

Born of the **SPIRIT**

Understanding the steps of salvation

STUDY GUIDE

National Youth Convention 2017

Born of the Spirit

Understanding the steps of salvation

David V Hall Jonathon Wills Richie Kaa Luke Pomery Lachlan Perrin

Study Guide for National Youth Convention 2017

December 2016

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NOW THAT FAITH HAS COME

Luke Pomery

In this magazine we are considering the implications of the gospel of sonship. The gospel of sonship is the primary message of the Scriptures. In particular, we are looking at the question, ‘What does the gospel bring us?’

We will consider what the gospel brings to a new believer. And we will consider what the gospel has already given to every child born to a Christian parent. For those born into a Christian family, it is important to appreciate the precious and magnificent promises given to them by God. In these articles, we will examine some of the practical implications of the gospel for all those who have been born of God.

BORN OF THE SPIRIT

The gospel brings to us the faith of the Son of God. What is the faith of the Son? Simply, He believes that we can become children of God. He has faith for us! And He gives His own faith to us, so that we can believe what He believes about us. A new believer receives the faith to be born as a son of God. For those of us who were born into a covenant household, the faith of the Son enables us to *live* each day as a son of God in Christ Jesus and fulfil the Father's will.

In his letter to the Christians in Galatia, the apostle Paul drew attention to some key aspects of the gospel of sonship, as part of a pastoral initiative he was taking toward them. For this reason, his letter provides useful clarity, particularly concerning the subject of faith. Paul summarised the gospel with his statement, 'In order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the *promise of the Spirit through faith*'.¹ The promise of the Spirit is the coming of the Holy Spirit, who is the essence of the New Covenant. The Holy Spirit connects us to the fellowship of God, who is Spirit.² The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son come and dwell in us. When God dwells in our hearts, He enables us by His Spirit to live as He lives. Let's look at how a person receives the promise of the Spirit.

First, Paul explained that the promise of the Spirit is given to those who believe.³ It is only by God's grace through the Spirit that a person can believe God's word that calls them to be His son.⁴ To claim they could become a son of God through their own efforts would be an insane presumption. The gospel is a specific call to accept God's predestination for their life. When they accept, believe and submit to God's will for their lives, God then reckons them to be His son.⁵ They will, however, need God's grace to help them receive all that He has promised them. Grace is God's ability within them enabling them to do God's will.

Second, God the Father gives faith to the hearer. This faith is gifted to them for their salvation.⁶ To understand this faith, it is helpful to note that when Christ came into the world, the faith of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for Their covenant will to come to pass was revealed in Him. He was the embodiment of Their fullness.⁷ The one faith of God has come through the Son of God.⁸

Evidently, it is the faith of the Son of God that the Father gives to the hearer so that they can believe what God believes about their sonship. Because they have

1 Gal 3:14

7 Col 1:19. Col 2:9

2 Joh 4:24

8 Eph 4:5. Gal 3:25

3 Gal 3:22

4 2Co 3:18

5 Gal 3:6-7

6 Eph 2:8. 2Co 3:18

received the faith of the Son, a believer can have boldness and confident access to God's purpose for them, which is to become a son of God.⁹ It is important to note that they are not receiving the Son Himself at this point; they are receiving His faith, from the Father. The believer no longer simply has faith *in* God. Now, they have the faith *of* God.

The faith of the Son of God begins to work in them by the love of God that is poured into their heart by Holy Spirit, once the Holy Spirit resides in them. The Holy Spirit was given to them by the Father when they cried out to the Lord for help to believe.¹⁰ Although it is not the topic of this article, we note that the first faith action of a new believer is to confess Christ's lordship.¹¹ They are now a disciple of Christ, and the faith of the Son has become part of their life.

Third, because they are sons of God by faith, and also have received the faith of God the Son as a gift, God then sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their heart.¹² Having received the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Father, a believer is strengthened to receive Christ into their heart. Now that the Son has come to dwell in their heart, they are justified by faith when they do the works that the Son of God does through them.¹³ All Three of the Godhead now dwell in their heart. Every child born into a Christian family has received these blessings while in their mother's womb. They are truly blessed of God because He has given them His Spirit.

Finally, the faith of the Son enables a believer to live as a son of God for the rest of their life. They are to live continually by the faith of the Son. For a new believer and for those born in a Christian family, this is the key point! Paul testified, '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.'¹⁴ The faith of the Son is the means by which we can live as sons of God and fulfil His purpose for our lives.

Paul amplified this summary with many illustrations and pastoral points. For example, he firmly rebuked the Galatian believers for accepting a gospel other than the gospel of sonship, which he had preached to them.

The same issue is confronting our generation. It is evident that many have turned away from the high calling of sonship. Instead of living in the faith of sonship, many are following a different gospel. An alternative gospel can appear to be

9 Eph 3:11-12.
Gal 3:26

12 Gal 4:6
13 Gal 3:24

10 Mar 9:24.
Joh 14:16-17.
Gal 5:6

14 Gal 2:20 KJV

11 1Co 12:3. 2Co 4:13.
Rom 10:8-9

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Christian, but it lacks the power and faith that is necessary to live as a Christian. God only joins His power to the faith of the Son of God. The faith that is like a grain of mustard seed, that Jesus spoke of, is the faith of the Son.¹⁵ We can only do the works of faith that belong to our sonship by the power of God. Followers of alternative gospels have not accepted the call upon them to be a sanctified son of God.

God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. His provision is full and complete. Nothing is lacking from God towards us. The faith of the Son has come! He has given us everything we need to live as sons of God.

¹⁵ Mat 17:20.
Mar 11:22

Study Questions

- What does the Son of God believe about us, and how do we believe that too?

- In your own experience, how has the faith of the Son enabled you to live as a son of God and fulfil God's purpose for your life?

FAITH SUPPLIES VIRTUE

Luke Pomery

The apostle Peter addressed his second letter to those who had received a precious faith of the same kind as his.¹ He was writing to Christians who had received the faith of God. Peter testified similarly that he lived and was sustained by the faith of the Son of God.² We have the same faith as Peter! We have the faith of the Son of God.

What is His faith? He believes we will come to full maturity as unique sons of God. Now that we have His faith, we believe what He believes about us – that we will be useful and fruitful sons of God!

1 2Pe 1:1

2 2Pe 1:3

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The Holy Spirit pours love continually into our hearts, enabling the faith of God to be active in our lives.³ Faith works in us through the love of God.⁴ The faith of God is made substantial in us, and will increase in us throughout our pilgrimage on this earth. Let's consider what the fruit of this substantial faith will be.

Working by the love of God, faith supplies to us the seven qualities called 'the excellencies' of Christ.⁵ These are virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.⁶ These qualities are the proven character of a son of God.⁷ They are evidence that the faith of God is working in us.

Peter wrote, 'If these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ'.⁸ Once we have the faith of the Son of God, these qualities are ours. Faith supplies them to us. As we continue to live by the faith of the Son, these qualities will increase in us.

Virtue is one of these qualities. We begin to manifest virtue as a result of receiving the faith of the Son of God. What do we mean by virtue? We could say that virtue is the character, attitude and actions demonstrated by someone who has the faith of God. Virtue, as well as the other qualities of Christ's life, needs to be received by us, formed in us and demonstrated through us. A virtuous person is one in whom the substance of Christ's life is being formed.⁹

Virtue is evident in a person's conduct – the way they live and relate in their day-to-day life. For example, Ruth was described as a virtuous woman because her faith and conduct were known by many; the writer of Proverbs described the conduct of a virtuous wife.¹⁰ We can see that a virtuous person is known for their conduct and manner. Let us consider what the conduct of a virtuous person looks like.

- They are *full of conviction* regarding what God is asking of them. They are illuminated and, as a result, they are full of initiative – eagerly getting on with what God has planned for them.¹¹ However, they do not become independent or isolated.
- They are *full of strength*. Being one who is strengthened by the Lord, they in turn strengthen themselves for the task.¹² They simply 'get on with the job' that pertains to their God-given name and works. They do not seek the praise of others. Interestingly, however, others will bear witness to their works of faith, and it will be to their praise.¹³

3 Rom 5:5

8 2Pe 1:8

12 Deu 3:18.

4 Gal 5:6

9 Gal 4:19

Pro 31:17,25.

5 1Pe 2:9. 2Pe 1:3

10 Rth 3:11. Pro 31:10

Hab 3:19

6 2Pe 1:5-7

11 Pro 31:13

13 Pro 31:31

7 Rom 5:4

- They are *full of joy* and have an ease about their character.¹⁴ They are easily met by others. They do not allow themselves to have a victim attitude, nor the demeanour of ‘feeling sorry for themselves’. Since they know the faithfulness of God towards them, they are not afraid of difficult seasons.¹⁵
- They are *well-pleasing* to God. This is because they offer themselves in obedience to His will.¹⁶ They are content with their identity and predestination given by God. In the Psalms, the virtuous person is described as having ‘oil’ on their face, causing their face to shine.¹⁷ Their confidence in God and resolve concerning His will are visible to those around them.

All of us can demonstrate virtue. Virtue is the evidence that faith is working in us! As a result of being a virtuous person, we will bring forth the fruit of sonship to maturity.¹⁸ As we submit to the life-long process of Christ’s life being formed in us, we will prove ourselves useful and fruitful in every phase of life.¹⁹

14 Pro 31:13,25

15 Pro 31:21

16 Rom 12:1. Php 4:18

17 Psa 104:15

18 Luk 8:14

19 2Pe 1:8

Study Questions

- What is the evidence that the faith of God is working in our lives?

- Having a better understanding of the faith of God, how will that change the way you conduct yourself and thus demonstrate virtue?

HIS JOY IN US

Luke Pomery

In this article, we will consider three aspects of joy. First, we will look at the joy we experience when we hear the word of God. Second, we will consider the joy that Christ possesses. We can ‘hear’ and recognise this joy in His voice, when He speaks His word to us. Third, we shall see that Christ desires that His joy becomes our joy. Jesus said to His disciples, ‘I have spoken to you, [so] that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.’¹ This joy in us is evidence that the gospel of sonship is effective and being outworked in our lives.

First, we are filled with joy whenever we hear the word of God. In the parable of the sower, Jesus explained that the person who receives the word of God

¹ Joh 15:11

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with illumination has joy in their heart.² John the Baptist said that we rejoice whenever we hear the voice of the Bridegroom.³ Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom, and His church is being made ready as His bride.⁴ Truly, our heart is filled with joy whenever we hear Christ's voice as He speaks to His church.

Second, Jesus Christ endured the cross and poured out His life because of the joy that was set before Him.⁵ What is His joy? It is the joy that the Everlasting Covenant of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will enable many sons to be brought to glory.⁶ With this joy in His heart, Jesus endured the travail and anguish of offering to see us born as sons of God!⁷

We read in the Scriptures that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rejoice over us with gladness.⁸ In the parables, Jesus described the rejoicing in heaven that breaks forth when a person is born as a son of God.⁹ The Lord rejoices over every one of us! This joy is expressed in Christ's voice whenever He speaks to us through His messengers. Jesus Christ is full of joy because *He believes that Their covenant plan will be accomplished.*

When Jesus expressed this joy to His disciples, He explained how God's covenant would be outworked.¹⁰ However, the disciples did not yet *understand*. Jesus knew that if they had received illumination, they would have been full of joy at hearing His words. Jesus further explained to His disciples, 'Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your *heart will rejoice*, and your joy no-one will take from you.'¹¹ In the days after Christ was raised from the dead, the disciples were born of the Spirit.¹² When that took place, because faith had come in their hearts, they could now rejoice with His joy.

And this is the third aspect of joy. His joy becomes our joy. As we read earlier, Jesus said to His disciples, 'I have spoken to you, [so] that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.'¹³ How does Christ's joy become our joy? His joy is a result of His faith. We receive the joy of Christ because we receive His faith. We go on receiving His faith as we continue to receive the word of Christ.¹⁴ And we live by His faith because we have His Spirit dwelling in us.¹⁵

What is His faith? It is that He believes Their plan is going to work – that many sons will be brought forth to glory. His faith is given to us, so that we *believe the same thing He believes*. This is how His joy becomes our joy. As we live by the faith

2 Mat 13:20

7 Luk 22:44.

12 Joh 20:22

3 Joh 3:29

Isa 53:11

13 Joh 15:11

4 Rev 21:9

8 Zep 3:17

14 Rom 10:17

5 Heb 12:2

9 Luk 15:7,10

15 Gal 2:20. Gal 4:6

6 Heb 2:10

10 Joh 14:28

11 Joh 16:22

His joy in us

of the Son of God, His will *is* being outworked and fulfilled in our lives, and in the lives of those around us. His covenant plan is coming to fruition. As such, His joy is made complete and full in us. His joy abides in us and no-one can take it from us. The apostle Peter described this as ‘joy inexpressible’.¹⁶

The joy of the Lord becomes our strength, enabling us to endure and persevere through every season.¹⁷ Jesus endured because of the joy that was set before Him. We also can endure because of the joy He has given us. The joy of the Lord being made complete in us is the evidence that the gospel is effective.

16 IPe 1:8

17 Neh 8:10

Study Questions

- How does Christ's joy become our joy?

- What is your testimony of the joy of Christ being made full in your life, as you have walked in obedience to His will?

TRAVAIL FOR SOMETHING NEW

Luke Pomery

We can understand travail as the *effort, pain and process* of bringing something to birth. When something is born, it is *new*. For example, a pregnant mother travails to bring a new person into the world. As Jesus noted, ‘Whenever a woman is in labour she has pain, but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish [or travail] because of the joy that a child has been born into the world.¹ Jesus used this example to explain that seasons of pain or sorrow would be turned into joy, whenever His life is being formed in us.²

1 Joh 16:21

2 Joh 16:20

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The Scriptures speak of a particular travail necessary for sons of men to be ‘born’ and then to ‘grow’ as sons of God. The Holy Spirit, as the Helper of the Father and Son, has a unique involvement in this travail. Not only does He travail personally for the sons of God; He also enables sons of God to travail with endurance for what God wants to establish and form in them.³ We also note that messengers of Christ travail for others so that Christ may be formed in them.⁴ This is the travail of Christ Himself within His disciple-messengers so that their ministry of the gospel will be effective towards those who hear them.

When the gospel is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit enables a person to hear and respond to the word of God. Even before a person has received the Holy Spirit, He pours out upon them the spirit of grace and supplication.⁵ Grace enables a person to hear what God is saying and see what God is giving to them. The Holy Spirit convicts them of sin, righteousness and judgement, causing them to know the love of God that called them to be a son of God, and to see why they have fallen short of God’s plan.⁶ God’s grace enables them to choose to receive this call and to respond with repentance. They begin to supplicate by the capacity given by the Holy Spirit.

The spirit of grace and supplication enables a person to mourn with godly sorrow. When a person mourns this way, it produces in them repentance, leading to salvation.⁷ They cry out to God to be forgiven for their sin. This sin is principally the pursuit of their own way. Importantly, however, the spirit of grace and supplication also urges them forward, beyond the joy of finding forgiveness from God. They begin to *travail for something new*.

The spirit of grace and supplication, given by the Holy Spirit, enables a person to travail for ‘new birth’.⁸ This person begins to cry out to God for help. God answers their cry and sends them the Holy Spirit.⁹ The Holy Spirit travails in them, so that they are brought forth as a newly born son of God. The season of travail results in fullness of joy, having resulted in new birth.¹⁰ However, at this point, the new believer is just a babe. There is a lifetime of growth and maturity ahead of them. The whole pilgrimage of growth following their ‘birth’ is also part of the travail.

The same is true for a child who is born into a Christian family. They are already partakers of the divine nature, through the faith of their parents.¹¹ However, they are a spiritual babe. The life of Christ needs to be formed and trained in them, so that they continue to grow to full maturity.

3 Rom 8:23,26 8 Joh 3:3,5

4 Gal 4:19 9 Joh 14:26

5 Zec 12:10 10 Luk 15:7

6 Joh 16:8 11 2Pe 1:4

7 2Co 7:10

For all of us, having been born as a son of God, this travail is an *ongoing* dimension of our Christian pilgrimage. There is continual effort, pain and process as we grow and mature as sons of God. As we pray, the Holy Spirit travails in us, so that we proceed to mature as sons of God.¹² We have daily fellowship with the Holy Spirit in His perpetual work of supplication and travail within us. The messengers of Christ also travail for Christ's life to be formed in us.¹³

There is also a travail which we personally experience in order to mature and grow. This is what it means to 'groan within ourselves' with the same travail as the Holy Spirit, until we come to full maturity in every season of our life. As Paul wrote, 'We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan [or travail] within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body'.¹⁴ In every circumstance in life, we mourn and travail as those with hope.¹⁵

Describing this travail, Paul said, 'I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'.¹⁶ This is our mindset too! And we can be encouraged at any point, that if we have a different way of thinking, God will reveal this to us.¹⁷ God helps us to be established in His work and mindset of travail, to see 'something new' come to birth. In our own lives, we can give thanks to God for the fruit that He has already brought forth in us. But we also realise there is more fruit to come. And we know we will have fellowship with Him and others in a travail to see this come to pass.

We are not only travailing for our own lives; we are also travailing for our brethren and for new believers. This is because the ministry of reconciliation has been committed to us.¹⁸ Christ makes us adequate as disciple-messengers. We participate in the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to see the life of Christ formed in others. We travail in word and prayer, so that others can grow as fruitful sons of God.¹⁹ What a privilege it is for us to share in God's travail to see the sons of men 'born' and 'grow' as sons of God.

12 Rom 8:26 18 2Co 5:18

13 Gal 4:19. Col 1:28 19 Col 4:12

14 Rom 8:23

15 1Th 4:13

16 Php 3:14

17 Php 3:15

Study Questions

- What is your understanding of the travail that we experience to be ‘born’ and ‘grow’ as sons of God?

- Describe how we travail, with the Holy Spirit, for the life of Christ to be formed in our brethren and in new believers?

BORN TO SEE

Lachlan Perrin

When Jesus taught Nicodemus about being ‘born again’ He identified three distinct elements of the new birth.¹ He said a person must be ‘born from above’, ‘born of water’ and ‘born of the Spirit’ in order to see and enter the kingdom of God. In this article we will discuss the first element of new birth and consider what it means for a young adult who has grown up in a Christian family.

When an unbeliever responds to the gospel message their human spirit, or identity, is regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit so that they can *see* the kingdom of God.² Jesus said that a person who receives this capacity has been ‘born from above’, or ‘born to see’. In contrast, a child born into a New Covenant family does not need their spirit regenerated and renewed. This is because, through godly

1 Joh 3:5

2 Tit 3:5

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parenting in the home, they are raised in the fellowship of one Spirit with the Father and the Son.³

When a person has been born from above, the eyes of their spiritual sight are ‘illuminated’ and they see the kingdom of God. They also see a way forward in life that is no longer bound by their flesh. Their perspective and decisions are no longer based on the information accumulated through their natural senses, and then processed by their fallen mind and its agendas. Having become spiritual, they can discern and eagerly pursue all that God has prepared for those who love Him.⁴ The apostle Paul described this spiritual sight as the ability to ‘know the things freely given to us by God, who is Spirit’.⁵

The danger for a covenant child is to reach their young adult years without learning how to receive and respond to illumination. When Jesus explained the subject of illumination, He described the human spirit as ‘the eye (spiritual sight) of the body’. He said, ‘When your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light’.⁶ Significantly, He proceeded to say, ‘Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness’.⁷

What does it mean for a young adult, who has grown up in the church, to be filled with light that is really darkness? It is possible for a covenant child to grow up attending the church program, participating in family devotions, singing at church meetings, partaking of the communion and even playing in the orchestra, without learning how to receive the word and the illumination it brings. In this way, the ‘light’ that is in them is really the ‘darkness’ of religious information and conformity. They can say all the ‘right’ things and make all the ‘right’ responses but cannot discern the things of the Spirit. Finally, Jesus Himself will say, ‘In vain do they worship Me. This people honours me with their lips but their heart is far away from Me’.⁸

The prophet Isaiah said, ‘Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness... woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!'⁹ The prophet spoke these words to God’s people because they presumed to be righteous, without having a genuine relationship with God. If a young adult presumes upon salvation because of their proximity to the church throughout their childhood, then they become legalistic and judgmental. Rather than allowing the illumination of the word to affirm and encourage their identity, name and works, they will become competitive with their brethren. They will approach fellowship based on religious information

3 Eph 2:18 7 Luk 11:35

4 1Co 2:9 8 Mat 15:8,9

5 1Co 2:12. Joh 4:24 9 Isa 5:20-21

6 Luk 11:34

and will compare themselves to others in an effort to determine who they are and where they fit.

The writer to the Hebrews described the transition from childhood to mature Christian adulthood. He said, ‘Everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an *infant*. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil’.¹⁰ A Christian will remain an ‘infant’ if they fail to train their spiritual senses. We train our spiritual senses by seeking out and applying ourselves to the word of righteousness and the illumination it brings. There is a point for every young person when they must take up their own initiative to fellowship in the word of God, beyond their family devotions. While ever their application to the word of righteousness remains only a participation in their parents’ commitment to the word, they are not ‘weaned’ and continue to need ‘milk’ from their parents.

A young person’s application to the word of God trains them to understand and accept the things of the Spirit.¹¹ It is vital that every young person be established in the fellowship of the word proclaimed at communion, because this is the context where relationship with God is sustained. Without a personal and disciplined approach to the word of God, an untrained person will progressively consider the things of the spirit foolishness. The temptation throughout the middle Young Adult years is to draw away from fellowship. This is a confused response. Instead of using their emerging adult accountability to become responsible for maintaining fellowship, they use it to take control of their own life and ‘make it themselves’.

In contrast, a maturing young adult will possess the testimony, ‘I delight in the Lord’s commandments, which I love’.¹² This is because they have grown sensitive to illumination. They will confess that the words Jesus speaks are *spirit* and *life*.¹³ They will be able to discern between competing influences in their life. Firstly, they will know the things freely given to them by God. This means they will recognize the provisions, opportunities and constraints the Father has prepared for them. Secondly, they will differentiate these things of the Spirit with the temptations of the world. Illumination will enable them to appraise worldly opportunities that only appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.¹⁴

The outcome for every person who desires to live by illumination is a steadfast commitment to fellowship. Fellowship is the context where grace for life is available. The testimony of someone who has experienced illumination will forever be, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’¹⁵

10 Heb 5:13-14

13 Joh 6:63

11 1Co 2:14

14 1Jn 5:19. 1Jn 2:16

12 Psa 119:47

15 Joh 6:57

Study Questions

Jesus said, ‘Watch out that the light in you is not darkness’. And we have said that the light in us will be darkness if our Christian experience is an exercise of ‘information’, rather than ‘illumination’.

- Compare and contrast the outcome of living by religious ‘information’ rather than spiritual ‘illumination’, within the contexts of your personal relationship with God, your family, and your church community.

A Christian who has become accustomed to the word of righteousness lives by illumination. They are no longer a child, ‘tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine or the trickery of men’. Eph 4:14. They make decisions and behave like an adult because their spiritual senses have been trained to discern between information and illumination.

- What is the evidence someone has learnt to live by illumination, and testify of how you have or are learning to live and fellowship by illumination?

BORN OF WATER

Lachlan Perrin

'Born of water' is the second stage of the new birth that Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus. He was referring to a person who receives the incorruptible seed of their foreknown name because their soul and spirit have been regenerated and recovered.¹ This seed contains the Spirit of the Father. Through His Spirit the seed of a new believer's sonship germinates within their heart and they are a *new creation*. They are born as the unique son of God that the Father named from before the foundation of the world.² At this point, the Father has not yet sent the Spirit of the Son into the heart of the believer, causing them to be born of the Spirit. Once again, in contrast to a new believer, a covenant child is born with the Spirit of the Father within. They already possess the incorruptible seed of their predestined name and they are new creation.

1 1Pe 1:23

2 Jn 3:1, Rev 13:8

Godly parents are mandated to raise their covenant children according to the potential sonship contained in this seed. By the grace of God, they are equipped to sanctify their children to the expression of their incorruptible name. This is a tremendous responsibility bestowed upon Christian parents. They are equipped to recognize when the other law, worldly influences or false projections of identity are operating within their children. Applying discipline steers children away from the disobedience associated with these wayward paths. Discipline affirms and encourages true abilities, capacities and character traits that reveal a child's foreknown name.

The danger for a covenant child, who is beginning to recognize their accountability as an adult, is to 'love the darkness rather than the light'.³ This occurs when someone who has grown up in the church rejects the name and works prepared for them by the Father, despite having known illumination in their spirit. Jesus said, 'This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God'.⁴

Somewhere around twenty years of age, a covenant child will need to graduate from participation in their parents' discipleship to a commitment based upon their own faith and conviction. The Father seeks a commitment from every young person to personally know and relate to Him in this season of life. We note, in the Old Testament, that every person twenty years old and upward was counted in the census of the Lord's people, required to make offering, and regarded as ready to fight, or war, the good fight of faith as an adult.⁵

We have often used the term 'lordship crisis' to describe the decision that every young person faces in taking up their discipleship. Having grown up discerning the things of the Spirit (born from above), a young adult must choose to accept the lines prescribed by the Father's plan for their future. When a new convert touches 'born of water', they also face the crisis of choosing God's will for their life. Practically, this will involve 'selling all' their own aspirations, dreams and goals for the sake of 'buying' God's plan for their life.⁶ This is a stark moment for a new believer, often accompanied by great rejoicing, because they have found the treasure of sonship.

3 Joh 3:19

4 Joh 3:19-21

5 Num 1:2-3.
Exo 30:14. 1Ti 6:12

6 Mat 13:45-46

For a covenant child, the crisis of discipleship can cause them to forget that this treasure is already hidden in their heart! The enticements of the flesh, the apparent opportunities available, and the attraction of the ‘big wide world’, can seem more glorious than being a son of God. Sadly, some young adults depart from fellowship at this point, telling themselves they are not resisting God, deceived in believing that they can fulfill His will another way. However, the Scripture clearly warns us that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one, and there is no life outside the fellowship of God.⁷ We are reminded of Jesus asking the Jews the rhetorical question, ‘How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the only God?’⁸

The pathway of life that brings a covenant child to twenty years of age can be a wonderful, fruitful journey. The incorruptible seed of the Father, which has been growing since their physical birth, can bring forth fruit appropriate for each stage of life and developing maturity. It is exciting to know that a covenant child is already reaping, receiving wages and gathering fruit for life eternal!⁹ The best lesson godly parents can teach their children is that the ‘world is *not* their oyster’. The next best lesson is that self-righteous Christianity, which is pursuing one’s own image of good, does not please God. His will is our sanctification. Parents who train their children this way give them a spiritual ‘rudder’. These children are able to navigate and steer their way through difficulty, because they possess sufficient formation and maturity to deal with the pressures of life.

Our hope for every covenant child is that they become familiar with the crises of discipleship during their childhood years. Not attending certain social occasions because they are culturally opposed to Christianity, forgoing sporting carnivals because they occur on a Sunday morning, not pursuing extra-curricular activities that clash with the church program, choosing the community of the church over worldly friendships, fostering a substantial devotional life, and so on, are hallmarks of a young adult who will develop a strong Christian ‘rudder’. They will not ‘reel and stagger like drunken men, at their wits’ end’ when the crises of being born of water touch their life.¹⁰

7 Ijn 5:19

8 Joh 5:44

9 Joh 4:36

10 Psa 107:25-27

Study Questions

A believer who has been born of water possesses the incorruptible seed of their predestined name. This seed contains all the works that the Father has prepared for them to do. Jesus described our choice to fulfil these works when He said, ‘He who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God’. Joh 3:21. These deeds are pleasing to God and they produce eternal reward.

- What, then, would cause a Christian to ‘love the darkness rather than the light’?

- In practical terms, being born of water involves letting go of all our self-defined aspirations, dreams and goals concerning who we think we ‘could be’. It is the crisis of choosing God’s will and parameters for our life. Reflect on how this crisis of Lordship has applied in your life.

BORN OF SPIRIT

Lachlan Perrin

'Born of Spirit' was the third element of the new birth that Jesus identified in His discussion with Nicodemus. He was speaking of the action of the Father to send the Spirit of the Son into the heart of a believer who has already been born of water, as a new creation.¹ When a new believer receives the Spirit of the Son, they receive a share in the divine nature. They also receive the capacity to live by the faith of the Son of God.² The evidence that a Christian has been born again is that they cease from striving to prove their own righteousness and, instead, live to reveal Jesus Christ. As they demonstrate the righteousness of Christ, who is the substance of their own sonship life, the divine nature within them will continue to be formed until they are a fully mature son of God.³ How does this 'born of Spirit' framework apply to a covenant child?

1 Gal 4:6

2 Gal 2:20

3 Col 3:4

A child born into a covenant household receives the divine nature at the point of conception. They have the Spirit of the Son dwelling within them, and they are not enslaved to sin. As they grow, the exercise of their godly parents is to apply the sword of the word to attitudes and actions that are motivated by the ‘other law’.⁴ In this way, parents are inviting and training their children to fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, to see these selfish motivations and behaviours removed. Every person is born with the other law at work in their members, urging them to seize control of their life rather than submit to God, who is the source and definer of all life. The other law is the expression of *carnality*. The Scripture describes carnality as ‘living and walking after the flesh’.⁵ The outcome of walking after the flesh is disconnection from fellowship with God, spiritual darkness, and death.

The danger for every person born of the Spirit is to continue living carnally. It was for this reason Paul asked the rhetorical question, ‘Having *begun* by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?’⁶ This verse confirms that ‘born of Spirit’ is a beginning, not an end in itself.⁷ There is a perfecting process that every Christian must walk out. Paul expressed this clearly when he said, ‘Not that I have already obtained or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus’.⁸ As Paul followed Jesus, he confessed that if he walked after the flesh it would be a death sentence to him! He said we carry ‘the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead’.⁹

Having been born of the Spirit, we cannot please God by any merits of our flesh. When Jesus discussed the new birth with Nicodemus, He pitted the flesh against the Spirit. He said simply, ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’.¹⁰ For this reason, we gladly die with Christ so that our fleshly propensities are cut from our thinking and behaviour. We trust that God will raise us from the death of Christ to which we have been joined.

A young adult who has been born of the Spirit will trust in God completely. Whether it be finding employment, continuing in participation and service at church during busy periods, dealing with relational problems, or seeking a courtship, a young adult who is born of the Spirit will trust God and not revert to self-serving control.

4 Rom 7:23

9 2Co 1:9

5 Rom 8:4-7.
1Co 3:3

10 Joh 3:6

6 Gal 3:3

7 Php 1:6

8 Php 3:12

When we participate in the circumcision of Christ, we put the deeds of the flesh to death and remain alive in the Spirit.¹¹ As new creation sons of God, our carnal expression is hostile to Him.¹² Our fellowship in Christ's sufferings cuts unhelpful thought processes, attitudes and self-defining justifications from our hearts. Christ's offering condemned sin through the death of His flesh. As we join Christ's death, the sufferings we experience are working to remove the body of sin from our flesh.

As Jesus spoke about the new birth to Nicodemus, His final statement was, 'The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit'.¹³ When Paul described a person who is born of the Spirit he said, 'Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God'.¹⁴ A young adult who is born of the Spirit is able to understand themselves. Jesus was saying that a Christian who is born of the Spirit will take heed to God, who is Spirit, concerning their predestined name and works. The wisdom by which they function will not be earthly, sensual, and based on selfish ambition promoted by the other law. It will be the wisdom described by the apostle James as coming 'from above'.¹⁵

Jesus testified to the Pharisees, saying, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world'.¹⁶ These words describe the practical application of being born of the Spirit. The hope for every Christian young adult is that they come to possess the ability to show insight into themselves. As they understand the depths of their own heart, they will not be fearful or ashamed when their priorities and decisions are misunderstood or belittled by those who appraise life through natural eyes.

11 Col 2:11. 1Pe 3:18

12 Rom 8:7

13 Joh 3:8

14 1Co 2:11

15 Jas 3:17

16 Joh 8:23

Study Questions

Having been born in the Spirit, we cannot please God by our flesh. It was for this reason Paul said, ‘Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?’ Gal 3:3.

- Using practical examples, what do you think it means for a Christian to pursue perfection by the flesh?

Our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ deals with the carnality of our flesh, so that we can remain alive in the Spirit. In fact, Paul testified that he could not trust in his flesh because carnality was a death sentence within him! Instead, he trusted God because he knew God gives life to the dead.

- Can you testify of circumstances in your life where your suffering has taught you to trust in God?

PREVENTIENT GRACE

Jonathon Wills

What is preventient grace?

When God's grace comes to an unsaved person, it is preventient – that is, it was there *before*. Put simply, the grace of God comes to an unsaved person *before* they have done anything to make them deserving of that grace.¹

Prevenient grace is essential to God's rescue package. Without it, those separated from God cannot receive the gospel and be saved. Being dead in sin, the unsaved person is unable to see, understand or receive the things of God.² There is nothing anyone can do to earn this precious moment of opportunity that God offers everyone. When the grace of God appeared, as the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, it brought salvation to *all men*.³

1 Eph 2:8

2 1Co 2:14

3 Tit 2:11. 2Co 4:6

God's grace grants to a hearer a moment of freedom to choose what God is offering them. It enables a person who is dead in trespasses and sin to look up into the face of Jesus Christ.⁴ In this moment, a person who is spiritually dead is able to see and receive the word of God that brings salvation.

This is possible because God's grace frees a person from every obstacle that could hinder them in choosing salvation. Such obstacles include familiar ways, the bondage of sin, spiritual oppression, unclean spirits, addictions, hurts, offences, anger, depression, and empty religious practices.⁵ By the sovereign working of His grace, God frees a person so that they can accept the truth of His word.

How does preventient grace work? The faith of God

The capacity to hear comes through preventient grace. Faith comes from hearing the word of God, which first comes when a person hears that God has faith for them.⁶ God believes that they can become the son of God He predestined them to be. By grace, the hearer is enabled to believe what God believes for them. They receive *faith to become a son of God*. When the hearer is born of God, they receive the *faith of the Son*. Through grace, *His* faith can become *our* faith. When *His* faith becomes *our* faith, we are participants in the grace of God.

For a non-believer, grace is light shining into darkness. Glory is shining from the face of Jesus Christ as the word of God is proclaimed.⁷ Those who resist God's grace quickly turn away because they love darkness rather than the light. The light of grace offends the darkness of their lifestyle. Stephen spoke about this: 'You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.' In response, they gnashed their teeth, cried out with a loud voice, covered their ears and rushed at him to stone him to death.⁸

Prevenient grace had come to these men. They could have been freed from being 'just like their fathers', but they remained proud. Stephen saw the light of grace shining from the face of Christ. They too could have looked upon the face of Christ and been saved. By grace, God had demonstrated His love, shone the light of the glory of God, poured out His Spirit, and proclaimed the word of the covenant to them.

4 Heb 12:2.
2Co 3:16-18

8 Act 7:51-58

5 Act 16:25-34.
Mar 9:17-29

6 Rom 10:17

7 2Co 4:6

How do we participate? Becoming poor in spirit

By His grace, Christ sends messengers like Stephen to proclaim the gospel to people who are spiritually dead.⁹ The Holy Spirit works with the messenger, pouring out a spirit of grace and supplication which convicts the person of sin, righteousness and judgement.¹⁰ Through illumination, the person realises the wretchedness of their bondage to sin.

They also become aware of something else. They realise that they are not capable of living as a son of God. They recognise that all their own resources are worthless and well short of the glory of God.¹¹ This is what it means to be *poor in spirit*.¹²

They begin to repent of their sin – for piercing Christ and for the loss of their sonship. They repent of the hurts they have caused and the impact of their sin upon others. They become accountable for this impact. They acknowledge that they cannot save themselves or obey the word of God. The person who has become poor in spirit recognises that they do not know how to proceed. They are cut to the heart and cry out, ‘Brethren, what must I do to be saved?’¹³

When a person reaches this point of bankruptcy, Christ is setting them free from sin. The prison doors are being opened, and the kingdom of heaven is theirs to enter.¹⁴ The first point of blessing is to the poor in spirit. And what a remarkable blessing it is; the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

This expression of God's grace demonstrates the depth of His humility. Instead of imposing His will upon us, He allows us to choose for ourselves. As this takes place, the love of God breaks in. And not because we loved God. It is God who first loved us.¹⁵ We are drawn from far off by the love of God, and given a moment of freedom to believe. This is an opportunity we did not deserve. We hear the call to come out from darkness and enter the marvellous light of Christ's sonship.¹⁶

10	Joh 14:26.	means Bankrupt	Jon 3:10.
	Joh 13:20. Joh 16:8.	13	Rom 5:8.
	Zec 12:10	14	Rom 8:21

11 Php 3:7-8, Saul's conversion in Act 9:1-19

11 Php 3:7-8 Saul's

Study Questions

Prevenient grace grants to a hearer a moment of precious freedom to choose what God is offering them. It enables a person who is dead in trespasses and sins to look into the face of Jesus Christ.

- What is grace able to do for an unsaved person?

- Using the account of Stephen in Act 7, what does the response of those who heard Stephen's message tell us about grace?

THE GRACE IN WHICH WE STAND

Jonathon Wills

What is ‘the grace in which we stand’?

Having entered the kingdom of heaven, you have a standing in the grace of God. You are joined to the Lord and are one Spirit with Him.¹ The grace in which you stand is the fellowship of God. It is worth noting that ‘the grace in which we stand’ is no different from ‘prevenient grace’. There is only one grace of God. When God gives grace, He is giving of Himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is referred to in four key ways in Scripture: God is word, God is love, God is Spirit, God is life,

¹ 1Co 6:17

and the life of God is the light of men.² These do not merely describe God; they are the essence of who He is.

How does ‘the grace in which we stand’ work? The faith of God

The apostle Paul taught that we received our introduction into the grace in which we stand through faith.³ This is the faith of the Son of God that we received from the Father, enabling us to believe for sonship and then to be born of water and the Spirit as sons of God.⁴ As sons of God we are baptised into Christ and joined in Him, by the Spirit to the fellowship of Yahweh.⁵ This is the context of the grace of God in which we stand. Grace is God’s capacity for His will to be done. To stand in grace is to be equipped to participate in the fulfilment of God’s will as a son of God and a member of the body of Christ.

It is from the cross, through Christ’s offering, that the grace of God is fully expressed in the face of Jesus Christ. From His marred face, the light of the glory of our sonship that comes from the Father is shone into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.⁶ We are being transformed into the image of sonship that we see shining from the contrite face of Christ.⁷ Multitudes will join Christ in the fellowship of being bruised and made contrite.

This was Christ’s invitation when He said, ‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle [meek] and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.’⁸ Coming to the point of meekness through bankruptcy of spirit and mourning is the call of the gospel.⁹ The Lord said, ‘But to this one I will look, to him who is humble [poor] and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.’¹⁰ Importantly, we note that the Hebrew word for ‘contrite’ means ‘bruised’. Evidently, those who are contrite are willing to be yoked to the Lord in the fellowship of His bruising. Here they find rest for their soul.

It is through the ministry of the word from those who are joined to the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the hearts of those who are humble and contrite of spirit. This is how we obtain the grace of life. As sons who are born of God, this grace is the *grace in which we stand*. It can be described in four dimensions.

2 Joh 1:4. 1Jn 4:16. 6 2Co 3:18. 2Co 4:6. 9 Mat 5:3-5
Joh 4:24. 2Co 3:17. 10 Isa 52:14
1Jn 1:5. 7 Isa 52:13-15.

3 Rom 5:2 Isa 57:15-17.

4 Gal 3:26 Isa 66:2

5 1Co 12:13 8 Mat 11:28-29

The first is the word of God. God is *Word* and the word is the will of God expressed.¹¹ *The word of His grace* enables us to become those who do God's will as Christ's disciples. The grace of God is allowing sons of men to do the will of God. The word of His grace touches our humanity, enabling recovery of what has been damaged by sin and the circumstances of life. By the word of His grace, we are recovered to who God predestined us to be, so that we can stand in restored identity.

The second dimension of grace is the love of God that begets sons and then nurtures them through fatherhood and motherhood.¹² God's grace also teaches us to live righteously *as sons of God*.¹³ God is love and, by His love, we receive grace to live as sons of the Father.¹⁴ The work of fatherhood and motherhood is to raise sons in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This instruction causes us to live as sons, not regarding lightly the discipline of the Lord or losing heart when we are reproved by Him.¹⁵ The grace of God accomplishes its work in our lives when we accept that our suffering is from the hand of our loving Father.

The third dimension of grace is the capacity to reveal another. The Holy Spirit gives the capacity to reveal Christ and one another. God is Spirit and, by His Spirit, grace abounds to us so that we can walk each day by the Spirit and be sanctified to our name.¹⁶ We can only be a slave in His house by the Spirit. Our work as a slave in the Master's house is to reveal Christ's sonship, not our own. We are not expressing our own name, but are doing everything as unto the Lord.

The fourth dimension is the grace of life received and expressed through offering. Offering is *life* shining as light. Light is the life of God revealed through offering.¹⁷ We receive grace to join the fellowship of Christ's offering. God's grace trains us to *offer ourselves* as living sacrifices, zealous for the good deeds prepared for us by God.¹⁸ Through offering, our works shine forth as light. People see our good works and recognise that we are sons of God and give glory and praise to our heavenly Father.¹⁹ The grace of His life enables us also to walk in the light, as He is in the light, finding fellowship with our brethren.²⁰

11 Joh 1:1. Heb 10:7 17 Mat 5:16
12 IJn 3:1 18 Tit 2:14. Rom 12:1.
13 Tit 2:12. Matt 5:16.
14 IJn 4:16 19 Mat 5:16
15 Heb 12:5-6 20 IJn 1:7
16 1Th 4:3

How do we participate? Becoming poor in spirit

In Hebrews, we are exhorted to ‘fix our eyes on Jesus’ and to ‘see to it that no-one comes short of the grace of God’.²¹ ‘Looking into the face of Christ’ describes our place of standing, where we are not falling short of God’s purpose for us.

The faith of the Son and being poor in spirit are essential to our standing in the grace of God. Without them, God’s grace becomes merely a resource for when we feel inadequate. But God’s grace comes previous to our efforts. When the grace of God is demonstrated through us, we are joined to *the expression* of His grace. The grace of God shining from the face of Christ is manifest in us, and we are a living example of that grace to others.²²

The grace in which we stand is a lifestyle of discipleship, sonship, slavehood and offering – coming to us from the face of Christ. We receive the enabling of His grace every day so that we do not fall short of God’s grace.²³

21 Heb 12:2,15

22 2Co 3:5-6

23 Heb 12:15.
1Co 10:12

Study Questions

When God gives grace, He is giving of Himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is referred to in four key ways in Scripture: God is word, God is love, God is Spirit, God is life. These do not merely describe God; they are the essence of who He is.

- How would you describe the difference between preventient grace and ‘the grace in which we stand’?

- Using Tit 2:11-14 as a context, consider how the four key references to ‘who God is’ are applied by Paul in his encouragement to Titus. Make particular note of how ‘the grace in which we stand’ is a lifestyle of discipleship, sonship, slavehood and offering – coming to us from the face of Christ.

ACCESSING THE GRACE OF GOD

Jonathon Wills

What is the grace of God?

The grace of God is not something we merely ‘get’ from God. God is not sitting in heaven with a big bag called ‘grace’ that He reaches into every time we feel a bit weak. He is ‘the God of all grace’.¹ Just as there is the one life of God, so also the grace of God is the one grace, expressed as the manifold, or varied, grace of God.² When God gives us grace, He is giving of Himself. We receive His capacity for His will to be done in our lives.

1 IPe 5:10

2 IPe 4:10

The important thing to understand, when considering our *access* to the grace of God, is that *it can be ours*. The Scriptures tell us that we access the grace of God through *faith* in Jesus Christ. The grace of God is accessible to those who have entered the kingdom by faith.³ Having gained access, the imperative is to remain in grace and prove ourselves to be disciples.

How does this grace work? The faith of God

We are weak in the sense that we do not know how to live as a son of God. Paul highlighted our weakness and need for help when he said, ‘The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should.’⁴ As we cry out in this weakness, we are led by the Holy Spirit to the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace to help in our hour of need.⁵

This hour of need is our everyday reality, not something we *need* every now and then. We *need* to remain joined to the travail of the Spirit, so that we are led by the Spirit and not by the lusts of our flesh. Our need is created by the fact that our flesh cannot obey God.⁶ Every day we *need to* put off the flesh and to be made alive in the Spirit. Our prayer is for the will of God to be done; not for grace to supplement or take away our weakness. We are not trying to access the grace of God by natural means, but rather ‘by the Spirit’.

How do we participate? Becoming poor in spirit

Our participation in grace is by the Spirit, by the faith of the Son, and by becoming poor in spirit. Paul showed us how this works: ‘to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh’.⁷ God afflicted Paul so that he would live by the Spirit and not by the flesh. Knowing Paul’s propensity to pride, God worked for Paul’s good by causing him to walk in weakness.⁸

Accompanying this affliction was the grace that made Paul adequate for every good work. This is because the power of God is made perfect in weakness.⁹ And it is the grace of God which enables us to cease trusting in our flesh, and helps to deliver us from our propensity to sin.¹⁰ The grace of God gives us the strength to suffer according to the will of God. We find this grace in fellowship with God, obeying Him and acknowledging His lordship. If we neglect these things, there is no supply of grace.

3 Rom 5:1-2 9 2Co 12:9

4 Rom 8:26 10 Rom 7:4-6

5 Heb 4:16

6 Rom 8:3

7 2Co 12:7

8 Rom 8:28

Accessing the grace of God

Poor in spirit is a place of bankruptcy and a place of freedom. We are free to rely wholly on God and to receive what He has determined. A person who refuses to become poor in spirit is proud and lifted up. Instead of giving them grace, God opposes them because of their pride and refusal to submit to Him and to their brethren in Christ.¹¹

Every person born into a Christian home will have to become poor in spirit as a way of life. The nurture and admonition in the house should bring us to the point where we cease to trust in ourselves. This is what it means for you to say, ‘I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live, I now live by the faith of the Son.’¹²

11 Jas 4:6-7. Pro 3:34.
1Pe 5:5

12 Gal 2:20

Study Questions

'Poor in spirit' is a place of bankruptcy and a place of freedom. God's grace frees us, in a precious moment, from everything that would have caused us to trust in the flesh and not in Him. We are free to rely wholly on God and to receive from His hand what He has determined.

- How would you describe the difference between weakness and being poor in spirit?

- What does the thorn in Paul's flesh tell us about the grace of God?

COVENANT HOUSEHOLDS

Richie Kaa

What is a covenant household?

At its most fundamental, a covenant household is sanctified to the purpose of God in His Everlasting Covenant. The Everlasting Covenant is the agreement of the three members of the Godhead to make available to mankind the blessing of Their life in the form of sonship life. By this means, the sons of men are able to become sons of the living God. These sons of men were created in the image of God, and are made spiritually alive through faith. When they are made alive in their spirit, they can live in fellowship with God and become partakers of His divine nature.

What is a Christian marriage?

The apostle Paul put it succinctly when he referred to a family being named under heaven at the point of marriage.¹ We know that marriage does not endure in heaven, but under heaven it is the context for man's participation in the bringing forth of godly seed.² This context is the family, which is a household – established when a woman offers herself completely to be redefined in relation to this man, and a man gives himself completely to love this woman as Christ loved the church.³

This sacred union is a household. Through its ongoing sanctification, a household can be enlarged by procreation and, wonder of wonders, the children are already heirs with Christ (and their parents) from the moment of conception. They are set apart from their mother's womb, because they already belong to the Everlasting Covenant. This is due to the offering and faith of the parents, whose marriage covenant is made in Christ.

Both marriage and parenthood are very conscious commitments of love and stewardship, completely sanctified by the fact that the children, the man and the wife are all the possessions of the Lord, not of spouses or parents. Parents don't own their children; but they have a stewardship towards them which no other person may violate. This stewardship is the care of nurturing the divine nature, which children possess from the moment of conception.

What do children receive in a covenant household?

Let's be clear about this point. A covenant household recognises that a child born to a Christian parent receives the seed of God's life (divine nature) when they are conceived, and are, accordingly, a son of God from their mother's womb.⁴ Even though a child of the covenant is born with the seed of the divine nature, they must acknowledge that they have another law within them. If they prefer to live by this law, then they cannot be the son that God wants them to be. So how are they delivered from this 'other law'?

Paul explained that it is by the circumcision of Christ.⁵ The circumcision of Christ is applied to children through the godly discipline of their parents. When parents are participants in the circumcision of Christ, they will ensure their children are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is the means by which

1 Eph 3:15

2 Mat 22:30. Mal 2:1

3 Eph 5:25

4 1Co 7:14

5 Col 2:11

a child grows as a firstfruits believer. They will hear, believe and obey the word of God because they are being delivered from another way of thinking and behaving.⁶

The order of marriage

The grace required to nurture and train children will only come as husband and wife live in right order before the Lord. This means that a man must function as the head of the house. He must seek headship from Christ, so that he can be led by the Lord, and in turn lead his wife. The wife must commit to be the unique helper of her husband, to be defined in relation to his headship. It is in this respect, only, that a woman is ‘weaker’ than her husband – that is, in relation to headship. In all other aspects of life, she can function with personal initiative as a certain kind of firstfruits, standing as a sister to her husband. When a husband and wife are able to walk in the fellowship of one spirit in right order, they will have access to ‘the grace of life’.⁷

Renouncing other covenants

If a husband and wife are to live in a truly Christian covenant of marriage, they must renounce all other covenants. These other covenants are often the unspoken power within many households. These false covenants can involve such things as the man serving the wife’s agenda, putting family ahead of the Lord, compromising with worldly culture or not crossing the children’s will. The bottom line with all of these things is: what or whom are we serving? A covenant household will reply, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’⁸

Why we can be confident

A covenant household will be a household that lives confidently before the Lord. This applies to the young people, and the parents as well. They will all be confident of the Lord’s faithfulness as they walk in obedience to His word and fellowship with their brethren, because God’s way actually works!

6 Rom 7:23

7 1Pe 3:7

8 Jos 24:15

Study Questions

- What is the purpose of Christian marriage and how does it relate to the Everlasting Covenant?

If a husband and wife are to live in a truly Christian covenant of marriage, they must renounce all other covenants. These other covenants are often the unspoken power within many households.

- Can you describe some examples of these other covenants and discuss how they affect families in their ongoing participation of the Everlasting Covenant?

LIVING IN A COVENANT HOUSEHOLD

Richie Kaa

What is the culture of a covenant house? The apostle Paul wrote some notable instructions to families concerning their culture and conduct. He understood that the covenant promises are available to every family when they live together in a specific manner. Obviously, every household will have minor differences, but at their heart the culture will be the same.

Abraham's house gives us a very clear picture of a covenant household. We see, for example, that he was a man discipled by the proceeding word of God. It's helpful to remember that we receive the word of our name as a seed in the Everlasting Covenant, which comes by His word. When it is spoken, the word requires a response of faith – to believe and obey. Hence, we can describe a covenant house as a house discipled by the word of present truth. In the example of a family

home, the parents are disciples, who understand how to run in lines of obedience because they too are under authority. They therefore can train up a child in the way he should go.¹

The parents will also be easily connected to fatherhood and motherhood, thereby growing in their capacity to father or mother their children. The mandate of a covenant home is to nurture each son of God toward fruitfulness in every season.

As spiritual people, they will live as love-slaves of Christ, participating in the circumcision of Christ as members of His covenant, commanding their children to their heavenly naming, beyond their natural heritage and family. As a firstfruits household, they will be concerned with revealing Christ and bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit.

As well, as people of offering, they will readily integrate in fellowship and will actively practise a love of the brethren. They will be ministers of reconciliation and their children will learn how to be reconciled with Christ when they are caught in a trespass or deviate from the fellowship which is in Christ. They will value the fellowship of the saints and will guard it and their own hearts by dealing with offence. They will manifest the truth that ‘we know we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren’.²

Addressing carnality

Even though a child of the covenant is born with the seed of divine nature, they must acknowledge that they have another law within them. If they live by what they think is best, then they cannot be the son whom God wants them to be. How are they delivered of this ‘other law’? Paul explained that it is by the circumcision of Christ.³ In practical terms, the circumcision of Christ is the action of God which cuts away our flesh and its influence upon our behaviour. We commit to this circumcision in baptism when we die with Christ, in order to be raised with His capacity, no longer relying upon our own. We are thus able to walk after the Spirit.

When a person is joined to the circumcising work of the Father, they can become a firstfruits believer. They can be the good ground in ‘the parable of the sower’! These people are able to hear, believe and obey the word of God because they are being delivered from their carnal way of thinking and behaving.⁴ Only a heart

1 Pro 22:6

2 IJn 3:14

3 Col 2:11

4 Rom 7:23

described as good ground can bring forth the fruit of godliness from the seed that has been given. When a whole family grows in faith this way, they become a firstfruits household. They are therefore concerned with revealing Christ and bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

Removing false cultures

A covenant household will be committed to removing the corrupting effects of carnality, sin and compromise. Carnality and sin will manifest in the form of a false or alternative culture, which begins to oppose the formation of godliness in the children. These influences are usually sourced in our own familiar (tribal) bonds which, sometimes without being formally acknowledged, have the power to be established as the ruling covenants of any home – Christian or not.

At their base, these are covenants with the flesh, serving a fleshly agenda. They produce disastrous households. For example, a husband and wife who were married in immorality, and who don't seek godly counsel on this matter, will be blinded to the necessary sanctification of their children. They will permit modes of dress, movies, worldly friendships and so on, and will not have the faith to believe that their own children can live as those set apart from the world.

A carnal Christian family will believe that the will of God can be achieved by the efforts of the flesh. They may be very diligent in many areas of the Christian life, but will find that they have no answer to the dilemmas their children face, because the answers require being led by the Spirit.

There is a kind of presumption which can destroy children. It works particularly in families that have a ministry profile, who happily proclaim the word, while hypocritically refusing to live it themselves. This will produce lawless children, who have no regard for authority in the body of Christ. Their parents will make all kinds of compromises, in the name of love and family, but the children will despise their parents all the same.

Marriages that do not relinquish their fundamentally romantic base will create a family context in which headship has no authority. The woman's view of life will always prevail. Sons will grow up angry and confused, while the daughters will have no respect for men. They will seek the compensations of lifestyle and comfort instead of doing the will of God.

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Obviously, there are many other examples that we could discuss. The point to take from this is that God is not mocked. We will reap what we sow.⁵ If we sow to the flesh, we are guaranteed of reaping corruption. If we sow to the Spirit, we will reap righteousness and peace. This is God's intention for all of us.

The key point is this. A covenant house does not simply sanctify itself away from wickedness, allowing itself a very wide latitude to live something broadly called Christianity. Our lines of sanctification are not drawn right on the edge of sin and corruption in the world. That is what leads to a carnal household. This will result in the children being lost or very badly formed. A covenant household, by contrast, recognises that the real threat lies in the deceptive nature of what is familiar and what seems 'good' to us. This is the light that so easily becomes darkness, because we don't see it.

And this is why we must commit in love, at a fundamental cultural level, to ongoing fellowship in the light with the Lord and our brethren. This sincere love will strengthen us to be delivered from all the vain traditions of our forefathers, ensuring that we are not merely carnal households, but become truly spiritual firstfruits families, living in the bond of the covenant.

⁵ Gal 6:7-8

Study Questions

- How would you describe the culture of a covenant household?

- Describe how a child born with the seed of divine nature will need to address the issue of the other law in their members. Give some examples of how the other law might be addressed in our lives through the different seasons of life.

ESTABLISHING A COVENANT HOUSEHOLD

Richie Kaa

Mature young adults will desire to be joined in Christian marriage. The Lord explained that marriage is part of His Covenant and is designed to serve His purpose of bringing forth many sons. Malachi recorded, ‘Did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks *godly offspring [seed]*.’¹

A covenant home will be established when two individuals, who are disciples, desire to be joined in one spirit in Christian marriage. Their desire for marriage signals their maturing awareness of the privilege of participating in a further

¹ Mal 2:15

aspect of the Everlasting Covenant. Their motivation to be joined in one spirit reflects their understanding of how godly seed will be brought forth.

This motivation will be culturally aligned to the sanctification of one person in relation to the other. The ‘will of God’ is described as ‘your sanctification’.² A maturing young adult will demonstrate personal stewardship concerning their sanctification. This will include such things as the knowledge of who they are in the Lord, submission to the lordship of Christ, a capacity to steward their own life and resources, reliability and growing maturity in all matters of offering, personal devotion to the Lord, and love of the brethren.

For a man, such areas become a proving ground for his emerging headship. How he oversees and orders his life will demonstrate his readiness for marriage. For a man and a woman, a shortfall in such areas will help to highlight where they need to find the regenerating power of the word of God in their lives.

Courtship

A courtship tests the reality of a desired union between and a man and woman. A courtship that leads to marriage will result in two accountable young people, each one known by and knowing the other, choosing to be sanctified in the exclusive bond of covenant relationship. A marriage is often only as good as the courtship that has led up to it, and it is vital that the culture of courtship is not compromised, corrupted or dismissed in any way. Where corruption does creep into a courtship, it will trouble the marriage, children and culture of the home until it is squarely faced and dealt with in fellowship.

If the courtship is walked out in the light, there can be great confidence going into marriage. A couple can know that the blessing of children will be a participation in the will of God, not simply the will of the flesh. Furthermore, they will be strengthened and illuminated in their mandate to steward and multiply the divine nature in the home, understanding the order of headship.

That is, God has provided mankind with an order by which His life would flow from the Father, to the Son, to the man, to his wife and then, together, they are charged with the role of imparting God’s life to each member of their family. Christ is the head of the man and man is the head of the woman. This is an inviolable order,

² 1Th 4:3

upon which rests the measure of whether grace is able to flow to the household. It is by the grace of God that children are nurtured and secured as sons of God. In this respect, marriage and parenting are essential features that participate in the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant.

Raising children

As you enter into the covenant of marriage, you will demonstrate the covenant imperative – to rear your children in the covenant of sonship and not allow them to be brought up by a surrogate person or under any other covenant. Parents must meet personally with their children. Your extended family cannot raise your children nor train them in the fear and nurture of the Lord. God has given parents this privilege, and it comes with a very large accountability.

It is possible for Christian parents to prioritise alternative covenants for their children which, in the end, will be their destruction. God holds every parent accountable. Jesus said, ‘If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.’³ When we become parents, we must learn to walk carefully but purposefully, so that we cause our children to be ‘the good man’ whose steps are ordered by the Lord. This is what it means to train them in the way they should go. When they are trained this way, they will not depart from the Lord. Rather, they can become pillars in His house, standing firm, who ‘go no more out’.

In summary, as a disciple, you will desire to pursue marriage with one who is also a disciple. Your marriage and your household will be characterised by obedience to Christ. The entire ethos of your home will be focused toward God’s precious inheritance of sonship. You will remove yourself and the members of your household from all other covenants, obligations and cultural expectations in order to prioritise His covenant.

³ Mat 18:6

Study Questions

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church, ‘For this is the will of God, your sanctification’, 1Th 4:6. The issue of personal sanctification is an important foundation for a Christian disciple to be established.

- Describe how sanctification is established and maintained. Why is a ‘whole of life approach’ helpful when understanding sanctification?

- Describe how marriage and parenting serve in the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant.

WHAT KIND OF CHRISTIAN ARE YOU?

David Hall

Jesus said that a person is spiritual when they have been born of the Spirit.¹ In other words, to become spiritual every person must be born from above to see the kingdom of God, through the Holy Spirit. They must be born of the water of the word, receiving the incorruptible seed of God that contains the Spirit of the Father – in fact, being born a new creation. Third, they must be born of the Spirit of the Son, to share His life in the form of another seed – the divine nature. This is how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have come to dwell within the believer.

¹ Joh 3:5-8

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In order to continue in the Spirit, the love of God will compel them to enter the kingdom. In this way, they will come into Christ through baptism, and will be made a member of the body of Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the seal of their sonship. He is able to give to a son of God the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the expression of the firstfruits of their sonship in the world, and the expression of their ministry as a member of the body of Christ.

A person living as a *firstfruits Christian*, has been converted from walking after the flesh. They can now walk according to the Spirit. They are regenerated daily and sanctified to their name by living as a slave of Christ. Their life reveals the fruit of the righteousness of God. Having been established in the culture of the kingdom, they are equipped to minister to others the reconciliation they received.

When Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of heaven to the disciples and Nicodemus, it was not yet possible to be born of the Spirit. The disciples and Nicodemus belonged to the Old Covenant, which was made with the flesh. Jesus taught them about spiritual birth – something beyond the life of the flesh. He taught that they could be born of the Spirit. Moreover, if they could walk by the Spirit, they would cease to be carnal and instead become spiritual!

The impact of Jesus' word upon them was to move them towards becoming spiritual. Regeneration could only occur within them once the Holy Spirit came as the New Covenant.² They first needed to become disciples of the word.³ This illustrates something very important for us. It shows that there is another kind of Christian – an unspiritual one – responding to the word. This is the *carnal Christian*. When the word comes to us it strikes us where we are carnal, wanting to move us towards the spiritual. As it was for the disciples, the impact of the word upon us will be either towards what is spiritual, or towards an offence.

When we are offended our mind can only function carnally, choosing destructive courses of action. This is the law of the mind at work. In the negative sense, our mind, which at first delighted in the law (or word), may harden and become focused on the desires of the flesh. It is in this way that we can seek to save our own life. Mechanisms of survival drive a person to react, conquer others or use every other law for personal advancement, even seeking to fulfil the law of God their own way. This is a self-seeking and lawless way of living. We call this living by 'the other law' which is in us. This law is the expression of our carnal nature. If we walk after this fleshly nature, we will die.⁴

2 Heb 10:16

3 Heb 10:15-16

4 Rom 8:13

We are gathered together to one communion table, for *judgement*, as the scripture says, because we were not discerning the body of Christ. And so the judgement of God comes among us. The effect of this judgement has two elements to it.

First, those who are carnal cannot eat and drink worthily since they have set their minds on fleshly judgement and disaffection. Many become weak and sick as they partake of the body and blood, because they are under judgement at the communion.⁵ However, the same judgement can be a teacher, teaching discipline so that we can be born of God to become spiritual. This means being properly sanctified and aligned to our name. The carnal person can find repentance through the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ in order to cease from sin.⁶ If they do this, they will not be judged with the world, but will nevertheless receive a limited reward. There is no eternal reward for dead works that are based on religious ambition and projection.⁷

However, if a person continues to respond carnally to judgment, they will corrupt even further. This highlights for us a third kind of ‘Christian’. While they may call themselves a Christian, they are in truth a *messenger of Satan*. Their response to the same judgement produces responses of hostility and wickedness.⁸ The law of their mind and the other law, colluding with the law of sin fathered in them by Satan, has now become lawless. They claim the right to interpret Scripture against the two other groups – those who are carnal and those who are spiritual. Their spiritual sight has ceased to be regenerated. They no longer perceive the difference between carnal and spiritual Christians, becoming enemies of both.

No longer seeking the law of God, they are now the judges of it. They have become cynical and unbelieving about the integrity of Christ being in the flesh of their brethren.⁹ They are therefore of the spirit of antichrist and, as such, are part of the messenger of Satan that buffets the presbytery.

They have gone past the carnal in their anger, and much to our grief, go out from among us to their destruction.¹⁰ It is important that we do not engage with these ones in their accusations. We need to free them to their own responses and maintain the ground of first love. This will mean that there is a ground to which they can recover, if perchance God grants them repentance.¹¹

5 1Co 11:27-30 11 2Ti 2:23-26

6 1Pe 4:1-2

7 1Co 3:15

8 Rom 8:7

9 1Jn 4:3

10 Php 3:18-19

Study Questions

A firstfruits Christian has been converted from walking after the flesh, in order to walk after the Spirit. They are spiritual. They respond to the word and receive regeneration of their spirit and renewing of their mind in order to continue being spiritual.

- How would you describe the responses of the spiritual person to the word in contrast to the carnal Christian's responses?

In 1Co 11:26-32, Paul describes how we need to judge ourselves when we take the communion meal together, and also the judgement of God upon those who do not judge themselves or the body of Christ rightly.

- Describe the attitude and responses that we need to adopt if we are to respond to the judgement of God in a spiritual manner.

BEING SPIRITUAL

David Hall

We are spiritual when we have been converted from living by the flesh, to walking according to the Spirit. Having been born of the Spirit we can know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can perceive all that God has prepared for those who love Him.¹ We have received the Spirit of God to know the things freely given to us by God. These things are not revealed to us through human wisdom, but through the word taught by the Spirit.²

It is the work of the Holy Spirit that causes our spirit to be regenerated so we can see the kingdom.³ In that moment, we began to be spiritual people. We are able to see the treasure that God has prepared for us – our sonship.⁴ And having been born of the Spirit and entered the kingdom through baptism, we received

1 1Co 2:9-10

2 1Co 2:12-13

3 1Co 2:12, Joh 3:3

4 1Co 2:9

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the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that we could continue to ‘see’ and be led by the Spirit.⁵ Whether we are born again or born in a covenant household, we will need to continue to walk in the Spirit and be spiritual.

Jesus spoke of the principle of sight when He described the eye as the lamp of the body. It is the means by which light can enter a person.⁶ He warned that if our eye is evil, then our body will be filled with darkness. He also said that if our eye is clear, then our whole body will be full of light. Jesus was referring to the regeneration of our spirit by the Holy Spirit to receive the light of the word so that we can have the light of life.⁷ This is important, because we will not be able to continue in the Spirit if our eye becomes unhealthy.

The condition of our spirit will affect how we are able to receive the rays of light from a lamp.⁸ We will need to be trained to look after our spirit, ensuring that we maintain a healthy perspective concerning the context in which we are receiving this illumination. We will need to remind ourselves to meet the word in the same manner in which we first received it and believed when it was spoken to us. In relation to every new admonition of the word we will need to become poor in spirit, mourn for our shortcomings and their impact, and travail for our sonship to mature as we receive the word with meekness.

When Jesus referred to the lamp He was also speaking to us about the context in which the light would be shining. This is the light of the lampstand church.⁹ We need to be personally connected to this context so that the rays of this light shine into our hearts and illuminate us. The lamp of a lampstand church is the presbytery fellowship from which the word of God shines into the heart of every member of the body of Christ in a local congregation.

It is important to the health of our spirit that we hear and obey the word that God shines into our hearts through presbytery. The apostle John said that if we walk in this light then our fellowship will be with the Father and the Son.¹⁰ This is the same fellowship that began to be open to us when the Holy Spirit first opened our eyes with regeneration. The light of the presbytery is shining the grace of God into our hearts so that we can receive the treasures of His grace into our earthen vessels.¹¹ The light that shines into our hearts becomes a practical instruction which we could call ‘the word of His grace’.¹²

5 Rom 8:14

10 IJn 1:1-3

6 Luk 11:34-36

11 2Co 4:5-7

7 Joh 8:12

12 Act 20:31-32

8 Luk 11:36

9 Luk 11:34.
Rev 1:20

When we join ourselves to the presbytery word we receive capacity for discipleship. We can be trained and conformed into the image of His son. This word brings the love of God to us so that we mature in sonship and continue to partake of the divine nature. It proclaims obedience to us so that we understand how to present ourselves as a living sacrifice for obedience. Through this word of grace, we were made spiritual and are now being sanctified to our name as a certain firstfruits by the Holy Spirit.¹³

When the word of God comes with illumination, its light becomes our life. If we are full of light, then the word, which is Spirit and life has made us alive in the Lord. We see all the things given to us by God according to our name as a son of God. We are able to exercise the capacities of our soul, including our mind, will and emotions to present our bodies as slaves of righteousness.¹⁴ Our motivations are governed by the Spirit and we are able to perform the good works that God prepared for us to do.¹⁵

Let us remind ourselves that our eye can become degenerate. This happens when a person sets their mind on the flesh and seeks to control their life. Rather than presenting themselves for obedience to the word as slaves of righteousness, they source their obedience in themselves and call it the truth.¹⁶ They judge the proceeding word from the basis of their education, tradition or reasoned positon. The word of God is used as information to support the agenda of their own life. This is their ‘light’, which Jesus called darkness.

As spiritual people we need to remember what we learned when the Holy Spirit first brought illumination to us. We saw the wonder of the promise of our sonship. But we also began to cry out for help, because we saw that we could not achieve sonship by our own effort. It is remarkable that the word from the presbytery continues to show us our need of the regeneration of our spirit and the renewing of our minds. It reminds us with every relational issue or training adjustment that we need to be converted from our fleshly responses by becoming poor in spirit, mourning for the impact of our sin, travailing for sonship to come forth, and receiving the word with meekness. A person who is spiritual will not seek to graduate beyond this truth. This is what it means to be spiritual.

13 Tit 2:11-14

14 Rom 6:19

15 Eph 2:10

16 Rom 6:16

Study Questions

We become spiritual when we have been fully converted from living according to the flesh to walk according to the Spirit. To continue to be spiritual we need to be trained to look after our spirit. This means that we will continue to engage the fellowship of the lamp presbytery which supplies the grace of God to our lives.

- What does it mean for you to be personally connected to the lamp presbytery? What steps do you need to take to make your connection more effective?

If we are not careful, our eye can become degenerate. This occurs when a person sets their mind on the flesh and seeks to take control over their own life.

- Describe the dangerous responses of a person with a degenerate eye compared with those of a person whose eye is healthy.

YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL

David Hall

The word ‘attitude’ can refer to the way a person is, and the mind-set that a person has in relation to someone else. This is more than a passing feeling or emotion like anger or frustration. Paul described the attitude of a spiritual person as ‘a spirit of gentleness’.¹ This is the demeanour and attitude of a firstfruits believer whose total preoccupation is to serve or minister to the needs of the saints.² They are ready to encourage and give aid to a brother even if that brother has stumbled or been caught in a trespass.

This is the restorative work of one who is spiritual. It is helpful to remember that reconciliation first came to us while we were still enemies of God.³ In the Father’s

1 Gal 6:1

2 1Co 16:15

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initiative toward us, He did not count our trespasses against us but reconciled us to Himself, while we were yet undeserving. We were brought near and restored to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son. God has now given to us this same word of reconciliation.⁴ This is the message that we are to proclaim.

When we set our mind on the Spirit, we will no longer see our brethren according to the motivations and judgements of the flesh.⁵ Our attitude to fellowship with them will be a spirit of gentleness, with a view to the restoration of relationships. A spiritual person will not be exercised in carnal assessments in order to convince or rebuke someone who is caught in a trespass. Because they walk by the Spirit, they will not be vulnerable to the mechanisms of the flesh, leading to legal judgement.⁶

A spiritual person will have his senses trained to discern good and evil by the grace of God in the fellowship of his brethren. Those brethren who represent Christ to him will confirm the knowledge of his name (who he is) and the focus of his work as he walks in the light of their fellowship. When he expresses his submission and sanctification in this fellowship endeavour, he is setting his mind on the things of the Spirit.

The spiritual person will hold fast his confession of the word of reconciliation which was given to him in Christ. He will remember the witness of our great High Priest who experienced all our weaknesses and all temptation, yet was without sin.⁷ This passage of Scripture in Hebrews is not intended to convey the notion that our attitude should be superior, as though we are expressing a patronising sympathy to someone who is ‘under-par’ or second class. It is instead an attitude of genuine love and ‘fellow-feeling’, since we also are vulnerable to the same weaknesses and temptations.

Paul tells the spiritual person to ‘look to yourself lest you also be tempted’.⁸ This means that our attitude will be to appreciate that we are vulnerable to the same temptations as the weaker brother. We appreciate that, being weak, our conscience is vulnerable to be strengthened to fulfil the desires of the flesh.⁹ On the other hand, if our demeanour is superior to the weaker brother, we will not only be fleshly, but also our own demeanour will arouse the weaker brother’s conscience to condemnation instead of reconciliation. We are then guilty of bringing our brother to ruin by causing them to stumble; and thus we are sinning against Christ, and have become enemies of His reconciliation.¹⁰

3 Rom 5:10

9 1Co 8:10

4 2Co 5:19-20

5 2Co 5:16

6 Gal 5:16

7 Heb 4:15. Luk 4:13

8 Gal 6:1

A spiritual person will be aware of their own cultural propensities and failings. In this way, he will resist being drawn to judge his brother from a superior position. We will be conscious that the Holy Spirit has joined us to this brother so that we are also being addressed by Him. No-one is immune from temptation, so we should be able to entreat one another with the word of correction in meekness.

Remember, if you walk after the Spirit, you will not perform the deeds of the flesh.¹¹ The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in our attitude and relationships: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These elements of a spiritual person's attitude are free from and unaffected by law.¹²

However, the reverse is also possible. If we set our mind on the flesh the deeds of the flesh will produce immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. Those who practise such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.¹³ We observe that those who practise these ways seek to draw others into their agenda, and think it strange that others do not agree with their fleshly positions. These are ministers of the flesh.

Ministers of the flesh do not submit themselves to the brethren. They operate by law, and their mode is to be the mediator of the law. This means that instead of reconciling others with gentle correction, their mode is either as an arbitrator or negotiator. This is what we refer to as the 'collegial model'. This style of counsel relies on the logic of things to be done, arising from a private assessment of what God's word requires. The words of Christ are treated as a law, which allow the collegial person to maintain authority and control over the interaction.

Those who are spiritual not only need to walk in the Spirit, but to become skilful through training in order to be ministers of the Spirit. As ministers of the Spirit, their testimony will show that they are submitted to the fellowship of light in the presbytery and the body of Christ. They will understand who they are, and therefore will be sanctified by standing with their brethren where the witness of their name is known and where the Spirit of God is found.

10 1Co 8:10-12

11 Gal 5:16,18,25

12 Gal 5:22

13 Gal 5:19-21

Study Questions

When we set our mind on the Spirit, we no longer recognise our brethren according to the motivations or judgements of the flesh. We will walk spiritually in reconciliation with a spirit of gentleness.

- Describe the difference between these two ways of seeing – the judgements of the flesh versus a spirit of gentleness.

As ministers of the Spirit, our testimony will show that we are connected and submitted to the fellowship of the light of a lamp presbytery and the body of Christ.

- Explain the difference in attitude between a minister of the Spirit and a minister of the flesh.

GLOSSARY

Attitude	The whole disposition of a person towards people and all the matters of life. It includes, but is not limited to, a person's manner, thoughts and feelings. It reflects their approach to life. For a spiritual person, their attitude leads to proper discernment of interpersonal relationships.
Born from above	When a new believer receives the Holy Spirit so they can see the kingdom of God. Their identity is regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. A covenant child has already received the Holy Spirit from conception, and through godly parenting, they are raised as spiritual people.
Born of Spirit	When a new believer receives the Spirit of the Son into their heart by faith. They receive a share in the divine nature. A covenant child receives the divine nature at the point of conception. They have the Spirit of the Son dwelling in them, and are not enslaved to sin. Those born of Spirit live to reveal Jesus Christ.

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Born of water	When a new believer receives the incorruptible seed of their foreknown name. This seed contains the Spirit of the Father. They are born as a unique son of God and have become new creation. A covenant child already has the Spirit of the Father. They also already possess the seed of their predestined name.
Carnality	The reliance on our flesh. A carnal person sets their mind on the things of the flesh and attempts to serve God by the mechanisms and desires of the flesh. Their wisdom is earthly, but will degrade to something worse unless they are transformed by the renewing of their mind.
Circumcision of Christ	The action of God to cut away our flesh and its influence upon our behaviour. We commit to this circumcision when we are baptised into the death of Christ. The circumcision of Christ is applied to children through the godly discipline of their parents.
A collegial person	Maintains authority and control over others through a private assessment of what God's word requires. They operate by law, and their mode is to be the mediator of the law. Their mode is either as an arbitrator or negotiator. They cannot entrust themselves to the operation of Christ in other people. They therefore cannot fellowship with their brethren.
Courtship	The process by which Christian friendship is able to blossom into romantic love, commitment and marriage. The process of courtship is a fellowship that enables a couple to mature separately and together to a point where they are ready to be joined in one flesh and one spirit.
Covenant child	A person included in the covenant of God, through the circumcision of Christ and participation in the life of offering.
Covenant household	A covenant household is established when a man and woman are joined in Christian marriage. A covenant household is sanctified to the purpose of God in His Everlasting Covenant. Children born into covenant households have received the seed of the divine nature. In other words, they are born of God from the point of conception.

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Covenant of marriage	The union of husband and wife in sanctification to the Lord. The means by which the blessing of God is extended to each new family. Christian marriage is a unique commitment and culture; it belongs to, and has its foundation in, the Everlasting Covenant.
Darkness	A person's state before they are born of God. Also, a spiritual person's light can become darkness, if their experience is just an exercise in religious information, not spiritual illumination.
Divine nature	The divine nature is the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They share in this one life. And they desire to share this life with us. We become partakers of the divine nature when Christ comes to dwell in our hearts by faith.
Everlasting Covenant	The agreement of the three members of the Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to make Their life available to mankind.
Faith of the Son	The faith of the Son of God enables us to believe what God believes about us. God believes that we will become children of God and come to full maturity. The faith of the Son enables us to live as a son of God and fulfil the will of God as we abide in the body of Christ.
Firstfruits believer	Someone born of God, planted in Christ's body, and joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A firstfruits Christian is able to bring forth the good fruit of the righteousness of God. They have been converted from living according to the flesh, to walking by the Spirit.
The grace of God	The full provision for each son of God, for every step of their obedience in life. We see this grace fully expressed from the face of Christ, who displays to us, and shines upon us, the total package of God's provision for us to be conformed to His image. He is 'the God of all grace'.
Identity	The spirit of a person; in other words, who we actually are. All people have identity, but without Christ we cannot align our identity to our foreknown name. When we accept our naming by the Father, our identity can be expressed in all the liberty of our sonship.

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Illumination	When a person has been born from above, the eyes of their spiritual sight are illuminated and they see the kingdom of God. Illumination comes from the preached word of God and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Those who live by illumination will have a steadfast commitment to fellowship.
Incorruptible seed	A person's predestined name given to them by the Father. This is the Father's word within them, so that they become a new creation. Receiving this seed is what it means to be born of water.
Judgement of God	The whole world, which includes our flesh, has already been judged by God. As Christians, if we choose to continue living by the flesh, we bring ourselves under this righteous judgment. But if we join Christ in communion and the fellowship of His sufferings, the judgement of God becomes a discipline upon us. This discipline reconciles us to God, delivers us from sin and matures us as sons of God. The judgement of God is upon us whenever we do not discern the body of Christ.
Law of sin	The motivation, fathered by Satan, to rebel against God. Satan arouses the desire within us to be like God. We endeavour to emulate God by taking hold of His law and all the resources available to make ourself into the image of our own imaginations. The law of sin is the motivation to save our life and avoid death.
Law of the mind	The law which governs our conscious assessment of how we should live, what is good for us and what we will not accept. A carnal Christian can delight in the law of God in the law of his mind, because God's law is obviously good. However, another man can equally delight in wicked or vindictive things in the law of his mind. Neither one is able to serve the Lord. Only a man who continues to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings can be delivered from trying to live by the law of his mind. The law of the mind will either be directed by an 'evil conscience' or by a conscience which testifies in the Holy Spirit.
A lawless person	One who refuses to live by anything except the light within them. This light is the light of their own law, laying hold the law of their mind. This light is actually darkness.

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New Covenant	Inaugurated when Christ died and rose again, at the point when He breathed on His disciples. This caused them to be born of the Spirit. All the promises of the Everlasting Covenant are given to us in the New Covenant by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The New Covenant expresses the high calling to sonship.
New creation	A believer is a new creation when they receive the incorruptible seed of the word of the Father. Something new has come into their humanity. Furthermore, the expression of new creation is only in Christ, who is the New Creation. If we are in Christ, we are expressing the life of new creation as a member of His body.
Nurture and admonition	The initiative of God toward bringing forth ‘godly seed’. God has given the responsibility of this work to parents. Nurture and admonition is the discipline and training of children by their parents.
The other law	An underlying principle or attitude that compels us to want to go our own way. It is simply our own desires and the things that seem ‘right’ to us. The desire to live from our own reference rather than by obeying God. It is the survival mechanism that governs our actions if we walk after the flesh.
Poor in spirit	The point at which a person desires to be freed from the bondage of the flesh, while recognising they have no resources to do so. This is a state of spiritual bankruptcy before God. The only hope for a person in this state is the grace of God, which is granted to them because of His great mercy.
Presbytery	The fellowship of overseers, elders and deacons of a lampstand church. These brethren walk together in a fellowship of first love. The presbytery is connected to the right hand of Christ through ascension-gift overseers. The presbytery is the lamp of the body of Christ.
Prevenient grace	The undeserved gift of God, which grants a hearer a moment of freedom to choose what God is offering them. It frees a person from every obstacle that could stop them choosing the way of salvation. When prevenient grace comes, they have a choice and can receive or resist the Holy Spirit. It can only be received by one who is poor in spirit.

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Promise of the Spirit	The promise of the Spirit means that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son come and dwell in us. We receive the promise of the Spirit through the faith of the Son of God working in us.
Regeneration	Describes the recovery of a person's identity through the work of the Holy Spirit. This recovery restores the person's capacity to know God and receive His word.
Righteousness	God imputes righteousness, meaning right standing, to a new believer when they accept God's word calling them to be a son of God. Being a son of God is the first expression of righteousness. Having been born of the Spirit, our obedience to the word of the Father reveals the righteousness of Christ. We reveal the righteousness of His sonship as members of His body.
Seal of our sonship	Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the seal of sonship for those who have been born of the Spirit. This is the guarantee that we are sons of God and will receive an inheritance in the age to come.
Sevenfold Spirit of God	The fullness of the Spirit of God, ministered from His throne. When a person is baptised in the Holy Spirit, they receive the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God to be a minister of the New Covenant in the church and in the world.
Spirit of antichrist	This is the spirit of lawlessness, which is against all the works of Christ. It particularly opposes the idea that the life of Christ is coming in the flesh, maintaining a superior position to the things of God. The spirit of antichrist exalts itself above God. It manifests in direct attack upon the Presbytery.
A spiritual person	Has been converted from living according to the flesh to walk according to the Spirit. They are able to perceive all that God has prepared for those who love Him. Having been born of the Spirit, they are able to know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Sufferings of Christ	Christ suffered for all humanity. He gathered up all human suffering into Himself and granted us the privilege of having fellowship with Him in His sufferings. He gives us a share of His sufferings, which become a discipline for us working an eternal weight of glory. In other words, by

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joining the fellowship of His sufferings, we are able to be changed from one glory to another.

Synagogue of Satan

A group of like-minded, disaffected people who become embittered and empowered against the brethren who bring God's word to them. They are captive to a religious mindset which is the result of the deception of Satan.

Throne of grace

In one sense, Jesus Christ is the throne of grace. In another sense, the throne of grace is a place of travail and prayer, where Jesus Himself lives to make intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Receiving grace at the throne of grace gives you the capacity to do God's will.

Travail

Travail is the effort, pain and process by which a person is born of God. Travail is also an ongoing fellowship and activity of our Christian pilgrimage. There is continual effort, pain and process as we grow and mature as sons of God.

Virtue

Virtue is the character, attitude and consequent actions demonstrated by someone who has the faith of God. Virtue is one of the qualities called 'the excellencies' of Christ. Virtue is evident in a person's conduct, as they walk by the Spirit in the fear of the Lord.

Walking after the flesh

The desire to serve God in our own way, by our own illumination and with our perceived abilities. When we live this way, we are unable to overcome the power of the law of sin that is in us. The outcome of walking after the flesh is disconnection from fellowship with God, spiritual darkness, and death.

Walking after the Spirit

Through ongoing fellowship with the Holy Spirit, Son and Father, we are able to take heed to God and His plan for our lives. The life of Jesus gives power to our mortal body so we can fulfil His will in our lives.

The world

The world describes the fallen laws which govern the behaviour of all people and the corruption of all creation. This world lies under the power of the evil one. It is ruled by principles which are the application of the law in the hands of sinful men. If we love the world, we are in fact loving the application of law in our own hands. This will make us hostile to God.

