1

15 Rom 7:5-6

16 Gen 3:17

17 Gen 5:29

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For Adam, his kingly work had become a demanding toil. The ground brought forth thorns and thistles as, in the sweat of his face, he laboured for bread. The work to which Paul was called was also characterised by ‘thorny’ experiences. Paul explained that his ‘thorn in the flesh’ was sent by God to buffet him. As we noted above, the thorn was a spirit of envy from Satan that incited many to persecute Paul.¹⁸ However, many of Paul’s tribulations were also caused by the natural elements, as was the case for Adam. They included dangers from rivers and seas, storms, and exposure to the cold and the heat.¹⁹

The effective working of the gift of grace

Once Paul understood this principle, he committed himself to live according to the mode of Christ. He gladly boasted and ministered from weakness so that the power of Christ would rest on him.²⁰ Christ Himself certainly ministered through Paul with signs, wonders and miracles that confirmed the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

However, because of the ministry of Christ in him, he was brought under persecution, physical abuse and much suffering. He was *made* weak through suffering. In weakness, Paul was able to speak in Christ according to his own name, by the Spirit. The secret to the success of his apostolic ministry was not the signs, wonders or miracles; it was that the power of God was being ministered from him to others as he was made weak in Christ. This is the principle of ‘offering transfer’. Paul wanted the Corinthian church to understand that, as he ministered to them in this way, the life of Jesus would be transferred to those who were in need. Further, he wanted them to learn from him so that, as they followed his example of ministry, they also could successfully minister Christ’s life to others.

The purpose of Paul’s ministry

Paul summed up his second letter to the Corinthians by saying, ‘All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that *we have been speaking in Christ*; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.’²¹ The emphasis here was not on Christ speaking in Paul but, rather, on Paul doing the speaking in Christ.

18 2Co 12:7

19 2Co 11:25-27

20 2Co 12:9

21 2Co 12:19

Paul was speaking in Christ to those whom Christ had asked Paul to address in the church. That is, those who were in conflict with one another: the jealous; the angry; the argumentative; the slanderers; the gossips; the arrogant; those causing disturbances; the impure; the immoral; and the sensuous.²² Paul explained that, as he spoke to them in Christ, deliverance could come to those who received his word.

Paul's ministry became effective toward the Corinthians as he was humbled among them, and mistreated by some of them. This mistreatment became part of his suffering travail, in the Spirit, for them.²³ Paul's travail was part of his participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings by which he was made weak. As he suffered because of their mistreatment, Paul was dying with Christ for those who were struggling in their sin and rebellion. To those who received Paul's ministry as he spoke to them in the weakness of Christ, the power of God became mighty in them and brought deliverance to them.²⁴ Paul, also, was personally receiving the life of Christ that was sustaining him as he participated in the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reiterating the principle: Paul said to the Corinthians that he was again *weak in Christ*. This meant that God would humiliate him among them, and that he would mourn over those who had sinned. He would be despised by some, given over to humiliation and rejection, and even appear to fail as he interfaced with the problems that were besetting the Corinthian church. Yet, through Christ in him, as Paul himself joined Christ's offering, God would be directing the power of God toward those in need. As the power of God became operative through offering, then deliverance and change were accomplished in people's lives. Paul, and those ministering with him, then experienced resurrection power and life within *their own* lives. This life was given to them, personally, and it was also given to those who were receiving their ministry. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul described this ministry as his travail through which Christ was formed in others.²⁵

How are we speaking?

Through our consideration of the apostolic call and ministry of Paul, we can identify two different *modes* of speaking, or ministry, in the church. The Scriptures, in fact, identify four different *bases* from which a Christian may speak. Recognising the differences between these modes of speaking is important in maintaining our

22 2Co 12:20-21

23 2Co 12:21

24 2Co 13:3-4

25 Gal 4:19

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sanctification as sons of God, and ensuring that we are ministers of the Spirit rather than ministers of sin or of wickedness.

Speaking on behalf of Christ

A person may speak on behalf of Christ. Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, saying, 'We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God [the Father] were making an appeal through us; we beg you *on behalf of Christ*, be reconciled to God.'²⁶ We also recall that Paul qualified his comments regarding divorce 'as his own', rather than as the Lord's.²⁷ Although it was his opinion on the matter, Paul was confident to make these assertions, testifying, 'I also have the Spirit of God.'²⁸ It was clear that Paul was speaking from the basis of his *sanctification*.

Many people *presume* to speak on behalf of Christ, having experienced, in only a preliminary measure, regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. This is the mode of many commentators who speak from the basis of their natural intellect and theological opinions. However, unlike Paul, they are neither spiritual nor joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. Consequently, their ministry has no power, and their hearers receive no illumination.

As Paul demonstrated, there is validity in speaking on behalf of Christ. However, the efficacy of this ministry will depend upon a person's ongoing participation in the offering of Christ. Even in the example highlighted above, Paul testified that He was speaking on behalf of Christ because it was the Father who was entreating Paul's hearers through him. In this regard, his words were not merely theological opinions regarding the concepts of reconciliation or redemption. They *were the ministry of reconciliation* that enables a person to be born of God and joined to the fellowship of the body of Christ.

Christ Himself speaking and ministering through us in power

Once a person has been born of the Spirit, each Person of the Godhead is able to speak through them. This is because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Christ are dwelling within them.

Christ Himself is able to speak and minister in power through a son of God. The gift is Christ Himself. As they speak, Christ is giving the gift of His own grace to another through them.

26 2Co 5:20

27 1Co 7:12

28 1Co 7:40

This mode of speaking also applies to the Spirit of the Father. We recall the words of Jesus, who said, 'But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; *for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*'²⁹

Likewise, the Holy Spirit speaks through believers according to the gifts of the Spirit. For example, in Antioch, as the church fasted and prayed together, *'The Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them".'*³⁰

Paul summarised this mode as 'speaking by the Spirit of God'.³¹ He further explained that 'there are diversities of gifts, but the same [Holy] Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord [Christ]. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God [the Father] who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.'³²

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are able to speak through a person, even if that person does not join or honour the offering of Christ through baptism and ongoing participation in the communion. Jesus was speaking of people like this when He warned that 'many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!"'³³

Importantly, while these people will perform many wonders in Christ's name, Christ will not be formed in their hearers through their ministry. Furthermore, their hearers will not know deliverance from the other law or from their besetting sin. This is because God's life can only be transferred to another person through offering, and the body of sin can only be removed by joining the circumcision of Christ.

Speaking as a son of God, in Christ

When a person who has been born of the Spirit is baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, their own sonship is hidden with Christ in the house of the Father, in heaven. They are made members of Christ's corporate body on earth, and receive a share in the life and nature of Christ. The Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit continue to speak through them as they accept their sanctification to be a particular and unique member of Christ's body.

29 Mat 10:19-20

33 Mat 7:22-23

30 Act 13:2

31 1Co 12:3

32 1Co 12:4-7

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Through His parables, Jesus taught that each slave in His house receives one mina, as well as a measure of talent that is given to them according to their ability.³⁴ The authority of Christ speaking through a person according to gift could be likened to the mina. This distinguishes it from a talent, which Jesus used to describe His own life and nature. His slaves are to multiply the talent that they receive from Christ. It matures and increases in them as they maintain their fellowship in the offering of Christ through suffering. By this means, they accrue for themselves an eternal reward.

Having joined the fellowship of Christ's offering by baptism, and then continuing to participate in His offering by eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood, a son of God is able to *speak and minister in Christ according to their sanctified name*. In this regard, they speak and minister by the Holy Spirit, with the life and divine nature of Christ. This is how they multiply their 'talent'. The Holy Spirit is given to them as the pledge of their eternal inheritance as a son of God. This means that He is the expression of their sonship. Furthermore, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, they are joined to the weakness of Christ where they have access to His life and are able to transfer it to others.

Amplifying what we introduced earlier, it is evident that Paul's ministry was not based merely on Christ speaking through him. If this were so, his ministry would have been no different from the ministry mode of many in Corinth. It was a church that Paul described as lacking in no gift.³⁵ However, the endemic carnality and widespread sinful activities of those in the congregation demonstrated the inadequacy of a ministry that was based solely on the exercise of spiritual gifts.

Paul explained to the Corinthians that he was speaking to them *in Christ*. This was in contrast to Christ speaking *through him*.³⁶ Paul's mode was to come among them in weakness. He expected to be humiliated and mistreated by some of them. By this means, he was joining the offering and suffering of Christ and ministering in weakness as Christ had done. As part of this fellowship in Christ's offering, Paul committed himself to mourn and travail for the many who had sinned. This mourning and travail was the travail 'of the Spirit', to which Paul was joined as he maintained his participation in the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.³⁷

Because Paul was weak in Christ through humiliation, much labour and suffering, Christ was mighty toward Paul's hearers and in his hearers.³⁸ The life and power

34 Luk 19:13.
Mat 25:15

35 1Co 1:7

36 2Co 12:19

37 Rom 8:26-28

38 2Co 13:3

of God was being ministered to them as Paul filled up what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ for their sake. By this means, Christ was being formed in them.³⁹ This is the principle of 'offering transfer'. More specifically, as Paul died with them through the suffering that he experienced at their hands, they were able to receive Christ's life from him and come back from the death of sin with him. In other words, because Paul's offering was working in Christ, he was being raised with those who were receiving the life of Christ through Paul's fellowship in the offering of Christ.

This effective working of Paul's ministry in the lives of his hearers was the proof that Christ was speaking to the Corinthians through him. It was not merely his capacity to exercise spiritual gifts among them. Paul's mode among them demonstrated that he had been sent to them as a father in Christ Jesus, and that he had begotten them through this travelling process as he preached the word of God to them.⁴⁰

Challenging the Corinthian congregation, Paul said that if they claimed that they were born of God, and that Christ also lived within their hearts, they should live and minister in the same mode that he did. He wrote, 'Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognise this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test? But I trust that you will realise that we ourselves do not fail the test.'⁴¹

Paul asked the whole Corinthian congregation to live by the same faith and mode that he had received from Christ. This was so that Christ could speak and minister through them and direct the power of God toward others. He wanted them to understand the true secret of ministry: as Christ ministered the power of God to others through them, then they also would be sustained in their weakness and be able to minister as sons of God and as members of the body of Christ. The same is so for us. It is only as we live this way that we pass the test that demonstrates that Christ is living in us as sons of God and that we are in Christ, ministering as members of His body.

Speaking from the basis of carnality

The fourth mode of speaking that a person may adopt in the church is to speak from the basis of their own carnality. In this regard, Paul warned his readers about false teachers who presumed to minister the word from the basis of their self-defined

39 Col 1:24. Gal 4:19

40 1Co 4:15

41 2Co 13:5-6

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projections. He said that these people taught strange doctrines that deviated from the truth that had been delivered to the churches through the ascension gift graces of Christ. He said that they wanted to be teachers of the Law, even though they did not understand what they were saying nor the matters about which they made confident assertions.⁴²

Jude described such ministers as ‘sensual persons, who cause divisions, *not having the Spirit*’.⁴³ Their words have no power to effect change in the life of their hearers.⁴⁴ Consequently, those who receive and promote their teaching become deceived, and cheat themselves of the faith of the Son of God.⁴⁵

The fellowship of the word

Having considered the way in which the word of Christ is to be ministered, it is important to understand how a person is equipped with the gospel of sonship so that they can speak it with boldness. The first point to note is that a believer is able to *speak* the gospel because they have *received* the gospel. As Paul noted, ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach).⁴⁶ The word remains in a person’s mouth and in their heart, as long as they, in love, remain connected to those who preach the word.

Christ has committed His word, which is from the Father, to a fellowship of overseers, elders, deacons and firstfruits brethren, called a ‘presbytery’. The apostle John explained that, from this fellowship, presbyters declare what they have seen and heard concerning the word of life. Those who receive their message have the word in their mouth and in their heart, and are able to join the fellowship from which the word is proceeding. Significantly, this fellowship is with the Father and His Son.⁴⁷

There are two competing ways of relating and functioning within the presbytery. One is the way of the Spirit; the other is of the flesh. These two opposing cultural ways impact upon the ministry of the word of God in the church and from the church.

A fellowship in the light

A presbytery that functions by the Spirit is a true fellowship in the light. In this fellowship, presbyters receive the graced messengers of Christ and the word that

42 1Ti 1:3-7

46 Rom 10:8

43 Jud 1:19

47 1Jn 1:1-3

44 Col 2:23

45 Eph 5:6. Col 2:8.
1Ti 6:21

they are laying down to the presbytery in offering. *This is because the presbyters are poor in spirit.* Consequently, they meet the word in repentance as they turn from their theological reasoning based on intellectualism, and from their self-definition. They receive the word with meekness as those who are yoked with Christ and learning from Him.⁴⁸ That is, they are able to be taught, or disciplined, under the lordship of Christ that is operative in the presbytery through the four ministry graces of the apostle, prophet, teacher and evangelist.

The evidence of this spiritual demeanour is that they are doers of the word and not hearers only. For this reason, they are not deceived, or in darkness, but are full of illumination.⁴⁹ Before they proclaim what they have received in fellowship from the ascension gift messengers, they first communicate what they have understood to the presbytery. They are then given to their work of ministry by the presbytery. Their ministry is defined by their sanctification. Their gift, through illumination, has made room for them.⁵⁰ Their ministry is now a true expression of their name (i.e. who they really are).

As those who have been addressed by Christ and illuminated by the Spirit, they are able to speak according to their sanctified name as an elder or as a firstfruits leader like Stephanas.⁵¹ In the same manner as Paul, they are able to travail for others so that Christ is formed in them.⁵² This is the way of weakness, which is fundamental to the fellowship of Christ's offering. As they are speaking in Christ, He is mighty in power toward those who receive their ministry.⁵³

A person who attempts to minister the word of God, without receiving it by offering, is either seeking to reveal themselves or merely restating what was laid down in the presbytery. Paul described these forms of ministry as 'peddling the word of God'.⁵⁴ People who peddle the word of God are ministering for their own benefit and validity. Jude described people who minister this way as, among other things, 'Clouds without water'.⁵⁵ Their teaching does not bring the blessing of rest or refreshing to the sheep of the Lord's pasture.⁵⁶ This approach to ministry in the church is an example of *collegiality*.

Collegiality

In contrast to fellowship in the light, the collegial mode is a carnal approach to Christ's administration. Collegiality refers to every form of engagement and expression within the presbytery that is not from the basis of *offering*. While there

48 Mat 11:28-30

52 Gal 4:19

56 Psa 133:3.

49 Jas 1:21-25

53 2Co 13:3

Isa 28:9-12

50 Pro 18:16

54 2Co 2:17

51 1Co 16:15

55 Jud 1:12

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are several different expressions of collegiality, those who operate in this mode have one thing in common – they measure themselves against the ascension-graced messengers, rather than receiving the illumination that is coming from the hand of Christ. Let us consider some examples of collegiality that may operate within the presbytery.

A common form of collegiality is demonstrated by those who view themselves and their own ministry expression as equal to the word that is being ministered in the presbytery by those with ascension gift grace from Christ. While they may not be questioning the value of what is being ministered by ascension-graced brethren, they view these ministers and their word as comparable to their own ministry capacities and inspirations. They consider the word that is laid down through offering by ascension gift messengers as simply another ministry initiative that is being voiced among equals or colleagues. In this regard, they neither recognise, nor accept, that the grace of God is being ministered from the hand of Christ to them by their brethren. They therefore receive no illumination or instruction from Christ as it is being expressed by ascension gift messengers in the midst of the presbytery.

There are those in the presbytery who view the word as a resource from which they can profit. That is, they become empowered by the word or their association with the messenger, and presume to use the word that is being laid down through offering to service their own endeavours. They profess that their endeavours are for the advancement of the kingdom; however, their motives are corrupt and self-centred. Their motives are based in the pursuit of power, influence and wealth.

Collegiality is evident when those with theological training and qualifications preference the science of linguistic interpretation over illumination that comes by the Spirit, as the authority of the Scriptures. They subject Christ's messengers and their word to theological and linguistic scrutiny. What is deemed to be acceptable is then selectively appropriated to their own ministry initiatives. In this way, the grace of the messenger is being misappropriated to their own agenda. They presume to preach because of their theological qualification, but the content of their message is that which they have selected from the word of Christ's messengers. They do this because their own spiritual sight is limited.

Collegiality is also demonstrated in the mode of those who creep into the fellowship of presbytery, 'unnoticed'. They often cleave, with deceit and flattery, to the graced messengers.⁵⁷ This is because they seek to take the grace of God

57 Dan 11:34

to themselves and to use the people of the congregation as a resource for their own agendas. Jude said that these people are 'marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who *turn the grace of our God into lewdness* [filthy through mixture] and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ'.⁵⁸ These men promote alternative gospels to the gospel of sonship. Paul said that men like this 'profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work'.⁵⁹ The apostle Peter described these people as 'false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them'.⁶⁰

The need for fellowship

We are not to function by appropriating, for our own benefit, the resource of blessing that God gives to us. In other words, we must not treat the word as merely theological content that we can draw upon to service our own ministry endeavours as elders or as members of the body of Christ. This kind of trading springs from the desire of the other law within us, and will corrupt us.

Regarding this matter, we recall that when Cain met Abel in the field, he did not join him in the fellowship of offering. That is, he had not come to receive a lamb for an offering from his brother. Rather, Cain competed against Abel for the resource of an offering and, consequently, destroyed his brother.

Cain's desire to have what he wanted overcame his capacity to see his need for fellowship with his brother, and for the fellowship of prayer. In this regard, the apostle James wrote, 'Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.'⁶¹

The 'collegial model', and the 'first love fellowship model' that was exemplified in Ephesus, are not compatible, in the same way that flesh must not take priority over the Holy Spirit. However, it is not possible to escape from the collegial model unless sanctification, offering and fellowship are understood. To whatever degree the collegial approach of an individual overrides fellowship, to the same degree offering and sanctification will be violated.

58 Jud 1:4

59 Tit 1:16

60 2Pe 2:1

61 Jas 4:1-3

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

Christ, speaking by gift within a ministry-graced person, is the *catalyst* for fellowship. The individual, in sanctification, speaking in Christ by the Holy Spirit, is the *expression* of first love fellowship. This expression then becomes offering as each person lays down their life to see others receive and reveal the life of Christ as their own. These elements are essential to a presbytery administration. Without Christ speaking among the brethren, there is no presbytery. Unless, from the presbytery, brethren speak in Christ, there is no expression of fellowship.

By offering through fellowship, the grace of others is multiplied and revealed. As the church functions this way, it makes increase of itself and begins to grow. Offering is the means by which the life of Jesus is multiplied and transferred to another to become their life. Offering is never for the purpose of serving another person's self-centred agenda.

The implications of refusing those who speak the word of grace

Just as it is important to consider the mode in which the grace of God is ministered to others, it is equally important to consider how we ourselves receive the word of grace. If we are not receiving grace as it is ministered from Christ's administration, we will have no capacity to live as a Christian in this world. Neither will we be effective ministers of the grace of God to others.

When a person is struggling in their Christian pilgrimage, it is because they have not availed themselves of the grace of God in one or all of its four expressions. This will be either because it was not made available to them as the light of the word of grace from the presbytery, or because the grace of God was refused by the one who is struggling.

A person falls short of the grace of God when they cease to look carefully and purposefully into the face of Christ.⁶² They cease looking into Christ's face when they refuse to receive Christ, who is speaking to them from heaven through the four faces of His administration on earth.⁶³ A person who is falling short of the grace of God is selling their spiritual birthright as they pursue their own religious aspirations and fleshly expectations of life.⁶⁴ That is, they are trading the sonship that was predestined for them, for the fleshly satisfaction of making a name for themselves. When they do this, instead of being rooted and grounded in love as a fruitful son of God, a root of bitterness will inevitably spring up in them, causing trouble, and defiling many.⁶⁵

62 Heb 12:25

63 Heb 12:25

64 Heb 12:16

65 Heb 12:15

Paul likened the religious mode of living that denies the necessity for receiving grace from the face of Christ to having a veil over one's own heart.⁶⁶ As we considered in chapter two, this veil impedes the true light that is shining upon the carnal Christian from the four faces of Christ's administration. Consequently, they become darkened in their understanding of the way of life, and fall back under the yoke of bondage to fear.⁶⁷ They become like the children of Israel who were afraid to enter the land of promise. This land symbolises their inheritance as sons of God. Paul described the children of Israel as rebellious and having an evil heart of unbelief that departed from the living God.⁶⁸

The Holy Spirit, who is the One who shines the light from Christ's face into our hearts, warns us, saying, 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways." So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest."' ⁶⁹

The point to understand is that a person will fall short of the grace of God when they cease receiving the word that is ministered to them through the four administrations of grace that Christ has established in His church. As a result, their capacity for Christian living will be adversely affected. Let us consider this in more detail.

King/slave

A person who defaults in relation to the face of the lion is presuming upon kingship rather than accepting the work of slavehood that is supposed to characterise their Christian life in this age. If a person refuses to be the slave of Christ in the house of the Son, they will have no resources for life. Their talents and minas will be denied them. Instead of accepting their slavehood in the house of the Son, and multiplying Christ's life through sanctified obedience, they will bury the life of Christ in the ground of their own fleshly endeavours.⁷⁰ For this reason, their treasure in heaven will be limited, and their sanctification according to name will be frustrated. Their false projections of identity will serve as a deception to their own mind. That is, they will believe that their own way is the way of righteousness. Instead of receiving and walking in the illumination that the Spirit gives through the ministry of Christ's four faces, they will believe that their own religious way is light; yet it is darkness.⁷¹ In this state, oppression and failure will plague their life.

66 2Co 3:16

70 Mat 25:18

67 Eph 4:18.
Rom 8:15

71 Mat 6:23

68 Heb 3:12

69 Heb 3:7-11

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Once a person has been born of the Spirit and then baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, their own sonship is to remain hidden with Christ in the house of the Father.⁷² They are made slaves in the house of the Son. Their work on earth, as His slaves, is to reveal Christ's sonship by the Holy Spirit. By this means, a son of God accrues for themselves their eternal sonship inheritance for the new heavens and earth.

To presume upon kingship (which has been reserved for expression in the new heavens and earth) is to pursue the revelation and expression of one's own name and identity as a son of God. A person who does this is a rebellious and unbelieving Christian who has become captive to their self-definition. This grieves the Holy Spirit, whose work is to sanctify them to their true calling and sonship.⁷³ The Holy Spirit opposes this person. On account of the Holy Spirit's opposition to their fleshly motivations, this person is unable to successfully proceed in the way they have chosen.⁷⁴ It is the Holy Spirit Himself who is frustrating their self-revealing endeavours.

Priest/offering

A person who refuses to receive the word of grace as it proceeds from the face of the ox is refusing to present themselves as a living sacrifice. Instead, they seek to priest, or minister, the virtues of Christ as a vicarious offering. Their view of the cross is largely limited to the price that Christ paid with His blood for their sin. Just as they seek to be blessed with the benefits of Christ's atoning work without participating in His offering and sufferings, they also minister this proposition to others.

What they fail to recognise is that Christ's passion was first the ministry of a *suffering Priest*. His confession was, 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. *Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.*⁷⁵ In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ prayed to the Father, saying, 'Not My will, but Yours be done.'⁷⁶ Prayer is an activity of priesthood. In obedience to the Father, Christ then priested Himself as a living sacrifice. By this means, He authored a pathway by which we could become sons of God. Moreover, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.⁷⁷

72 Col 3:3

76 Luk 22:42

73 Eph 4:30

77 Heb 2:10. Heb 5:9

74 Gal 5:17

75 Heb 10:5-7

The grace of life from the face of the ox is ministered to a person for the purpose of joining them to a kingdom of priests. A person who resists this grace is indisposed to receiving and doing a will that is not their own. However, grace is being given by Christ so that we are able to priest ourselves as a living sacrifice in the same manner in which He did. We must, therefore, receive a will that is not our own, and offer ourselves according to that will as one who has joined the fellowship of Christ's priesthood.⁷⁸

When a person refuses to offer themselves as a living sacrifice, they have no capacity for fellowship in the body of Christ, even though they may be quite socially engaged. Because they are unwilling to walk in the light with others, the blood of Christ will not be effective in their life.⁷⁹ Accordingly, they will have no capacity to minister the life of the Son within the body of Christ or beyond the body of Christ. Alienation, incapacity and refusal of relationship in the fellowship of the Son and the fellowship of the body of Christ, the church, will result.

Discipleship

A person who refuses to be discipled and taught is rejecting any sense of lordship that resides in the master-pupil relationship. They are their own master, their own commentator, and their own judge of their Christian pilgrimage and culture. Paul described these people as 'novices' who are puffed up in pride.⁸⁰ They are idolatrous people who are puffed up with *their own knowledge*. As Paul noted, 'If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.'⁸¹

In contrast, a true disciple will follow their Master, doing as their Master does.⁸² They will accept the word of instruction that comes from the lordship of Christ, which is expressed in the church through the four faces of Christ's administration. They will also accept the thorn in their flesh that He gives them as a protection against pride, which is the undoing of the carnal believer.⁸³

Fatherhood

When fatherhood is rejected, nurture and admonition do not operate in the life of a person. Fatherhood can be as kind as it likes, but the novice will mistake this kindness for approval and will take advantage of it. They will not receive the discipline and chastening of fatherhood for their correction.

78 Rom 12:1

79 1Jn 1:7

80 1Ti 3:6

81 1Co 8:2-3

82 Mat 10:24-25.

Luk 6:40.

Joh 13:13-17

83 2Co 12:7

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The implication of this mistake is that the novice will not remain sanctified to their name as a son of God. They, therefore, cannot be delivered to a more excellent way, which is the way of love.⁸⁴ Instead, as spoilt children, they will entreat fatherhood and motherhood for the purpose of affirming their self-projections. They will not be able to honour their father and mother, nor their in-laws in the family, nor anyone else in the church who has the capacity to exercise spiritual fatherhood or motherhood toward them.

Selling all for the gospel

The gospel of sonship is the mystery of Christ and the heartland of the whole of Scripture. It is the pearl of great price.⁸⁵ Jesus also likened it to a treasure hidden in the field which, for joy over it, a man will sell everything he has (and must sell everything he has) in order to possess it.⁸⁶

We must sell all that we have to see and buy the gospel of sonship. If we have not sold all for this gospel, we will not meet it with the joy of illumination. Instead, we will meet and teach the word with the collegial approach of our own intellectualism that we bring to bear upon the subject. With collegiality as our approach, religious information will substitute for the confession and expression of Christ speaking in us, and us speaking in Christ.

Christ is not weak in us when we are ministering in weakness. Rather, He is mighty in the effect of His word upon the hearts of our hearers.⁸⁷ When we minister in weakness, according to our name, and by the Holy Spirit, we transfer the life of Christ to our hearers. We will join them, with ourselves, to the travail and sufferings of Christ, so that the word may be born and become flesh in them. This means that the life of Christ will be expressed through them as they negotiate the sufferings or fight of affliction that transpires in their lives and relationships as their culture changes and becomes spiritual and godly.

84 1Co 12:31

85 Mat 13:45-46

86 Mat 13:44

87 2Co 13:3