



# SONS of the MOST HIGH

*The pathway of sonship*

**STUDY GUIDE**

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONVOCATION | **2014**

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of the  
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# Sons of the Most High

## *The pathway of sonship*

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Luke Pomery Jonathon Wills David V Hall Kane McNally

Study Guide for International Youth Convocation 2014

December 2013

Scriptures are quoted from NASB, NKJV, KJV and LITV. Where italicised emphasis is used in Scripture references, this has been added and does not appear in the original translations.

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# THE WORK OF SONSHIP

Richie Kaa

It's amazing to consider that we, the sons of men, have been predestined to become the sons of God. So, it is of great importance that we give our attention to learning how to walk in a manner worthy of this high calling. We have been hearing that our walk as a son of God is a process that is first initiated by the word of the cross. This word continues to be spoken, today, through the messengers who are sent as part of Christ's administration.



## **The word of the cross**

We call it 'the word of the cross', not because the preacher is necessarily talking about Jesus going to the cross or dying on the cross, but because the impact of the preached word causes us to be connected to the glorious work of the cross. You may recall the first time you heard and received the word that joined you to the work of the cross. As it sounded forth, you heard the word of God in such a way that you knew that God was speaking directly to you. Its impact upon you was that it caused you to 'see' something that you had never seen before about yourself. You were 'illuminated' to see that certain aspects of how you had been living (your actions, your attitudes, your personal definition, even your life goals) were in fact completely opposed to the way that God was now calling you. This is an amazing transaction, and the Scriptures teach that those who have entered the kingdom now live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

## **Cut to the heart**

To be illuminated by the living and powerful word that convicts our heart brings a kind of sorrow, which the Bible describes as being 'pierced' or 'cut to the heart'. It's not that sin is a foreign concept to us or that we're unable to identify the principle of sin in our own lives or the lives of others, but somehow, in that moment, at the hearing and receiving of the word of the cross, we are caused to 'come alive' to the fact that sin is more than a concept or an action that can be assessed or defined. Our hearts are pierced because we begin to see our own sinfulness, our wickedness, and feel the shame of our sin. We begin to see the truth about our real condition before God. For the very first time, we understand that we are lost and without hope.

## **What shall I do?**

As we receive the Spirit of grace and supplication, it causes us to mourn. We are no longer part of the 'they know not what they do' crowd. Now we express a simple and accountable response; an admission that our sin crucified Christ; and cry in hope, 'What shall we do?' This very question acknowledges that something has to be done. However, it equally acknowledges that I cannot be the source of the answer. The word of the cross has brought me into a fellowship where I can

hear the Father's will for my life, and it is here, in this fellowship, that I will grow up as a son. Practically, we know that the fundamental activity of a son of God is to do the will of the Father. The question is, 'How'?

## **The Father's will**

During His time of earthly ministry, Jesus taught us about the Father's will: 'Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother'.<sup>1</sup> 'Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, *but he who does the will of the Father in heaven.*'<sup>2</sup> In describing how to pray to the Father, Jesus states, 'Your kingdom come, *Your will be done on earth* as it is in heaven'. Later, we recall the words of Christ in Gethsemane, 'Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet *not My will, but Your will be done*'.<sup>3</sup> Our focus as sons is to get down to the reality of hearing, receiving and doing the Father's will. This seems such a simple and obvious point to make, but the real challenge for us is to gain understanding regarding these matters.

## **Receiving the Father's will**

So what is the Father's will for us? At the most basic level, His will is to give us His will. As silly as this might sound, this is such a key point to consider. Receiving the Father's will can only happen as our hearts are circumcised and our will is cut and replaced with the Father's will. Thankfully, Christ has pioneered a pathway for us. A key is to understand what it means for us to abide with Christ in the fellowship of His prayer in Gethsemane. Remember, when Christ was praying in Gethsemane He already knew the Father's will. However, it was necessary to receive the Father's will before He could proceed to actually do the Father's will. This is a key for us, because Jesus also invited three of His disciples to 'watch and pray' whilst He went on ahead to pray to the Father. What did they see and, more to the point, what does Christ want us to see today concerning His prayer to the Father? Simply, Christ illustrates for us that we are to proceed according to the Father's will and not according to our own will. This is not just referring to the contents of His will, as if to suggest that a step by step set of instructions was passed on so that Christ would follow the script all the way to Calvary. Receiving the Father's will is both 'to will and to do' His will.<sup>4</sup> How important it is that we understand how to receive the Father's will so that it might become 'my' will, and

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1 Mat 12:50

2 Mat 7:21

3 Luk 22:42

4 Php 2:13

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not just assume that the hearing of His will is sufficient before we proceed to do His will. In fact, we have no hope of doing His will unless His will has replaced 'my will'.

### Doing the Father's will

In the receiving of the Father's will we proceed to do His will, which is to minister, by offering, our name and works. This is a priestly work. The process that gets us to present, or priest, our bodies as a living sacrifice to prove the will of God, is in fact our life work. Participating in this work will require us to continue to hear the will of the Father as it comes to us in the word of the cross, and to receive the Father's will as we continue to stay in the fellowship of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane.

### Robes of righteousness

In Christ we receive the will of the Father and the capacity to do that will. Now, when we speak of the capacity to do His will we are linked to the scriptural expression of being clothed in our robe of righteousness.<sup>5</sup> This is a broader topic, but our point here is to understand that the robe of righteousness is the mandate to do the will of God for our life.

The hope of every son of God is to be clothed with the robe of righteousness, which is also referred to as our priestly garment. The key thought of being clothed in our priestly garments, or our robe of righteousness, is that we are to do a priestly work. This is the work of offering. The word 'righteous' simply means 'right way to live'. There is only one right way to live, and that way is not determined by a set of rules or laws that we try to live by. The right way for us to live is gifted to us by the Father, in His will. The Father's will is not just a series of commands that we must do. His will speaks to the very essence of who we are to become; our name, our works and the very life by which we will live.

When we describe someone as 'clothed in robes of righteousness', we are actually saying that they are clothed with the ability of His will. We are referring to the ability to present (or priest) one's self as a living sacrifice. This is the only right(eous) way to live. If you are to be a priest to God, then you will have to receive the garments with your name and your works. God wants to clothe you

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5 Isa 61:10

with those garments. He wants to give to you a work, and give you the grace and the capacity to do that work.

### **What is the work I am supposed to be doing?**

The gospel of sonship specifically connects us to our name. When we speak of a person's name, we are referring to the name which has been recorded in the Lamb's book of life. However, we do not have this name at our birth. Practically, every person is born in possession of their identity, but you only find your name and works once you are in Christ. Now that you are in Christ (by baptism), you have access to know what's written in the Lamb's book of life. This connects us to our name. It would then follow that we present ourselves, or priest our offering, which is our name and works. We are fulfilling His will, because we know that the will of the Father is for His sons to make offering according to their name. However, we can only make offering according to our name once our conscience is cleansed from dead works. Dead works are all the things that are not the Father's will for us. This cleansing comes to us in the circumcising action of the Father in which we are now participating as we have come into Christ. Now we are being clothed in the priestly garment, or a robe of righteousness. We are receiving the mandate to do His will.

The activity of every son of God is to continue to receive the will of the Father as it continues to come to us in the word of the cross. I must remain connected to Christ's travail in Gethsemane where the circumcising work of the Father is cutting away my will so that I can receive His will. This is setting me free to present myself as a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable priestly service, so that I can prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

## **Study Questions - The Work of Sonship**

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The word that is preached by those who are sent by Christ causes the hearer to be connected to the work of the cross.

- What has been the impact of the word of the cross on your life?

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- How has receiving the will of the Father changed the way that you live?

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The gospel of sonship specifically connects us to our name and works. A person's name and works are written in the Lamb's book of life.

- What is the difference between the works of sonship and dead works?

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- How are you coming to know what has been written about you in the Lamb's book of life?

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# BRINGING FORTH THE FRUIT OF SONSHIP

John Hay

## Introduction

Before the world was created, God the Father predestined us to become His children.<sup>1</sup> What an incredible thought! According to the kind intention of the Father's will, we have been predestined to become His sons and daughters through Jesus Christ. He is the example, or *pattern*, of our sonship, and we are becoming God's children, and fellow heirs with Christ, as we bring forth the *fruit* of our sonship, in Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Eph 1:5

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Jesus said to His disciples, ‘You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.’<sup>2</sup> This is the fruit of sonship. In this article, we will consider how we are to bring forth the fruit of our sonship. We will firstly examine how the word of our sonship comes to us as a seed of the divine nature. We will then focus on the way that God gives us a *new heart* so that the seed can take root, grow and produce the fruit that will remain. This is what it means to be born as a son of God.

### The Father’s great love

The apostle Paul explained that God the Father made salvation available and gave us the inheritance of sonship because of His great *love* with which He loved us. ‘But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.’<sup>3</sup>

The Father’s love for us is revealed in the giving of His only begotten Son.<sup>4</sup> This didn’t just happen when Jesus Christ was *born*. This happened in the fellowship of God’s covenant *before* the world was created! The Son is the total sum of the will and provision of God for our sonship. The Father gave the Son, and now all those who receive Him are given the right to become sons of God.<sup>5</sup> It is amazing to consider the Father’s great love for each one of us!

### The Saviour of the world

When Adam disobeyed God and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sin entered the world and, through sin, death entered the world. In fact, Paul explained that because of Adam’s sin, death has spread to *all* of mankind.<sup>6</sup> We were actually *born* dead in trespasses and sins.<sup>7</sup>

However, because of His great mercy, God the Father made Jesus Christ – Him who knew no sin – to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.<sup>8</sup> As we know, Jesus offered Himself through Eternal Spirit and finished the work that the Father had given to Him. He died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures.<sup>9</sup> He has

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2 Joh 15:16                      8 2Co 5:21  
3 Eph 2:4-6                      9 1Co 15:3-4  
4 Joh 3:16  
5 Joh 1:12  
6 Rom 5:12  
7 Eph 2:1

now ascended back to the Father and received the glory that He had before the foundation of the world.

## The Seed of the divine nature

This work revealed Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world in whom we receive mercy. Importantly, it also revealed Him as the ‘Seed’. Speaking of Himself, Jesus said, ‘Unless a *grain* of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.’<sup>10</sup> Later, both Peter and Paul identified Jesus as Abraham’s Seed, in whom all the families of the earth shall be *blessed*.<sup>11</sup> This is an important point.

Jesus Christ is the Seed of the *divine nature*. We become *partakers* of the divine nature when we are born of God.<sup>12</sup> This is what it means to be *blessed*. We could say that we are blessed when we are born of the incorruptible seed of the divine nature, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.<sup>13</sup> Now, let us consider how a hearer is blessed by firstly receiving, and then partaking of, the divine nature.

## The parable of the sower

The parable of the sower teaches us that we have access to Christ – the Seed of the divine nature – when sowers, or *messengers*, are sent to us.<sup>14</sup> True messengers are members of Christ’s administration, and they are full of faith and the Holy Spirit. The word that they proclaim is the word of *sonship* which comes as a seed of divine life. This is actually the word that is proclaimed when we gather together in the name of Jesus Christ, e.g. at communion.

The word of sonship is described in many ways throughout the New Testament, including the gospel of Christ, the gospel of God and the word of the cross. Regardless of its description, the words that Christ is speaking, through the messengers whom He sends, are *Spirit* and *life*.<sup>15</sup> Thus, we can understand that the divine nature is the one Spirit and one life of Yahweh that is given to us as a personal possession.

The parable of the sower further teaches us that the word of sonship is sown onto the ‘ground’ of our *hearts*.<sup>16</sup> We receive the seed of the divine nature when we

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10 Jn 12:24                      16 Mat 13:19

11 Rom 3:25. Gal 3:16

12 2Pe 1:4

13 1Pe 1:23

14 Mat 13:3

15 Joh 6:63



receive both the messenger and the message into our hearts. Sadly, many reject both the messenger and the message. Jesus said that these ones received the seed *by the wayside*.<sup>17</sup> In this case, the seed is snatched away because their hearts were hard and they resisted the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

## Stony ground

In contrast, Jesus described those who are receiving the word of sonship for the first time as those who are receiving seed on *stony* ground. This imagery is helpful. Without Christ, our hearts are *hard*. They are either hard, wayside ground, or hard, stony ground. Amazingly, the seed of the divine nature *can* germinate on a hard, stony heart. How does this happen? The seed of the word is living and powerful. It comes with the capacity, or grace, to germinate in a stony heart and bring the hearer all the way to the good ground of the body of Christ. This capacity of the seed is often referred to as *prevenient grace*, which just means a grace that comes *before* a response.

At this point, it is important that we do not confuse receiving the seed of the divine nature with being born of God. We are born of God as a new creation with a new heart, a new spirit and a new will, once we have come into Christ and have been joined to His circumcision. Let us consider this further. As the seed begins to germinate on stony ground, the word of God causes the hearer to look on Him whom they have pierced – Jesus Christ. As they mourn for the Firstborn Son, they cry out, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’<sup>19</sup>

The hearer is called to repent, come *away* from the world, and come *to* the Father where they find Christ. They are then called to be baptised with Jesus Christ into His death, burial and resurrection, for the forgiveness of their sins.<sup>20</sup> When a person agrees to obey this word, their heart is changing from a heart of stone, and they are beginning to find salvation.

## Good ground

It is clear from the parable of the sower that the seed of divine life can only bear fruit on *good ground*.<sup>21</sup> This means that our stony hearts must somehow become good ground. Rather than change our old heart, God has promised that He would give us a *new* heart. ‘I will give you a *new heart* and put a *new spirit* within you; I will

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17 Mat 13:19

18 Act 7:51

19 Act 2:37

20 Col 2:12-13

21 Mat 13:8

take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.’<sup>22</sup> When does this happen? We receive a new heart when we join the fellowship of Christ’s circumcision in the Garden of Gethsemane.

This circumcision gives us the new heart, the new spirit and the new will of a son of God through the regenerating work of God’s word. We are truly a new creation in Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Now that we have received a new heart, the seed of the divine nature can take root and produce the fruit of sonship in us. This is an important point. Jesus said that every tree was known by its fruit.<sup>24</sup> A believer demonstrates that they are born of God by bringing forth the *fruit* of sonship. How do we bring forth the fruit of our sonship? We must participate in the offering of Christ.

## The offering of Christ

The offering of Christ is the means by which the divine nature is multiplied. As we participate in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, the seed of the divine nature that we have received bears fruit in our life, showing that we are sons of God. Furthermore, we are able to sow this life so that it becomes the possession of *others*. There are three elements to the multiplication of the divine nature.

First, the life of the seed takes root and grows in *us*. Christ has given us a new heart, and the root of the divine nature is going down deep and then multiplying upwards.<sup>25</sup> We are growing and maturing as a son as we endure tribulation and affliction because of the word. At this point, it is critical that we do not draw back, or God has no pleasure in us.<sup>26</sup>

In the second element, we are joined to the offering of Christ and the seed begins to multiply to become more seed that is given to *others*. This is our evangelistic ministry. As we preach the gospel of Christ and others are born of God, the seed of the divine nature is multiplied again as these new believers join the offering of Christ. In this way, believers are being connected together in the on-going fellowship of Christ’s offering.

In the third element, the multiplied seed of the divine nature becomes bread for eating. This is the bread of *fellowship*. Paul wrote, ‘The bread which we break, is it

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22 Eze 36:26

23 2Co 5:17

24 Luk 6:44

25 Isa 37:31

26 Heb 10:38

not the communion [lit. *fellowship*] of the body of Christ?<sup>27</sup> Jesus said that His food was to do the will of the Father. Likewise, the bread is revealing the will of God that is being accomplished individually, and by His many-membered body. The bread is both food for fellowship and food for sustenance.

### Our heart – a watered garden

As we conclude, it is helpful to consider the words of the prophet Jeremiah. Describing God's people, he wrote that 'their souls shall be like a *well-watered garden*, and they shall sorrow no more at all'. The prophet Ezekiel wrote, 'This land that was desolate has become like *the garden of Eden*; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.'<sup>28</sup> These amazing promises are to us!

Our hearts were once stony and desolate – unable to bring forth the life of God. However, the gospel of Jesus Christ took root in our hearts as a seed of the divine nature. Our stony, desolate hearts were *removed* and replaced with a new heart as we were born of God and joined the circumcision of Christ. The seed of the divine nature was then able to grow on the good ground of our heart, and we were enabled to bring forth the fruit of our sonship and multiply this seed to others. However, we must *continue* to receive a new heart, and this new heart must continue to be *watered*, otherwise it will become unfruitful once again.

Jesus said, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.'<sup>29</sup> We continue to receive a new heart – the heart of new creation – as we eat His flesh and drink His blood. As we fellowship in the body and blood of Christ, we abide in Him and He abides in our hearts.

Our hearts continue to be watered as we allow the waters of purification to cleanse us of the flesh and its desolation. This cleansing enables the seed to continue to germinate and bear fruit on good ground. However, we must take care that the seed is not choked by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. This is the seed that fell among thorns.<sup>30</sup> Through the power of Eternal Spirit, we are able to have our minds renewed so that they can be set on the things of the Spirit,

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27 1Co 10:16

28 Eze 36:35

29 Joh 6:53–56

30 Mat 13:7

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so that we are able to cast down every imagination and high thing in us that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.<sup>31</sup>

The prophet Ezekiel proclaimed the promise of the Everlasting Covenant. ‘You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.’<sup>32</sup> If we will continue to receive the seed of the divine nature and bring forth the fruit of our sonship, He will be our God, and we will be God’s people. He will be a Father to us, and we will be His sons and daughters.

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<sup>31</sup> 2Co 10:5

<sup>32</sup> Eze 36:28

## **Study Questions - Bringing Forth the Fruit of Sonship**

We understand from the parable of the sower that the seed of divine life can only bear fruit on good ground. This means that our stony hearts must become good ground.

- Explain how our hearts become good ground in which the seed of God's life can take root, grow and multiply.

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- Is your heart becoming good ground? What are some of the practical changes that are occurring in your life, through this process?

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The offering of Christ is the means by which the divine nature is multiplied.

- What are the three elements necessary for the multiplication of the divine nature?

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- How are these elements evident in your own life?

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# HEARTS DRAWING NEAR

Julianne Hamilton

## Introduction

We have often heard it preached that the word of God *comes calling*. What is He *calling us to do*? Quite simply, He is calling us to 'draw near'. As a father lovingly calls to his children to draw near, so too, Yahweh Father is calling us to 'draw near to Him'.

We know well the words of Jesus, when He said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through Me.'<sup>1</sup> He also said that no-one can come to Him, unless the Father who sent Him, draws them near.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Joh 14:6

2 Joh 6:44

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The apostle John said in his Gospel that the Father gives those who respond to the call to become a son of God, to Christ. And Jesus said, 'Whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given Me, but shall raise them up at the last day. For My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'<sup>3</sup>

These words of Christ are directing us to observe the nature of the relationship between Yahweh Father and His Son. Their relationship together has brought forth something very special by which we are now able to *draw near to God*. And what They have brought forth is something completely new.

### The circumcision of Christ

From before time began, in the realm outside of eternity that the Scripture calls 'before', Yahweh Elohim agreed together to make room to include us in Their unique love, fellowship and offering. From out of Their own Covenant, They agreed together to make covenant with us. And that covenant was called an 'everlasting covenant of life and peace'.

Their fellowship is as a garden, full of good fruit, out of which flows rivers of living waters. The garden of the Lord is a well-watered garden! Out of the richness of Their relationship together, They bring forth a harvest of sonship life.

This sonship life – that is, 'the life of a son of the Father' – was brought forth by Yahweh Son, who is the sum of all sonship. He submitted His will to the Father's hand, and in that realm outside of eternity, He laid His own life down to become the Father's personal possession. He became, for us, 'something new'. He became a 'new kind of Son'. He became 'the Son of the Father'.

As Yahweh Son submitted His will to the Father, the Father then conformed Him to the image of *His sonship*. That is, 'The image of the sonship which belongs to the Father'. We are not being conformed to the image of sonship that the 'intrinsic' Yahweh Son was, 'before'. We are being conformed to the image of 'the Son of the Father'.<sup>4</sup>

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3 Joh 6:37-40

4 Rom 8:29

This conforming process is, in fact, what the Scripture calls ‘the circumcision of Christ’, which happened ‘before’ and was revealed in time. He was conformed to the image of sonship which we are to become – one that fulfils the will of the Father in heaven. The writer of the book of Colossians calls His circumcision a ‘circumcision made without hands’.<sup>5</sup> It happened ‘before’, by the conforming process of the Father, and not by *the hands of man*. This is what circumcision means in its ‘simplicity’. It is the work of the Father to conform His Son to the image of the sonship that is to be the full expression of His fatherhood.

As the Son lives in the fullness of that expression, the Son is fully revealing His Father. When the Father is fully revealed by the sonship of His Son, then the Son is fully revealed by His Father. This is ‘offering love’ in action. One is of the other, conformed to the other, revealing the other, and then revealed by the other.

This process and relationship is what we are being conformed to, by the circumcision of Christ. From His circumcision comes the heart of a son of God. From His circumcision comes the enabling power, supplied to Him, to be conformed to the will of the Father in heaven. We must join His circumcision to be enabled to do the will of the Father in heaven. Christ was circumcised ‘once for all’. Our own circumcision avails us nothing. Only Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God.<sup>6</sup> It is only through Him that we can *draw near to God*.

## **The Seed of the New Covenant**

Christ is also called ‘the Seed of the Covenant’.<sup>7</sup> He was established as the Seed of the Covenant, when every name in the Covenant, and in the Lamb’s book of life, was given to the Son as His personal possession. Our name and life is in Christ, the Seed. His flesh and blood is the bread and wine which enables our obedience.<sup>8</sup>

We could say, poetically, that He was brought forth by the conforming process of the Father, as the Seed of sonship. He was then planted in the covenant garden of Yahweh, and grew up as ‘a Son of the Father’ in that realm, before! Everything that would be brought forth from the Son’s word was supplied to Him by the Father in that covenant garden. He was nurtured and tended by the Father and Holy Spirit, by the enabling power of the seven-fold Spirit of God.

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5 Col 2:11-13

6 1Co 1:24

7 Gal 3:16

8 Joh 6:32, 53-56.  
Mat 14:22-24



## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

And so He produced a multiplicity of sonship seed in that covenant garden, 'before'. He worked hard! That 'seed' grew into a harvest from which He took grain, processed it, and made it into bread – the bread which gives power, enabling obedience. This bread is His flesh. And also, from His blood, yielded by His circumcision, He planted a vineyard and processed it into wine. This is the blood of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is in His blood. It is the life of new creation.

Christ is New Creation. He has set a table, and has said, 'My flesh is the bread of obedience, and My blood is the wine of life.' 'Come eat and drink of Me.' 'Taste and see that the Lord is good!'<sup>9</sup> From a 'good heart' you can serve the living God, and become His personal possession. This is the New Covenant life for every household.

And, having eaten of His sonship – His sonship as a 'Son of the Father' – Christ says, 'It tastes good, doesn't it? Now, join Me as a son of God! Receive the flesh of My heart as your heart, for your heart shall be like a well-watered garden which produces a harvest of the fruit of righteousness and peace. And by joining My circumcision, cut away all that is of the old, so that My seed may grow in you.'

From His circumcision comes the heart of a son of God. From His circumcision comes the 'good' heart. This is what the New Covenant has given to us. It has given us a 'new heart', a heart which is the 'good ground'. And it has given us the seed of the divine life, which is to grow in our heart and produce a harvest of righteousness and peace. This is New Covenant life which Christ has made available for every child of God, for every family, and for every household. But we need to take heed to the matter of our heart if we are to enter in to all that the Father has predestined for us as His sons.

### **Only the circumcised of heart can draw near**

The Scripture uses the 'heart' to describe the whole inner man, both soul and spirit. The heart is the real substance of a person, which cannot be seen from a natural perspective.<sup>10</sup> The simple reality is that our whole inner man, both soul and spirit, has a tendency to do its own thing! This is the reason why the Scriptures say, 'take

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9 Psa 34:8

10 The Word of the  
Cross, p37

heed', 'watch', 'take care', and 'beware'! Our heart 'turns after its own way'.<sup>11</sup> We all have many justifications for why this is so.

We also read the ecclesiastical words of Solomon the preacher, who proclaimed to us that 'Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.'<sup>12</sup> Our own Lord and Saviour also taught, saying that 'out of the hearts of [the sons of] men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride [and] foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.'<sup>13</sup>

Hearts such as this can never draw near to God! This is further expressed in the book of Ezekiel, where the Lord proclaims that 'no foreigner who is uncircumcised in heart shall enter His sanctuary'.<sup>14</sup> We can easily extrapolate from this that 'no one who is uncircumcised in heart shall draw near to God'. Only those who are 'circumcised of heart' can draw near to Him. Only those who have been conformed to the will of the Father in heaven, by joining Christ's circumcision, can draw near to God.

### **Circumcision in the Old Covenant**

Speaking to the children of Israel, the Lord's chosen people, Moses delivered the highpoint of the Old Covenant. This was that 'the Lord God would circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their descendants, to love Him with all their heart and with all their soul that they may live'.<sup>15</sup>

The Lord deemed that this covenant was to be sealed by the sign of circumcision, which was to be performed in the flesh of every Jewish male. Every Jewish son born was to be circumcised on the eighth day, and every Jewish daughter born was to participate in the rites of purification.<sup>16</sup>

By inference, Paul described the circumcision rites of the Old Covenant as a circumcision 'made with hands'. It was a work performed by the 'hands of men', by their 'own hand', according to the letter of the law. But this practice did not profit them anything because, even though they were circumcised in the body of their flesh, their hearts had turned after their own way. Through the deceitfulness of sin, their hearts had become as hard as flint.

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11 Isa 53:6-11                      16 Luk 2:23. Lev 12

12 Ecc 9:3

13 Mar 7:21-23

14 Eze 44:9

15 Deu 30:6  
paraphrase

## ‘They made the pleasant land desolate’

We read the words of the Lord in Zechariah chapter seven, where He describes the nature of His relationship with the nation of Israel from one generation to the next. We read how they made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which He sent to them by His Spirit through the former prophets. So, He sent great wrath upon them.

Describing their relationship, He said that just as *He called* and they would not listen, so *they called* and He would not listen. He scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations that they did not know. And the land was desolated behind them so that no-one ‘went back and forth’, *for they made the pleasant land desolate*.

This is an interesting statement: ‘they made the pleasant land desolate’. For us, the making of *the pleasant land into a desolate land* is a matter of the heart. A heart of flint is a heart that is desolate. It is a heart of stone. It is an ‘Old Covenant’ heart of law that can never be cut into the New Covenant, unless it is joined to the circumcision of Christ. When affliction comes because of the word, and the suffering of the disciplining hand of the Father comes to conform us to the image of a son of God, we have a tendency to become offended, and our hearts become hard. In fact, we make our hearts hard. As it was written in the book of Zechariah, we make our hearts like flint. We actually give ourselves to this! We give our hearts to be offended and hardened, and so they are *made hard*, like flint.<sup>17</sup>

## The example of Adam and Eve

The word ‘made’ is critical here. To ‘make’ something takes a thoughtful process and application. It is a ‘work’ purposely performed. It doesn’t just happen. For example, if you want to bake a cake, it takes a thoughtful process and application. It doesn’t just happen, just because you say, ‘I want to bake a cake’. You have to work at it. And so it is with matters of the heart. There is a work that we participate in.

I cannot help but think that there was a work that Eve purposefully and carnally performed in her own heart. She acted in presumption and disobedience when she partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Her ‘pleasant land’ we could say, was the garden of Eden, into which God had placed her and her husband. It

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17 Zec 7:11-12

was a rich and fertile ground where seed had grown to produce the most beautiful garden, with many trees that bore much fruit.

The scriptural writers often refer to the 'heart' as a garden. The fertile nature of the ground of this garden, the garden of Eden, was like the human heart that God had created within them. It was compatible with Christ's heart of flesh, brought forth in Him, through His circumcision, in the realm of the covenant, 'before'. Christ's heart was rich and full of goodness, able to nurture the divine life of God. In the fullness of time, the heart of Christ would be given to mankind when they were born of God, by joining the fellowship of His circumcision.

Christ's heart was a 'good' heart. The heart of Adam was compatible with the heart of Christ, while he lived by the obedience of faith. While Adam and Eve walked in fellowship with God in the garden, they were able to bring forth a harvest of 'righteousness and peace'.

Now, let's not get our meanings confused here. Let's not be confused by the language of the apostle Paul, who often taught about 'the body of flesh' which is to be cut off. This is the 'evil heart of unbelief' that Adam and Eve embraced when they disobeyed God. Before he fell through disobedience, Adam's natural heart was actually compatible with the 'circumcised heart' of Christ.

By faith, in the fullness of time, Adam and Eve were to interface with the *new heart* that Christ had received through His circumcision, 'before'. This was to be Christ's further ministry and provision for them. It was always deemed that the sons of men would receive the divine nature and become sons of God, in the fullness of time, through the ministry of Christ. It was not by procreation that the sons of men would become the sons of God.

When Eve was deceived by sin, and turned from the Lord and His word, she made her heart hard like flint. Adam also joined Eve in this action, and purposefully hardened his heart as well. This stony heart of unbelief was fathered in Adam and Eve, when they received the word of Satan. This became for them a covenant of sin. Their pleasant land was made desolate, and so death swept in. Neither Adam nor Eve chose to wait patiently in faith, or to endure through the season of trial by God's enabling grace. Rather, they made another way for themselves. And, by doing this, they made themselves the source of their own way.

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

They were made captives of the law of sin and death when they received the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The seed of their disobedience was the word fathered by Satan in their hearts, and its fruit *made their pleasant land desolate*. They became disconnected from Christ's heart of flesh from that moment and were driven out of the 'pleasant land' of the garden of Eden, into desolation. The way to the tree of life was barred to them.

### **Eve did not draw near to God**

It is clear that Eve did not draw near to God, because she did not *resist the devil*. The evidence of drawing near to God is that you *resist the devil*. He has no foothold in your life. But Eve did not draw near to God. And Satan obviously did not *flee* from her. This is why Satan kept hanging around in the garden of Eden. He was in fact, right in the middle of the garden of Eden! Her work was to *resist him!* She was meant to see him *flee* from the garden. That was her *work of sanctification*. She was meant to get a big stick and say, 'What are you doing here? Get away from me, Satan! Get out of my garden!'

Does this not sound like the words of Christ to Peter? 'Get behind me, Satan!' We are to resist the devil's word, no matter from whom it comes. Satan's word will lead us away from our participation in the circumcision of Christ, which conforms us to the image of His sonship.

Eve's heart had already begun to turn to flint when she desired another way, as she listened to Satan's words. Her heart became carnal when she did not remain completely submitted to God and to His will. We are carnal too, when we draw ourselves away from God through unbelief. And Satan is always there with an alternative view that will lead us astray.

We read in the book of James, 'Submit therefore to God [and to His righteousness]. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will lift you up.'<sup>18</sup>

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18 Jas 4:7-10

## Conclusion

We need to *draw near to the Lord*, to understand His ways, and to know Him. This is where our deliverance begins. Why would we, who have tasted the goodness of the Lord, *desire something else* that would only ever produce in us desolation, hardness of heart and death? Why do we justify our own law, and the reasons of our own heart, knowing all the while that the life of God does not come to us from our own way?

No matter what our effort, our thoughtful process or our application, the purposeful work of *our own hands*, will never bring forth the life of God in our heart. And so, the work that is 'made with our hands', will only ever make *the pleasant land desolate*. The children of Israel, God's own chosen people, give testament to this.

The heart of stone is not regenerated. It can never bring forth a harvest of righteousness and peace. Our only way forward is to participate in the work that is 'made without hands'. Our only way forward is to apprehend the new heart, given by the New Covenant, and brought forth by the circumcision of Christ.

The simple truth is that in all our hearts there is some element of 'desolation'. There is something of hardness there. There are thorns there. Our pleasant land is desolate. We need a washing of regeneration that comes to us when we receive God's word.

We read in the book of Isaiah that the Lord looks upon all of our desolation with compassion – not for our sake, but for His sake. It says, 'The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; He will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.'<sup>19</sup>

The Lord wants to comfort you, today. His comfort is a 'matter of the heart'. Is your heart as the prophet Isaiah has written? Is it in ruin? Is it like a desert, dry and parched, stony and hard? Is it a wasteland, where nothing can grow? The Lord looks upon the state of your heart with great compassion. He looks upon all your ruins and desolate places with compassion.

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19 Isa 51:3

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

The Lord promises, through His prophet Isaiah, that if you remove your heart of stone (which is *the pointing of the finger*), and if you remove your heart of thorns (which is *the speaking wickedly against one another*), then He will *continually guide you*, and *satisfy your desire in scorched and desolate places!* He will *give strength to your bones!* And your heart shall be *like a watered garden*, and *like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.*<sup>20</sup>

These are such great and precious promises which the Lord has given to us, today! He wants to give us *a new heart*. Our stony ground and thorny ground hearts need to be removed out of the way. And they can only be removed when we join the circumcision of Christ. And if we will remove them, the Lord will give us *His very own heart of flesh*. It shall be a heart that is like *a well-watered garden*, able to receive, nurture and grow the divine seed which comes to us as the word of God. And, by this heart, we shall bring forth a harvest of life and peace as children of the covenant. The Lord is drawing us, today. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Draw near to Him!

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<sup>20</sup> Isa 58:9-11

## **Study Questions - Hearts Drawing Near**

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It is through the circumcision of Christ that we receive a new heart. This is necessary for drawing near to God.

- How do we join the circumcision of Christ?

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- Why is this necessary for drawing near to God?

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The evidence of drawing near to God is that we resist the devil. He has no foothold in our lives.

- How do we resist the devil, and what happens if we don't resist him?

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- What is your testimony of drawing near to God? Where have you known deliverance from the hardness of your heart?

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# THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

*- changing us from natural to spiritual*

Bruce Hamilton

## Natural v. spiritual

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The apostle Paul explained to the Corinthian church that ‘the body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.”<sup>1</sup> The last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.’<sup>2</sup>

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1 Gen 2:7

2 1Co 15:42-46

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

Everyone born of the Spirit of God is spiritual. Spiritual people are called 'sons of God' because they have been born of the Spirit of God; they are sons of God the Father. Everyone not born of the Spirit of God is natural. Natural people are called 'sons of men'. It is written in the Bible that 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him'. These things of God which He has prepared for His people are revealed through the Spirit of God. Only those who are born of the Spirit of God can receive and know the things of God. The natural man does not receive, and cannot know, the things of the Spirit of God.<sup>3</sup>

Unless a person is born of God and receives the Spirit of God, he is only a natural man who thinks that the things of God are stupid. He is locked up to the ignorance of the natural realm, which is the spirit of the world. It is like being blind and deaf to all the things of God – 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard'. However, God has put eternity in the hearts of the sons of men, except that no-one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.<sup>4</sup> This is why, instead of turning to God, people all over the world for hundreds and even thousands of years have been asking in vain, 'What is the meaning of life?', 'Where did we come from?', 'Why do we exist?' The natural man can only look at natural things for the answers, but he will never find the answers. Some people look out to distant planets and stars. Others look closer and closer at the microscopic world. Some people are just happy to leave it to their imagination, while others don't care. Solomon, who is regarded as the wisest man who ever lived, said, 'When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see what is done on earth ... then I saw all the work of God, and that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man works really hard to discover it, yet he will not find it; and more than this, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.'<sup>5</sup> There is no hope for the natural man.

The first step from natural to spiritual is when our ears are opened to hear the word of God and our eyes are opened to see the things of God. We proceed from the natural to the spiritual when we are born of the Spirit of God. We do not have to remain natural and alienated from God. He has opened a way for us to become spiritual sons of God. This is how God always meant things to be. In the same way that being a baby is not something to be ashamed of, we do not need to be ashamed of being natural. However, if we never grew or matured and we kept

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3 1Co 2:9-14

4 Ecc 3:11

5 Ecc 8:16-17

being babies, that just wouldn't be right, would it? It is the same for our Christian walk. We must grow and mature and be changed from natural to spiritual. This is a journey that we must walk for our whole lives.

To become spiritual, we will have to become like Jesus. He is the example of what it is to be spiritual. However, there is a difference between Jesus and us. Jesus was God the Son, which means He always was; He always existed. That is why He says that He is 'I Am'.<sup>6</sup> He never received an identity or came into being through birth. We received our identity and came into existence when we were conceived in our mother's womb. We are born as children of men and have to grow and be trained as we develop into mature adults. For Jesus to become a son of God, He also had to become a son of man. Jesus came into the womb of Mary and was born of her as a son of man. We call this 'the incarnation'. Jesus began His ministry when He was thirty years old, and during His ministry He referred to Himself as 'the Son of Man'.<sup>7</sup> He told people that God was His Father. If they wanted to know what God the Father was like, Jesus said He was the best example of who God the Father is. He said, 'He who has seen Me has seen the Father.'<sup>8</sup> Many people were shocked at what He said. They did not accept that He was the Son of God and that He was the example of what they were to become as sons of God.<sup>9</sup>

The Bible introduces two separate, but connected, subjects to explain how God the Son became the Father's Son. One is called 'circumcision' and the other is called 'offering'. Together, these explain this mystery to us. Circumcision is the process by which God the Father made God the Son, His Son. Offering is the process by which God the Son gave up His own rights as God the Son and submitted Himself to become all that the Father asked of Him. When He became the Father's Son, He became the full expression of all that the Father is and does. This was His offering. Paul explained this to the Philippian church.<sup>10</sup> He said that although Jesus was God the Son, in the form of God and equal with God, He emptied Himself. Paul meant that the Son humbled Himself and became obedient to the Father. The Father then made the Son a king-priest. His work was to offer Himself on the cross. By His offering, the Son was to redeem man and multiply the life of God through offering, giving it as a personal possession to everyone who believed in Him. Through Him they could be born as sons of God.

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6 Joh 8:58

7 Mat 16:13

8 Joh 14:9

9 Joh 8:59

10 Php 2:5-11

## The circumcision of Christ

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### Before time and in time

To properly understand the circumcision of Christ, we have to consider what God does outside of time, what He does within the bounds of time, and how His purpose is fulfilled in both of these contexts. It is important to note that unless the Spirit of God gives us understanding, our point of view will only be from a time-bound perspective, because our lives here on earth are bound by time. The circumcision of Christ cannot be understood from a natural, time-bound perspective, only. This perspective will cause us to view the circumcision of Christ as an event that occurred before the world began and then was somehow repeated in time. This would be an error.

It is helpful to recognise three key realities. First, God has no beginning and no end. He just 'is'. The Scriptures refer to the realm of God's fellowship as 'before'. We could ask, 'Before what?' The answer is, 'Before a beginning had been declared by God to bring to pass His plan'. This leads us to the next reality, the eternal. That which is eternal, or everlasting, has a beginning point but no end. The Everlasting Covenant is our example here. Before the Father, Son and Holy Spirit agreed together to bring forth a multitude of sons, there were no sons of the Father. The Everlasting Covenant of sonship had a beginning point. The sons of God were to be born as natural people and then receive God's life, which would enable them to live forever. Third, we recognise that time-bound, or temporal, things have a beginning and an end. There is, in the passage of time, a sequence of actions that occurs between the beginning and the end. Things are accomplished. For example, people are given time to choose whether they want to be sons of God, or not.

How does this help us understand the circumcision of Christ? All that was 'foreordained before' was a completed work. This work was manifest and finished in time when Christ died on the cross at Calvary.<sup>11</sup> This is significant. When Yahweh Father accepted Yahweh Son as His Son in Their covenant 'before', He said, 'You are My Son, *Today* I have begotten You.'<sup>12</sup> The statement 'Today' established the beginning of time and the beginning of the Eternal Covenant. Christ had to journey the whole course of the Eternal Covenant and fulfil all its stages. He was conformed by His obedience, and showed at every stage that He

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11 1Pe 1:20

12 Heb 5:5. Ps 2:7

was the Father's Son. Christ had to finish the course and accomplish everything that the Father required of Him. The Father gave Him strength and ability at each stage of His development. And, by this means, He was perfected as God's Son. It was not until Christ had died and was raised from the dead, that the Father declared that He was His only begotten Son.

### **It is finished**

Circumcision was the work of the Father to conform the Son completely to the Father's will. He was being conformed to an endpoint. This endpoint was a death in the sense that He ceased to exercise His own initiative as Yahweh Son. While He did not cease to exist as Yahweh Son, Jesus did die on the cross. Paul explained that, having come in the flesh of men, the Son humbled Himself by becoming an obedient Son to the point of death on the cross. His death came after He had declared that all His work was finished. When He said, 'It is finished!'<sup>13</sup> He proclaimed that His circumcision by the hand of the Father was complete. This was the endpoint of His circumcision. It was also the end of His offering. He had fully emptied Himself and become the Father's Son. This was the endpoint, or death, of how things had been, and was now a new beginning. More than this, it was the completion and presentation of the new creation.

There are many aspects to the finished work of Christ on Calvary. One is the end of death. Man had fallen into sin and was lost to God because of his disobedience. Judgement was passed on man because of his sin, and man came under the condemnation of death. On the cross, Christ conquered sin. Death was abolished. Through the message of the cross, every person can now be redeemed from sin. They are able to return to the Father and inherit their sonship. Through this process, they are recovered to their predestination and receive eternal life.

### **Conclusion**

When Jesus was raised from the dead, He was raised as the immortal Son of God. The Father did not declare Him to be His Son until Jesus was fully mature and immortal, and able to inherit the new heavens and new earth. This is also true for us. We are to journey with Christ as His disciples, come under the Father's hand, and experience His circumcising work in our lives as we fellowship in the body

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13 Joh 19:28-30

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

of Christ. We are also to learn from Christ how to offer ourselves in the service of God as priests to the Father. When we do this we are able to have the life of God as His sons.

The apostle Paul encouraged every believer to mature in faith and grow up into the full stature of a son of God.<sup>14</sup> If we continue and mature on this pathway of sonship, our bodies will be changed and made immortal when Christ returns. After we receive our spiritual body, we will proceed with Christ to the new heavens and new earth, and live in the family of God forever.

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<sup>14</sup> Eph 4:13

## **Study Questions - The Circumcision of Christ**

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Unless a person is born of God and receives the Spirit of God, he is only a natural man who is unable to comprehend or understand the things of God.

- What does it mean to be 'spiritual'?

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- What is the beginning point for making the transition from the natural to the spiritual?

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Knowing that all things had been accomplished, Jesus cried, 'It is finished!' and bowed His head and gave up His Spirit to the Father.

- What had been 'finished' by Jesus? Explain the difference between the offering of Christ and the circumcision of Christ.

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- How do we come under the Father's hand and experience His circumcising work in our lives, today?

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# ABIDING IN THE HOUSE FOREVER

Peter Hay

Jesus and the New Testament writers used several different pictures to describe the way we become sons of God. Paul taught that those who are becoming sons are receiving an *inheritance* in the *kingdom* of Christ and of God.<sup>1</sup> This is helpful to recognise, as Jesus used these various pictures to explain the kingdom. For example, He said, ‘The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil.’<sup>2</sup> ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind.’<sup>3</sup> In general, these illustrations are all pointing to God’s purpose

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1 Eph 5:5

2 Mar 4:26

3 Mat 13:47

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

and plan to bring forth a multitude of sons who are His people and to whom He is God. However, each distinctive description provides us with specific points of application regarding the pathway of sonship. In this article we are considering how we come to dwell in the *house of the Lord* forever.<sup>4</sup> Abiding in the house is a key characteristic of a son of God.<sup>5</sup>

The imagery of a house brings to mind thoughts of families, household activities, the cultures of a household, provision for food and drink, etc. And these themes are prominent in the scriptural references to God's house. What is also notable is that the Bible refers to several different houses. For example, we see references to the Father's house, the Son's house, the household of the faith, the household of God, and so on. Immediately this provokes several questions for us. Are these different houses? Do people move between these houses? Does this change over time? Where are the houses in which we are to live? Why do we need to distinguish between them? Clearly there is much to understand about the house of God. As we might expect, the beginning point for abiding in the house is the proceeding word of God.

### The word proclaimed

In the first chapter of his Gospel, John declared that Jesus was the *Word made flesh* and that He had come from God. By this, John meant that Jesus was coming to proclaim, demonstrate, and provide for God's covenant purpose. The word of this everlasting covenant declared our sonship, and Jesus was revealing both what a son of God was and the pathway by which we could become the children of God. Significantly, John testified that as Jesus dwelt among them they beheld His glory 'as of the *only begotten from the Father*, full of grace and truth'.<sup>6</sup> Through the preaching of the gospel to the multitudes, and His daily interactions with different people, Jesus was revealing the glory of sonship that was from the Father. When Jesus came to people and they received Him, He was able to illuminate them by giving them understanding regarding the pathway of sonship. And with His word came the capacity they needed to commence their journey on this pathway.

Christ is *still* coming to the hearts of hearers through the proceeding word of God. This word is spoken by messengers who are sent as part of Christ's administration. Jesus, Himself, declared that 'he who receives whomever I *send* receives Me; and he

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4 Psa 23:6

5 Joh 8:35

6 Joh 1:14

who receives Me receives *Him who sent Me*.<sup>7</sup> Messengers are those who have been sent to preach Christ and Him crucified.<sup>8</sup> When a messenger speaks the word of God, it is Christ who is coming near to the hearers. Jesus likened this to sowing the seed of Christ on the ground of our heart.

When Christ first comes to our hearts by the preaching of the word, we are filled with great enthusiasm and hope for the future. This was the experience of the multitudes who rejoiced in the words Jesus spoke and the great signs that He performed. Jesus was viewed as the Teacher with the answers to their questions and the solutions to their problems. As a consequence, they began to believe that the promised Messiah had come to deliver them from their bondage to the ruling Roman empire.<sup>9</sup> Jesus *was* the Messiah, but He wasn't bringing a deliverance that was according to their expectations. He was coming to deliver them from their slavery to sin so that they could be born again as sons of God.

## Revealing the Father

We too can view Jesus as the provision for a better life now and in the future. There are many so-called believers who think that Christ came to take away their pain and suffering. They think that He should bless them in this life and receive them into heaven when they die, because they believe in Him. However, this view of Jesus is as misplaced today as it was when He was ministering on earth. Jesus' own testimony was that He had come to do the will of God. Every work that He did was according to the will of the Father and was written in 'the book'.<sup>10</sup> In coming to do the will of the Father, Jesus was *made* a son of God in all respects.<sup>11</sup> He was the *first* among many brethren, meaning that His sonship revealed what we were to become as sons of God.<sup>12</sup> The Word made flesh was revealing sonship, and grace and truth were now available for us to be made sons of God in His image.

On account of their expectations of the Messiah, the people in Jesus' day rejected the work of the Son and became offended because their expectations were not met. Even His closest friends were confused at this point. Peter, for example, determined to fight anyone and everyone to the death in order to usher in Christ's kingdom, while Thomas did not realise that Jesus was going to prepare a place for him in the Father's house. At one point, in seeming exasperation, Jesus, *cried out*, 'He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.'<sup>13</sup>

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7 Joh 13:20

13 Joh 12:44

8 1Co 1:23. 1Co 2:2

9 Mat 21:9

10 Heb 10:7

11 Heb 2:17

12 Rom 8:29

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

Jesus had not come to reveal Himself. Rather, He had come as a firstborn son to fully reveal the Father. In so doing He was the way, the truth and the life through which a hearer could come to the Father and be born again.<sup>14</sup> The question is, how does Christ bring us to the Father?

### In the Father's house

When Philip the disciple asked this question, Jesus explained that He had *already* been revealing the Father to them.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, it was as they were sitting around the table during the last supper that Jesus most directly explained His work to the disciples. And here is a key! Jesus, the One who had been revealing the Father, had invited them to eat the bread and drink the wine that had been *prepared by the Father*. The Son of God had brought the disciples into the Father's house to eat at His table! Truly they were coming to the Father, through Him.<sup>16</sup> Although the bread and the wine were Christ's flesh and blood, they were prepared and given by the Father. Let's take a moment to consider this further.

Jesus said, 'I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.'<sup>17</sup> It was the Father who planted the vine. From this vine came forth the wine that Jesus described as His own blood. The wine was the Son's blood, but it had been prepared by the Father. What about the bread? Jesus said that His food, or his meat, was to do the will of Him who *sent* Him.<sup>18</sup> In love, the Son of God had been *given* by the Father so that we would have eternal life.<sup>19</sup> Jesus confessed, 'I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he *will live forever*; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world *is My flesh*.'<sup>20</sup> The flesh of the Son of God was the flesh of every new creation son, and it was given to us by the Father so that we could also become sons of God.

The bread and wine had been provided for us even before the creation of the heavens and the earth! Peter highlighted this reality when he explained that we were redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb that had been slain, *before*.<sup>21</sup> As we catch the point, we also recognise that the disciples were eating the flesh and blood provided by the Father *before* Jesus had begun to suffer the trauma of the cross. Why is this important? It is because the disciples were *partaking* of the provision for their *participation* in that offering. This was also the experience of Abraham, the father of all who believe.<sup>22</sup> After meeting Melchizedek and receiving

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14 Joh 14:6

20 Joh 6:51

15 Joh 14:9

21 1Pe 1:19

16 Joh 14:6

22 Rom 4:11

17 Joh 15:1

18 Joh 4:34

19 Joh 3:16

the bread and wine of the communion, Abraham was *then* invited to participate in offering. It was this experience that Jesus was referring to when He said, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.'<sup>23</sup> The bread and the wine were the provision of faith for the disciples to continue from the Father's house to Gethsemane where they were invited to join with Him in His death, burial and resurrection. This was where Christ's offering and circumcision was revealed. We are also invited to join Christ in Gethsemane.

When we first hear the word of Christ as it is ministered to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we come to our senses and recognise that we are lost and destitute. At this point we are *all like the prodigal son*. The word brings to our remembrance the Father's house and that there is provision for life there. We humble ourselves and cry out in repentance to the Father to be forgiven of our disobedience and rebellion. We are happy to come into the house as a slave. However, the Father rejoices and calls us into His house to eat at His table *as a son!* As we begin, in faith, to eat the flesh of another will and drink the cup of blessing, we see that Christ has authored a pathway on which we can become *authentic sons of God* and remain in the house forever. We are receiving strength from the Father to *participate* in the offering and circumcision of the Son that was revealed in the garden of Gethsemane.

## **Brought to the Son**

Now we begin to understand what Jesus meant when He said, 'No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught of God". Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.'<sup>24</sup> The Father teaches us of, or draws our attention to, the offering of the Son. From the Father's house, we are to go to Jesus who offered Himself 'outside the camp' in Gethsemane.<sup>25</sup> It is the Father who grants this participation to us as we find repentance and eat the provision for our journey with Christ. As we partake of His table and receive the Spirit of the Son into our hearts from the Father, we begin to cry out, as Christ did, 'Abba! Father! ... not my will but Yours be done.'<sup>26</sup>

When we go to the Son, it is important to understand that we are not actually leaving the Father's house. Jesus said that we would know that He was *in the Father*, and that we are *in Him*, and *He is in us*.<sup>27</sup> He also declared that the temple

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23 Joh 8:56

24 Joh 6:44-45

25 Heb 13:13

26 Gal 4:6. Mar 14:36

27 Joh 14:20

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was the house of His Father, and that it would be raised as a new temple in three days.<sup>28</sup> Reinforcing the point, Jesus said, ‘He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and *will disclose Myself to him*.’<sup>29</sup> Jesus was saying that we don’t go out of the Father’s house and into the Son’s house which is next door! The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. We are to be *in the Son*, and both the Father and the Son make Their abode in us.<sup>30</sup> Hebrews teaches us that the Son’s house and the Father’s house are of the same.

When the Son of God testified that He had come to do the will of the Father, He declared that the Father had prepared a body for Him.<sup>31</sup> This body was the corporate body of Christ, of which we are to be a part. Just as a seed contains the genetic plan for all the subsequent seeds that will come to fruition, all of our names as sons of God are in His body. The Scriptures call the body of Christ ‘the secret place of the Most High’.<sup>32</sup> The secret of our name, works and life as a son of God is *hidden* in Christ as the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.<sup>33</sup> Our natural birth is the *first phase* of God’s plan. The spirit, or identity, of a person is created within them, in the womb of their mother. The source of their spirit is the breath of God. Adam was created from the earth and became a living soul when God breathed into him the breath of life.<sup>34</sup> His breath is not our spirit; rather, it is the creator of our spirit. From this point, every person born is a *natural man* with a soul.<sup>35</sup>

While our soul is eternal, this does not automatically mean that when we die we live forever in heaven. Those who reject Christ will *exist* forever in hell. Paul explained that Christ, the *second Adam*, came as a *life-giving Spirit*. This is obviously *new* to the life we have when we are born. Those who receive this life will be heavenly, or spiritual, just as Christ is heavenly.<sup>36</sup> Our name and works as sons of God are to be given to us *in Christ* when we are born again of the life He received from the Father. Paul highlighted that if any person is *in Christ*, they are a new creation.<sup>37</sup> The elements of new creation – name, works and life – are joined to the identity, or spirit, of a person once they come into Christ. When Christ discloses Himself to us, He is revealing to us the works we are to do in Him as sons of the Father.

Significantly, Jesus also promised to give us the Holy Spirit who would lead us in the truth of our sonship. When we first received Christ, it was the Holy Spirit

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28 Joh 2:16, 19

34 Gen 2:7

29 Joh 14:21

35 1Co 15:45-47

30 Joh 14:23

36 1Co 15:48-49

31 Heb 10:5

37 2Co 5:17

32 Psa 91:1. Psa 27:5

33 Col 2:3

who convicted us of our sin against the Father, and that we should be sons in His house.<sup>38</sup> However, when we come into the Father's and the Son's house, we are given the Holy Spirit as a possession forever. The Son asks the Father to give us the Holy Spirit to help us continue in the truth of our sonship.<sup>39</sup> The Father sends the Holy Spirit to us in the Son's name. The Holy Spirit teaches us all things and brings to remembrance the words of the Son so that we can continue to live in the Spirit rather than the flesh.<sup>40</sup> We continue to receive the conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement as we receive the word that is enabling our participation in the circumcision and offering of Christ.

### **Abiding in the house**

To *remain* in the house of the Father we need to come into the body of Christ. Jesus said that 'In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.'<sup>41</sup> In fact, the Father will not hear our prayer or continue to provide us with our daily bread unless we come into the secret place of the Most High.<sup>42</sup> As members of the body of Christ, we are being fitted together and are growing into in a holy temple in the Lord.<sup>43</sup> We belong to the house of God 'if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end'.<sup>44</sup> This means that we need to continue to abide in the Son.

The evidence that we are abiding in the Son and in the Father is that we are bearing good fruit.<sup>45</sup> It is only as we abide in the Vine that we are able to produce the same fruit that the Vine produces. This is the fruit of sonship. Interestingly, Jesus said that if we are not connected to His body, we dry up and are thrown away and burnt. However, if we abide in Him and His words abide in us, whatever we ask for will be done. This is because we no longer ask 'amiss', or according to our own pleasures or the desires of our flesh.<sup>46</sup> Rather, our preoccupation will be to reveal the Father just like Jesus did. Jesus said that the Father is glorified as we reveal Him and we prove to be His disciples.<sup>47</sup>

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38 Joh 16:8

44 Heb 3:6

39 Joh 14:16-17

45 1Jn 2:6

40 Joh 14:25-26

46 Jas 4:3

41 Joh 14:2

47 Joh 15:8

42 Mat 6:6-13

43 Eph 2:21



## **Study Questions - Abiding in the House Forever**

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On account of their expectations of the Messiah, the people in Jesus' day rejected the work of the Son and became offended because their expectations were not met.

- What are some of the expectations we can have of Christ and our life as a Christian?

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- Where is the Father's house and how do we come into it?

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Jesus said that 'everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.'

- What is the Father teaching us and what are the implications for our lives?

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- What is your testimony of abiding in the house? What fruit are you seeing in your life as a consequence?

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# PRIESTING THE WILL OF GOD

*- receiving capacity and authority to do God's will*

Luke Pomery

Every person's actions are motivated by their will. The exercise of 'will' is a motivation to fulfil the desires that spring from our heart and mind.<sup>1</sup> Through the exercise of our will, we express ourselves, and pursue the things we want. Before we heard the gospel, we were unaware that there was another way to live. Without faith, the motivations of our will were self-centred. We naturally put our energy into self-seeking thoughts and projections. In this state, we were not connected to the purpose of God.

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1 Eph 2:3

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

When a messenger proclaimed the word of God to us, we began to realise that God had a purpose and a plan for our lives. As we heard this word and believed it, we received power to proceed and accept what God had promised.

In love, God purposed to bring into existence a multitude of sons and, to each one, He gave the right to become His son if they chose. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit purposed who we would be and how we would live. They wrote our name and the works of our sonship in Their covenant book of life. The Everlasting Covenant is the expression of the will of God.

When the word of God's covenant was preached to us, it enabled us to have faith and to receive God's plan for our lives. God gave us the choice to accept our name and works, and the choice to become obedient to His plan. The love of God gave us the freedom to join our will, in faith, to the purpose of God for our lives.

In this article we are considering what it means to 'priest' the will of the Father. The word brings faith and it also brings us into fellowship with God. Once we are restored to fellowship with Him in the body of Christ, He gives His will to us, as a gift. God's will becomes our possession and motivates our desires. The Holy Spirit also gives us the power of God and helps us to do the works of our sonship.<sup>2</sup> As sons of God, our work is to priest ourselves as a living sacrifice in the service of God's will.

### A pathway to follow

God has established a pathway through life for us to walk on. Christ is the author of this pathway, and He has blazed the trail for us to follow. It is a way of self-sacrifice and offering. When a person offers their will to God, they join a fellowship of service. The fellowship of God is a relationship from which love is expressed by giving and receiving.

The idea of priesthood is introduced into our thinking as we learn about God's love and Christ's self-sacrifice for us. The Bible calls Christ our Great High Priest. The work of a person who is becoming a son of God is the work of priesthood. Every Christian is to offer themselves in the service of God as a priest. Christ is the example whom we are to follow. We are His disciples and belong to God as a

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2 Act 1:8

family of priests. Our priestly work is to present ourselves to God, serving Him as obedient sons.

Christ came as the Son of God to fulfil the purpose of God by being the example of the kind of son whom we are to become. Christ said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will.'<sup>3</sup> The Son was obedient to God, doing all the works that the Father asked Him to do. During His earthly ministry, He said of Himself that He had come only to do the will of His Father. His obedient service was His priestly work. Even at the age of twelve, Jesus told His parents that He 'must be about His Father's business.'<sup>4</sup> Following the example of Jesus, children from a young age can receive and understand what God's will is for their lives.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father, 'Not My will, but Yours be done.'<sup>5</sup> This is perhaps one of the least understood aspects of Christ's pilgrimage. What is Christ teaching us in His prayer? Was there something wrong with Jesus' own will? Not at all. Throughout the whole of His earthly life, He was in harmony with the will of the Father. Jesus was demonstrating to us that He did not serve God from His own initiative or in His own strength. He had received the plan of God for His life, and now He needed to receive 'the will' and capacity to do what God was asking of Him. As He prayed, the will and power of God was given to Him as a gift of grace.

Jesus then proceeded to offer Himself on the cross by the strength that came from God. The strength to obey God and do His will was found in the capacity of Eternal Spirit that was given to Him by the angel of the Lord.<sup>6</sup> Jesus authored the pathway of priesthood and received the grace which enabled Him to complete it. He endured the cross and fulfilled the will of God. Because of His obedience, Jesus was able to establish and show us the pathway of priesthood that we are to follow.<sup>7</sup> He now calls us to walk this same pathway with Him. The question now arises, what other elements are necessary to our pilgrimage, if we are to do God's will and become His sons?

## **Partaking of the bread of life**

Before He suffered on the cross, Christ invited His disciples to partake of the Passover meal with Him.<sup>8</sup> When we become His followers, we are also invited

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3 Heb 10:7, 9

4 Luk 2:49

5 Luk 22:42

6 Heb 9:14

7 Heb 12:2

8 Luk 22:15

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by Christ to partake of the communion meal before we begin our pilgrimage. Communion is essential and is the first aspect of our relationship with Christ as we begin our journey with Him. Christ wants to fellowship with us and give us the resource of His own life. He wants to give us His own flesh and blood.<sup>9</sup> Christ shares Himself with us in the communion meal when we eat the bread and drink the wine. He strengthens us with His life and equips us for the journey ahead to Gethsemane and to the cross. We partake of Christ as our spiritual food and receive strength and ability to step forward and embrace God's will for our lives.

During the communion meal, Christ discloses to us the pathway of our personal discipleship. Each of us has a unique journey to make. The will of God for our lives has already been written down as part of the Everlasting Covenant. It is the will of God that we be set apart to our name, and given power to do the works He planned for us to do.<sup>10</sup> We demonstrate our freedom by doing the works that belong to our name as sons of God.

The bread of life, Christ's body and blood, is given to us to nourish our spirits. The bread of God strengthens us as we receive the word of God that is spoken to us in the fellowship of the body of Christ. It is important and necessary to participate in the communion table each week. Why is this so? It is because, as we participate, we receive strength to proceed in the way of discipleship.

### Participating with Christ in prayer

From the last supper, Christ led the disciples to the garden of Gethsemane and invited them to participate *with Him* in the fellowship of prayer.<sup>11</sup> As disciples, we also must journey with Christ and join Him in the fellowship of prayer in Gethsemane. This is the second part of our journey. In Gethsemane, we are reborn and given a new heart when the blood of Christ, that flowed from His body as sweat while He prayed, is sprinkled upon us.

At this point in our journey Christ says to us, 'Keep watch with Me.'<sup>12</sup> As He teaches us the meaning of prayer, we are able to join Him in the fellowship of prayer. We say, 'Abba, Father! Your will be done.'<sup>13</sup> Christ our Great High Priest is teaching us and causing us to understand that the first step of our priestly work

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9 Rev 3:20.  
Joh 6:53-56

13 Mar 14:36.  
Mat 6:9-11

10 1Th 4:3

11 Luk 22:39

12 Mat 26:38

is to pray. The will of God is revealed to us as we offer ourselves to God in the priestly service of prayer.

In prayer, we confess that we have no capacity within ourselves to fulfil God's will. As the psalmist expressed, 'my flesh and my heart fail'.<sup>14</sup> Our flesh is incapable of obeying the will of God. Indeed, our flesh is weak.<sup>15</sup> Equally, no matter how religious or willing our heart may be, before we are born of God we can never attain to or achieve the will of God that He has purposed for our lives. We must cry out to God and ask for a new heart.<sup>16</sup>

As we pray, the Holy Spirit comes to our aid and strengthens us. He strengthens us by giving us a Spirit of grace and supplication which enables us to endure with Christ in the travail of prayer.<sup>17</sup> As we remain with Christ in the fellowship of prayer, we overcome the temptation to turn aside.<sup>18</sup> We are given insight to look at Christ's offering. We see the blood that is flowing as sweat from His body and understand that as we stay with Him in the fellowship of prayer, His blood cleanses our hearts from an evil conscience and makes them a new creation. The blood of Christ gives us the ability to be obedient sons and serve God in a way that is acceptable to Him.<sup>19</sup>

This blood was the fruit of Christ's willingness to be the Son that God the Father wanted Him to be. The blood of Christ, when sprinkled on our hearts, delivers us from self-centredness and sin, and makes us a son of God. The seed of God's will is then planted within our reborn new heart and begins to grow. We are now able to take up our cross and walk forward with Christ to Calvary.

## **Enabled to do His will**

Gethsemane is the place where Christ offered Himself to God for us in prayer. Christ invites us to join Him in His prayer offering. As we join with Christ in prayer, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all working in us, making us willing and adequate to do His will.<sup>20</sup>

The Father is making us His sons. He is working in us and conforming us to His image. The Father desires that we be conformed to the image of sonship that He intended for us.<sup>21</sup> His work of chastening, training and moulding us, is a circumcising work that is conforming us to our sonship. It is important that

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14 Psa 73:26

19 Heb 9:14

15 Mar 14:38.  
1Pe 1:24

20 Php 2:13

21 Rom 8:29.

16 Psa 51:10

2Co 3:18

17 Zec 12:10

18 Mar 14:38

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we don't resist the Father's work in our lives.<sup>22</sup> He is cutting out of our lives the motivations that belong to our own selfish ambition. If we reject His circumcising work, we will conform ourselves to the way of the world, because we continue to be motivated by the desires that spring from our own heart.<sup>23</sup>

In Gethsemane, we are being separated to God's purpose and are becoming the unique person He has planned we should be. Also, we are being built together as living stones within a spiritual temple, as part of His church. We are a community, a holy priesthood, whose work is to offer ourselves to God as spiritual sacrifices in His service.<sup>24</sup>

The Son's work is to teach us priesthood. The work of a priest is to make offering. When a priest makes offering, he is given access to God. Moreover, he is invited into fellowship with God. The garments of a priest are a symbol of his right and authority to minister before God as His son. The will of God is our clothing as a priest. God has given us His will as a right.<sup>25</sup> A son of God clothed with this right ministers his own life as an offering in the service of God through faith. Our ministry is to glorify the Father's name by being His sons.

The work of Christ as our Great High Priest is to equip us with the garments of priesthood. Our garments of priesthood must be cleansed from the dead works that spring from our own self-righteousness.<sup>26</sup>

### Our stewardship

Christ committed Himself to do the Father's will. This meant that His pathway led Him to the cross where He offered Himself for our sake. He received the will of God and was strengthened in the garden of Gethsemane to achieve God's purpose. Once enabled by the power of Eternal Spirit, Christ went forward and completed the will of the Father. From the garden of Gethsemane, after receiving the will of God, Christ offered Himself in obedience to each suffering that befell Him that day, and finally died upon the cross.<sup>27</sup> He fulfilled the will of God, and then, through His resurrection, He enabled us to become God's sons and follow in His steps.

Following Christ on the pathway of obedience is the third aspect of our journey. We are to proceed with Christ from Gethsemane to *do* the will of God. There is

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22 Heb 12:5

23 Rom 12:2. 1Pe 1:14

24 1Pe 2:5

25 Joh 1:12

26 Heb 9:14. Rev 7:14

27 Php 2:8

a pathway of offering for each of us to walk. We need endurance to complete the will of God. As we make offering as sons of God, we are fulfilling our work as priests. This is pleasing in the sight of the Father.<sup>28</sup> God has given us the right to steward our name and works. A steward is a responsible person with an important position in God's house. He must be diligent and obedient to see the will of God done. As stewards, we are to submit ourselves to the leading of the Spirit each day, never presuming that we have graduated beyond the need to hear from God and obey what He says to us.

## **Conclusion**

As we mature and function in priesthood, our will is being conformed to God's will. The Father's will has become our possession. We have received a new heart, and this heart desires to do the will of God. It is no longer an evil heart. The elements of Christ's blood and the Spirit of God are enabling us to do our works. Our freedom as sons of God is evident. As we fulfil God's will, we are being our true selves and are not captive to any other inclination.

The Father makes us adequate as ministers of the New Covenant.<sup>29</sup> Our work as priests is also to connect others to the fellowship of Christ's body. As they join Christ, they too can become sons of God and do the Father's will.

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28 Heb 13:21.  
Php 2:13

29 2Co 3:6



## Study Questions - Priesting the Will of God

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When a messenger proclaims the word of the God to us we begin to realise that God has a purpose and a plan for our lives.

- How do we receive faith? Why is faith necessary for receiving the will of the Father?

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- What does it mean to 'priest our lives' in the service of God's will?

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Christ our Great High Priest teaches us and causes us to understand that the first step of our priestly work is to pray. We commence our priestly work in the service of God's will as we pray.

- What are the garments of priesthood, and how do we get them?

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- What is your testimony in this season of learning how to travail with Christ in the fellowship of prayer?

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# FAITH AND SUFFERING

Jonathon Wills

To varying degrees and at different times we all experience suffering and futility in life. We all thirst and hunger; we are hot and cold; we are tired, weary and exhausted; we are sleepless and restless; we grieve, we mourn and we experience loss; we weep and cry; we fear and tremble; we lose; we doubt; we are lost; we are disappointed; we are left out; we are unfairly treated; we are accused falsely; we are rejected; we are overworked; we experience trial and testing; we stumble and fall; we experience pain; we experience hardship; we are sad; and we are forgotten.

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

Whether Christian or not, every person was born into this world, in corruptible flesh. Consequently, every person will suffer. Even at a most basic level, the corrupt principles by which we live mean that we will experience suffering. The decay and then the death of everything in the natural world is guaranteed. Of this process Paul says, 'Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet the inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.'<sup>1</sup>

### The cause of suffering

The cause of suffering is not unknown to us. It is the result of sin and the curse of the Fall. When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a judgement was placed upon them. God had previously warned them that in the day that they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die.<sup>2</sup> This was the consequence of their disobedience. Eve was told that the pain of childbirth would be 'greatly multiplied'. Her desire would be for her husband, who would rule over her.<sup>3</sup> Adam was told that the ground was cursed because of his sin, and in toil he would eat of it all the days of his life. Thorns and thistles would grow 'for him', and by the sweat of his face he would eat bread. This process of futility would continue until he returned to the ground because from the dust he was taken and to the dust he would return.<sup>4</sup>

So what do we make of all this? Do we conclude, as the writer of Ecclesiastes did, that everything is meaningless; a futile chasing after the wind.<sup>5</sup>

Joyously for us, we have hope. We who were dead in sin and trespasses have the hope of being made alive to God in Christ Jesus.<sup>6</sup> In the cross of Christ, the place of death and cursing becomes a context for our salvation and reward.

When we break the law, we suffer the consequences brought about by our actions. If I am foolish enough to break the law of gravity and step off the roof, I will suffer the consequences of my foolishness – possibly a broken neck. There is no merit to this type of suffering. Cause and effect have just produced their inevitable, natural result.

But when suffering, be it because of the futility of our own actions or because of sin, is joined to Christ, the result is different. His sufferings are the means by

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1 2Co 4:16-17

2 Gen 3:16-19

3 Gen 3:16

4 Gen 3:17-19

5 Ecc 2:11

6 Eph 2:5. Rom 6:11

which the law of God is satisfied. As He, in His innocence, took upon Himself the due penalty for our sin, He suffered our punishment and fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law.<sup>7</sup>

However, the question remains. If Christ reigned victorious over sin and death once and for all at the cross, why wasn't there an immediate cessation of all suffering?

### **Since Christ suffered in the flesh**

Peter gives us an answer when he says, 'Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live ... no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.'<sup>8</sup>

Sin is transgression of God's law. When we break the law of God, suffering is a consequence.

Christ, on our behalf, accepted our suffering and sin as His. Then He asked us to join Him in the fellowship of this suffering. As He suffered the consequence of our sins, by the power of God, He overcame sin within us and restored us to fellowship with God.

Simply put, Christ offered Himself in *His* sufferings to destroy the power of sin in *our* lives. As we arm ourselves with His 'same purpose', we are able to see suffering with Him in the fellowship of the cross as a context where we learn to cease from sin and come to show virtue by living as sons of God.

### **Faith is a precious value**

The apostle Peter brings an essential element to the discussion on suffering when he links it with faith. Peter teaches that suffering is a context in which we learn the merits of faith. Faith is initially something that is given to us when we are born of God. As we join with Christ in baptism, we are born from the death of sin with Him, and are made alive again and given the hope of sonship. As we are born again, we receive a faith that motivates us to lay hold of sonship. Faith is a precious value that we didn't have before.

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7 Mat 5:17

8 1Pe 4:1-2

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

Faith is something special because it has the capacity to activate the power of God towards our lives. As we believe in the *hope* of sonship, we are protected and preserved by the power of God until we receive the full reward of our sonship.

Our faith is tried and tested. It is purified through sufferings to manifest the virtues that are part of *its* substance. This process is essential to our lives. The qualities that belong to a son of God are best demonstrated when we are suffering a trial.

It is by faith that we live and overcome the world, knowing that ultimately our faith has its eternal reward. And so, in this world, we suffer its trials so that our faith can be manifest as the substance that proves we are sons of God. Once this has been demonstrated to the Father's satisfaction, we proceed to the new heavens and the new earth for our reward.<sup>9</sup>

In Hebrews it says about many of the Israelites that, having had good news preached to them, the word they heard did not profit them because it was not united with faith.<sup>10</sup> The union of the word and faith is essential in the life of a son of God. The word is the will of God for our lives. Faith is our willingness to accept and obey what God is saying to us. As we believe, the power of God becomes active within us, enabling us to overcome sin and to live as a son of God. Peter calls the word mixed with faith 'a precious value'. It is a unique substance that only a son of God can possess.

The 'word' is the word of our predestination that we receive and now live by faith. The word has become our faith. The precious value that we receive - the word of faith to be a son of God - is then tried in the context of suffering with a view to reward.

Having received the precious value, faith is then purified by testing, and demonstrated as being real. This is the life of a son of God.

In his discussion on faith and its rewards, Peter outlined seven contexts in which a Christian can demonstrate faith through suffering. He records each suffering and its context. He discusses what virtues are to be manifest through faith, what lesson is learned through trial and what reward is gained through the experiences. These are the contexts within which our faith can be manifest as the substance

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9 1Pe 1:6-9

10 Heb 4:2

## Faith and Suffering

that proves we are sons of God. The following table summarises these seven contexts described by Peter.

		<b>Trial of faith</b>	<b>Reward</b>
1	1Pe 2:18-25	Suffering as Christians in the workplace	Cease from striving and from straying
2	1Pe 3:1-13	Suffering in the family	Learn to bless and become a blessing
3	1Pe 3:14-22	Suffering for righteousness' sake	You are blessed
4	1Pe 4:1-11	Suffering the fellowship of the cross	Cease from sin
5	1Pe 4:12-19	Suffering the fiery trial of faith	Eternal reward
6	1Pe 5:1-7	The suffering of elders	Crown of glory/life
7	1Pe 5:8-14	Suffering the attacks of Satan	Eternal glory

### Suffering as Christians in the workplace

Peter talks about suffering as Christians in the workplace. The connection to Adam is clear as the ground was cursed because of him and thorns and thistles grew *for him*.<sup>11</sup> This suffering may include the disappointments that befall us, the cutting off of misplaced ambition, misguided pride in our own competence and natural capacities, and being humbled.

When we bear up under the sorrow of suffering unjustly in the workplace we find the answer of a good conscience toward God. *The reward of this trial of faith and suffering is that we cease from striving and from straying like sheep, and we find favour with God.*

### Suffering in the family

Families can be a context within which Christians can suffer evil, insult, harm, and deceit from family or clan members. We are to be 'as Christ' in the midst of these sufferings. We are to live by faith so that the blessing can come to our families. The result of blessing will be other family members becoming children of God.

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<sup>11</sup> Gen 3:17-19

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

In the midst of sufferings in the family, the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer. We are to prove ourselves zealous by doing good and, even when harmed, we are to seek peace.

If you endure, through patience and faith, in the family, and you bless and do not curse, then the result will be that God will give the blessing of sonship to your family. *Our reward is that as we learn to bless, we become a blessing.*

### Suffering for righteousness' sake

Simply put, it is better to suffer for what is right, according to the will of God, than to suffer for doing what is wrong. For the sake of righteousness you will be intimidated, slandered and reviled. These sufferings are because of good behaviour in Christ, maintaining your witness while suffering, and keeping a good conscience. In these things, those who oppose you will be put to shame. Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'<sup>12</sup> *The reward for suffering for the sake of righteousness is that you are blessed.* This means God's life is being multiplied in you and is being ministered to others through you.

### Suffering the fellowship of the cross

Christ's purpose in suffering death in the flesh was to destroy sin and to multiply sonship life through His offering. We arm ourselves with the same purpose when we join Christ in the fellowship of the cross. As we do this, we enter a process of ceasing from sin and multiplying sonship life.<sup>13</sup>

As we join in suffering we learn to pray and devote our lives to God. A devoted life that is submitted to the will of God does not run with the excesses and lusts of the world. These are replaced by a fervent love for the body of Christ. The body of Christ is a fellowship of love. The apostle Peter taught that this love covers a multitude of sins. As we join the fellowship of suffering, love is evident and sin is ceasing, causing the body of Christ to be built up.

*The reward for suffering the fellowship of the cross is freedom from bondage to sin.* The outcome is that we live a devoted life in the service of God within the body of Christ.

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<sup>12</sup> Mat 5:10

<sup>13</sup> 1Pe 4:1-2

## Suffering the fiery trial

Salvation and sonship are received in the midst of suffering trial.<sup>14</sup> As we endure the difficulties that come from the trial of faith, we are to entrust ourselves to God as our faithful Creator. We are to accept that the trial of faith is part of God's will for our lives. When we do this, we obtain the outcome of our faith, which is the salvation of our souls.<sup>15</sup>

We are to patiently endure in the fiery trial of faith, knowing that its purpose is to test us. This test of fire, when endured in faith by the power of God, perfects our faith, making it more precious than gold. The outcome is to the praise and glory of God.<sup>16</sup> *Through fiery trial we receive the eternal rewards that come from faith.*

## Suffering of elders

There is an expectation that the elders of the church are to be witnesses and partakers of the sufferings of Christ. As partakers of His sufferings, they walk in suffering according to the will of God. They shepherd the flock of God and show themselves to be examples by their fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. Paul exemplified this attitude when he said, 'that I may know Him ... and the fellowship of His sufferings'.<sup>17</sup>

When Paul outlined his sufferings, he ended by saying that apart from such external things, there was also the daily pressure of his concern for all the churches.<sup>18</sup> The elders who suffer according to the will of God are the true shepherds of the flock. *The reward of this fellowship in the sufferings of Christ is the unfading crown of glory.*

## Suffering the attacks of Satan

This seventh aspect, suffering the attacks of Satan himself, is the sum of the previous six. At all times, these satanic attacks are to be resisted by a firm standing in faith. Satan is our adversary, prowling around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. The fiery trial that comes to test our faith demonstrates that we have a firm foundation of faith that can, and will, resist Satan.

In the Scriptures we read of the courage of those who overcame Satan by being joined to Christ and by the word of their testimony. These ones, in offering, laid

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14 1Pe 4:18

15 1Pe 1:9

16 1Pe 1:6-9

17 Php 3:10

18 2Co 11:28

19 Rev 12:11



## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

down their lives to the death.<sup>19</sup> *This kind of purified faith is of precious value, leading to eternal glory in Christ.*

### Conclusion

So we see that suffering has its place in our lives. It is no longer just the outcome of the curse, leading to death. Now, in Christ, suffering has become an essential element in the life of a son of God. Let's remember that, whether Christian or not, every person will suffer to varying degrees. However, for the person who is born of God, suffering has become the context within which their faith is tried and tested and proven to be of precious value. As we arm ourselves with the same purpose as Christ, finding the power of God made perfect in our weakness, we find the virtues of faith proven in our lives. We find ourselves in fellowship with a great cloud of faithful witnesses. These witnesses are the men and women of faith who endured much suffering to see their faith tested, purified and demonstrated to be of precious value. We are encouraged by their witness and rejoice, knowing the greatness of our eternal reward.

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<sup>19</sup> Rev 12:11

## **Study Questions - Faith and Suffering**

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In the book of Hebrews, Paul writes that the children of Israel had the gospel preached to them. However, the word did not profit them because it had not been mixed with faith in the hearers.

- What does it mean for the word to be united with faith in those who hear?

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- How is the word being met with faith in your own life?

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Faith is purified by testing. It is tried in the context of suffering with a view to the full reward of sonship.

- Paul talks about the precious value of our faith. What does he mean by this?

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## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

- What are the seven contexts, identified by the apostle Peter, within which our faith is tested?

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- Can you testify to suffering in any of these contexts? What impact did this experience have on your life and Christian walk?

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# THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

David V Hall

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that ‘the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God’.<sup>1</sup> Some writers have explained ‘being saved’ not so much as a finished work, but as the need for Christians to continue in ‘the way of salvation’. This is showing us that there is a continuing process of salvation in which each person must walk.<sup>2</sup> The Lord knows the way of the righteous, and we can learn this way from Him through His word.<sup>3</sup>

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1 1Co 1:18

2 Heb 10:36

3 Psa 1:6

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

It is important for us to consider that, while we have begun to be saved, the Scripture says we are *being saved* only if we *continue* in the way of salvation. Having been reconciled to God, we shall be saved by His life. Paul teaches us that we have been saved in the hope of receiving our sonship.<sup>4</sup> If we persevere and continue in the way of salvation, God will be our Father and we will be His sons.<sup>5</sup>

### The word of the cross

The apostle Peter wrote in his first epistle that those who preach the gospel, do so by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.<sup>6</sup> 'Preaching' is more than just spreading information about God. It is not just speaking to us about religion or good works from man's perspective. When a preacher announces the word of the cross to us, it comes to us with power and in the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

This living and powerful word is being preached to us 'today'. We could call it 'the today word' because the writer of the book of Hebrews says, '*Today* if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they (Israel) provoked Me'. There is a sense in which the word of the cross is coming to us right now! Peter calls this 'the word which is present with you'.<sup>8</sup> If we receive and live by this word, we will be partakers of Christ and will hold our assurance firm until the end.

The word of the cross comes to pierce and convict our hearts. The word illuminates our understanding, giving us knowledge and hope in relation to our calling.<sup>9</sup> We must continue to receive this word each day and obey it. The capacity for obedience does not begin within us. It is in the word that we are receiving. We receive the capacity to obey when faith is given to us. It is evident that as we obey the word by the faith we have received, we are born of God. Our participation in salvation is not a one-time event. It is a pilgrimage, the goal of which is to obtain our sonship.

### A process for impurity

The word of the cross is powerful because it brings to us the substance of Christ's finished work. What do we mean by this? When Christ proclaimed on the cross, 'It is finished', He was declaring that all offering had been fulfilled and summarised into one process. He then died and gave up His Spirit to the Father.

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4 Ro 8:24

5 Rev 21:7

6 1Pe 1:12

7 1Th 1:5

8 2Pe 1:12

9 Heb 4:12. Eph 1:18

His body that He left hanging on the cross was the remains of a fully completed and consumed offering. In this sense it was like the ashes of an offering. When Christ finished His work, the centurion pierced His body with a spear. The ashes of His finished offering, with the blood and water that came from the wound made by the spear, are the elements through which mankind can be saved and recovered to their sonship.<sup>10</sup> Writing to the Hebrews Paul quickly summarises the matter. 'For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'<sup>11</sup>

Christ's death was the prophetic fulfilment of the offering that produced the ashes of the red heifer under the Old Covenant.<sup>12</sup> In this offering a red cow (heifer) was killed and some of its blood was sprinkled towards the tent of meeting seven times. Its body was burnt with its blood, along with some cedar wood, scarlet material and hyssop. Then its ashes were mixed with pure running water. Using a sprig from a hyssop bush, this water was sprinkled seven times by a clean person upon the body of someone who had become unclean by touching a dead body. This water was called 'water for impurity'. The process was repeated on the first, third and seventh days, indicating an ongoing process for sanctification.<sup>13</sup>

The unclean person was only declared clean at the end of the seven-day process. However, on each of the three days of sprinkling, the clean person who administered the waters of purification was considered unclean until the evening. Neither the person receiving the sprinkling nor the one administering the sprinkling could enter the congregation until they were clean. If they entered while unclean, they were to be cut off from the midst of the assembly because the sanctuary, or temple, of the Lord was being defiled by them.

The Scriptures list different contexts in which a person would come into contact with a dead body. Many of them seem accidental, but they nevertheless made the one who touched them unclean. In our context as Christians, the dead body represents everything that Christ has passed judgement upon. This is all that is in the world, that is old, and that is passing away.<sup>14</sup> These things are old to us because the finished work of Christ has delivered us from an old way that leads to death, to 'a new and living way'. Paul wrote that the new and living way was

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10 Joh 19:34. 1Jn 5:6 11 Heb 9:13-14

12 A red heifer is a red-haired cow, one that has not calved and is pure and without spot.

13 Num 19:1-10

14 1Jn 2:17

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established though the veil of Christ's flesh. He was referring to His pierced side. We see, then, that the finished work of Christ's offering is bringing us into a new and living way, into the pathway of sonship.

As we walk on the new and living way, there are many instances where we may interact with, or touch, that which belongs to our old and fallen condition as Adam's children. For example, if we return to our former sinful behaviours after being delivered from them, we will need to be sprinkled with the waters of separation. The same is so if we engage in family cultures or practices that are contrary to the culture of the body of Christ. It also could be as a consequence of simply engaging in worldly practices at school or at work to fit in and to find approval.

We all are in obvious need of the waters of purification as we continue on the new and living way. Availing ourselves of these elements is essential to living as a son of God. This is because we are unable to make acceptable offering as sons while we are unclean. If we do this, we bring our uncleanness into the fellowship of the body of Christ. This is what it means to defile the sanctuary. If we continue without addressing these matters, the Lord will cut us off from the congregation of His people.

### **The divine nature**

Zechariah referred to the blood and water that came from Christ's side as a 'fountain for sin and impurity'.<sup>15</sup> This fountain is giving us the power to process and remove sin and impurity from our lives. For the Christian, the issue is often not so much one of dealing with sin, but of coming out from the impurity of the world and its ways, and being sanctified to God.<sup>16</sup>

The fountain of life that is flowing from Christ's side is not only giving us the power to deal with sin, but it is also giving the life of God to us. God uses the agency of the water, the blood and the Holy Spirit to give His life to us. It is through the activity of these three elements that we are receiving the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We call this life, the divine nature.

God is offering His own life to us so that we can be His sons. It is His 'personal' life because it belongs to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who share this life in

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15 Zec 13:1

16 2Co 6:17

common. God is three Persons in one fellowship. While They share this life, They each minister Their life to us in a specific and unique way.

God the Father is offering His life to us through the water of the word. His word brings us illumination, giving us understanding to know what our name is. His word also gives us the power to be the obedient son whom He named us to be. The word defines the elements of our name and works. When we receive our name and works from the Father, we also receive His life as our own life, and this life enables us to live as a son of God.

God the Son is redeeming us by the life and power that is in His blood. His blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. His blood brings us back from the death of sin, and enables us to live as sons of God. We see, then, that His blood is not only cleansing our hearts from dead works; it is also enabling us serve God and to demonstrate that we are His sons.

God the Holy Spirit is giving us His life when He gives us power to do the works that belong to our name. There is power in the life that the Holy Spirit gives to us. He also gives to us the seven-fold Spirit of God, called in Scripture *Eternal Spirit*. Resident in the Spirit of God is the power that joins us to Christ's offering. This enables us to give ourselves to God as a living sacrifice.

When we receive the life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we have received the divine nature.<sup>17</sup> We have received God's own life and this gives us the capacity to continue on the way of salvation, the new and living way. The 'today' word preached to us unfolds before us the pathway we are to journey as Christ's disciples. As we travel through life with Christ, we are also commanded to maintain our fellowship with other Christians. As we journey on this pathway, we are being cleansed from sin and impurity. The process of purification is only effective as we continue to walk in fellowship with one another.

## **Grace and supplication**

When the word of the cross is first preached to us, we have no capacity within ourselves to receive what is being said, because our minds have been blinded by Satan. We are living in the darkness of sin and are under the power of Satan who is the god of this world.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 2Pe 1:1-4

<sup>18</sup> 2Co 4:4. 1Jn 2:11



## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

Zechariah proclaimed that the Lord would pour out upon those who hear the word of the cross the Spirit of grace and supplication.<sup>19</sup> When someone preaches the word to us by the power of the Holy Spirit, God pours out the Spirit of grace and supplication upon us. We recover understanding and faith. We are able to look upon Christ whom we have pierced and mourn for our sin. We see Christ's pierced side and mourn for the loss of our sonship. We understand that He died because we were dead to God on account of our sin. He gave His life as an offering for us so that we could live.<sup>20</sup>

The water and blood are for our reconciliation and sanctification, and they give us life. The water and blood are the primary elements that belong to the water of separation. The washing of the water of separation is the application of the water and blood which flowed from Christ's wounded side, to our lives. Remember that the water for purification from sin and uncleanness is made up of all of the elements that Christ provided for us from His offering. These are applied to our lives by the word, through the convicting work of the Spirit of God.

The word is giving us the capacity to lay aside the old man and his unclean ways.<sup>21</sup> As we receive the ministry of the Spirit, we are reborn and renewed in the spirit of our mind. We put on the new man, our new creation, and are renewed in righteousness, holiness and truth.

The water of the word is the will of God that the Father has for each one of His sons. As we receive the word of the cross that is preached to us, we come to know the will of God for our lives. The way of obedience becomes clear to us, providing us with the confidence of faith, and motivating us to enter the new and living way through the provision of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

### Our participation

The word of the cross first called us to come out from the world and its ways, and from the familiar cultures of our families. Paul, in the book of Corinthians, calls us to 'come out from among them and be separate, and do not touch what is unclean' so that we may be sons and daughters of God.<sup>23</sup>

The Spirit gives us the ability that comes from grace and power to pray for God's will to be done in our lives. As we pray, illumination is given to us. We are given

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19 Zec 12:10

20 2Co 5:14

21 Rom 6:6.  
Eph 4:22. Col 3:9

22 Heb 10:19-22

23 2Co 6:17-18

an understanding of the things that we are to believe for in our lives. We see the pathway ahead, and the process that Christ has established to cleanse us from unrighteousness.

In a very practical sense, as we believe in and receive His provision, we are able to obey and participate in the process needed for cleansing to occur. The apostle John wrote and said to us that, 'Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure'.<sup>24</sup> He also said, 'If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.'<sup>25</sup>

The work of blood and Spirit is only effective in our lives while we fellowship together in the light. Paul writes that the outcome of fellowship is confidence. Why? Because we learn, as we fellowship, what the will of God is for our lives. Faith to proceed in the way of sonship comes from this assurance. We are able to embrace our name and to proceed to do our works as disciples of Christ, and this includes ministering the same word of sanctification to each other. We receive the love of God as it is poured into our hearts, and with it comes compassion by which we are able to enter into the sufferings of others. In the context of fellowship we are able to confess our faults to one another, pray for one another, and be healed from our uncleanness.<sup>26</sup> We are able to inspire one another to love and to do the good works that belong to our sonship. We are encouraged in faith as we continue on the new living way.

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24 1Jn 3:3

25 1Jn 1:5-10

26 Col 3:9-14, Jas 5:15

## Study Questions - The New and Living Way

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The ashes of Christ's finished offering, with the blood and water that flowed from His side, are the elements through which mankind can be saved and recovered to their sonship. Christ has established a new and living way for us to walk on.

- What makes us unclean as we walk on the new and living way?

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- How are you practically being cleansed by the waters of purification as you continue on this pathway?

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The fountain of life that is flowing from Christ's side is not only giving us the power to deal with sin; it is also giving the life of God to us.

- Explain how the life of God is given to us through the elements of water, blood and Spirit.

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- How are you receiving these elements in your life?

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# COME! AND BE A SON OF GOD AND WORSHIP

Kane McNally

## **Introduction**

The song 'Come! And be a son of God' declares the message of the gospel of sonship. This is the key message of the Scripture. God desires fellowship with us and calls us to be His sons.

The message of this song evangelises both those who are unsaved and those who are being saved. If we are being saved, we must continue to hear His word, answer His call and walk out His plan for us in this world, as He separates us to Himself.

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

In this way, we will continue to live as sons of God now and forever in the new heavens and new earth.

### **Appreciating leads to worship and fellowship**

This song is a summary of God's plan for us. As we step through the content of the song we can begin to understand God's plan and appreciate His love for us. What does it mean for us as Christians to 'appreciate' someone? When we discern, worth and know a person as a son of God, we are beginning to appreciate them. We see the beauty of their name, and we thank God for our fellowship with them. We are beginning to worship, or '*worth-ship*'. As we worship in this way we have fellowship with God and with one another.

In the first part of this article we are going to appreciate the communication of the love of God through the word of this song. This is God's call to be His sons. In the second part of the article we will consider our participation in the culture of worship in God's house.

### **Come! And be a son of God**

*Verse 1*

*In the beginning, before the earth was made,*

*God planned for all of us, to be His sons*

*But we were born as dead to Him, only sons of men*

*He is calling you, 'Come be a son today'.*

This verse outlines the abounding love of God expressed towards us. Even before creation, God lovingly discussed the sons of God that He would have us to be, and wrote these details and the ministry works we should achieve, in the *book of life*. When we understand this, we are beginning to behold and be illuminated regarding the manner of love the Father has given to us, so that we might be called sons of God.

However, because of the fall of man in the garden of Eden, all of humankind is now born into this world as dead to God – alienated and estranged from Him in trespasses and sins. Those of us who were born in Christian households were covered by the faith of our parents. However, at a particular point in our lives, God

*Come! And be a Son of God and Worship*

calls every one of us, alone. We cannot just continue in the faith of our parents. We must respond to His call, personally. This is the love and honour He bestows upon us.

*Verse 2*

*God's servants, preach to us this good news,  
And when we hear it and answer His call,  
We are made alive to Him and join His family,  
He is calling you, 'Come be a son today'.*

In His love, God sends messengers to preach the good news of sonship to all the nations. When we answer His call to come and be that son, we are made alive to Him and join His family. We are not just sons of men; we are also sons of God.

*Verse 3*

*He heals the broken heart, He heals the wounded  
Yes, families are restored, when they become His sons,  
The Father calls to you from His house today,  
I am calling you, 'Come be a son today'.*

The Lord ministers to us when we are His sons. He heals our broken hearts and the wounds we bear. Our families are restored to true Christian love and fellowship when we become His sons.

The Father calls to us from His house. This is beautiful. Jesus has prepared a place for us in the Father's house. This is where we can live and dwell with Him. It is from His house that He calls to us to be His sons so that we can dwell with Him.

*Verse 4*

*We walk full of joy, men and women, sons and daughters  
Rejoicing as we receive from Him grace to do His will  
And now we are walking on, as His people  
Yes, we rejoice this day, we are His sons today'.*

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

Because we have appreciated His call to us and His provision for us to be sons, we now walk forward, rejoicing in His love and plan for our lives. We love our brethren, and He gives us abundant grace as we receive and do His will in the body of Christ.

It is wonderful to consider that God loves us all with the fullness of His love. He does not withhold His love from anyone. All are precious in His sight. All women, men, all daughters and sons are called to walk full of joy as sons of God.

*Chorus*

*Come and be, come and be, come and be a son of God*

*Come and be, come and be, come now and be a son of God*

*He is calling you, the Father's drawing you and now He says, 'Come be a son',*

*He is calling you, come be a son today.*

The chorus then calls to all to come and be a son of God. The love of God calls to us from *before* and the Father Himself draws us to come and dwell with Him in fellowship, forever. This is the key message of the Scripture. God is our Father, and He has called everyone who has ever been born on earth, to be His sons. This is the gospel of sonship – this is the gospel we have heard, believed and now walk forward in. Every time we hear the word preached, we are hearing the call to Come! And be a son of God.

### **Appreciation leads to worship and to fellowship**

When we appreciate the love of God and His call to sonship, we respond and step forward to meet Him and be the son He has named us to be. We are now beginning to worship. We are thankful; we are rejoicing in our spirit; we are worshipping. As we step forward to continue to worship for the rest of our lives – giving worth to Him, ourselves and our brethren in Christ – we have fellowship with God and with one another.

The highpoint of our expression of worship and fellowship is when we gather together with our brethren at the communion table. It is the privilege of every son of God to participate and worship in this way.

## **King David's administration of worship**

There is a whole administration of worship in God's house. This was first revealed to King David as a pattern by which the whole nation was to worship and minister to the Lord. One key aspect of this pattern was that there were *distinct courses of ministry*. This meant that a particular 'note', or worship expression, was called for at a particular time. Another key aspect was that each functionary or family of singers and musicians were to minister a particular 'note' that was *designated by name*. This meant that each person or family was set in order within the administration and they were to function within their given mandate.

The same is so for us. When we come to the house of the Lord to fellowship at His table, there is a 'note', or worship expression, called for by the Holy Spirit. Then, according to name, different ones are to minister in a particular way to lead us in our worship. This is wonderful! A theme of worship is called for, and we all now are led in our participation as we worship and fellowship together.

## **Worshipping in rank and order according to name wins the battle**

There are accounts in the Bible of the army of the Lord going into battle, led first by the singers and then by the musicians after them. We find that when the order of worship was established and there was a distinction in the course of ministry, the battle was won. In this way, the Lord won the victory. He ambushed the enemy or put them into confusion so that there didn't even need to be a battle.

## **The beauty of holiness**

In the Psalms we are instructed to worship the Lord in the *beauty of holiness*. Whenever we see the word 'holiness' we know it refers to sanctification. When a person is particularly set apart for a work, they are being sanctified to that work. In this regard they are also being separated to their unique individual expression of the life of God. As we appreciate that person, we worship the Lord. We are appreciating the beauty of their sonship and the capacity for ministry that they have received from God. We are also receiving the ministry of the Lord from that person. We are not only appreciating others, but we are all appreciating our unique privilege, accountability and responsibility to be the precious person He planned us to be. And so, we participate full of joy.



## **Why do we worship?**

Why do we sing and worship at our communion gatherings? Is it just a religious pattern that has been passed on from generation to generation? If this were so, it would seem to some a little meaningless or even mysterious.

This is not the case. Our worship times are vibrant and full of the life of God. They are not just a religious method to start a successful meeting. The song leader is led by the Holy Spirit as they choose songs to minister the theme that the Spirit wants in the meeting. We appreciate the Lord and what He is saying and ministering to us in the meeting as we sing and worship. The Lord is meeting us, we are fellowshipping, and He is giving us grace to walk forward as His sons. We don't just come as observers, but rather we come to participate in worship, and we find fellowship with the Lord and each other.

## **Letting the word of Christ dwell richly within you**

The word of Christ dwells richly, or abounds in us, as we participate in singing and worship together! This is why we come together and sing. The Spirit then teaches and admonishes us according to what He is ministering to us each time we gather together. We leave with the fruit of His life in us and we are ready and equipped to walk forward as a son for the season ahead.

## **Why do we lift our hands when we worship?**

Often the lifting of hands during worship has been thought to signify our surrender to God. However, King David asked that his prayer be counted before the Lord as incense, and the lifting up of his hands as the evening sacrifice. King David kept faith with the offerings according to the law. We are to understand the 'substance' of these offerings in the body of Christ. We can see here that raising our hands unto the Lord is indicative of our life being a whole and continual offering to Him. We can also lift our hands in thanksgiving to the Lord. The word 'thanksgiving' in Hebrew means 'lifting of the hands'. When we raise our hands we are expressing the substantial nature of the offering culture to which we have been called.

## **Exhortation to musicians and singers to be instructed by the Spirit**

As singers and musicians, let's all be trained by the Spirit in fellowship with those who watch over the culture of worship, so that we can minister distinctive tones or courses, as He sees fit. Our personal devotional and prayer life is a key to being skilled in articulating the distinctive tone, or 'note', of worship that we are called to minister week by week. Let us put time aside to worship the Lord, to pray and wait on Him so that we may be a useful vessel, fit for His use.

## **Appreciating the word of God in song**

We can sing with our voices and sing on our instruments, psalms and hymns at home. A key for us is to appreciate the word of each song. The word of God in song can challenge us, refresh us, and encourage us. As we do this, we are learning to be highly responsive and skilled in expressing His word in song. We are not just playing the correct notes, but becoming skilled in appreciating the word of each song and the particular skills of ministering the expression of the word in song. We become skilled at ministering the note of repentance, rejoicing, thanksgiving, peace and love. The Spirit is teaching us to minister the note of each song.

## **Wait upon Him for the spiritual song**

As those who are learning to worship, we can begin to wait upon Him for the spiritual song. As we move from a psalm or a hymn in our devotions, to play in the Spirit, from time to time the Spirit intensifies His anointing upon us and teaches and instructs us to minister a particular note, or worship expression. On a musical instrument this can be like a vocabulary that He gives us in the Spirit. This is according to our name and He is teaching and instructing us in this. We should all wait on the Lord for His leading.

## **Sons of God worshipping**

We are expressing ourselves as sons of God in worship at the communion as we play instruments and sing. However, more so, we are expressing the Spirit. The Spirit comes upon us, and we are motivated by Him to express the distinction He is calling for. This is His ministry in the midst. The Spirit is sounding forth in the midst of the congregation, and what we are expressing is according to His leading.

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Consequently, His house is full of worship. This is our main aim, for the Lord's house is to be filled with worship.

### **Conclusion**

In the season ahead, let us all sow to the sonship He has planned for us. Let us behold what manner of love that the Father has given to us that we should be called the sons of God. Appreciating His love then, let us wait on Him in prayer and in worship so that when we come together we are led by the Spirit to fill His house with worship.

## **Study Questions - Come! And be a Son of God and Worship**

The love of God calls to us from 'before' and the Father draws us to fellowship with Him as a son. This is the gospel of sonship that we have heard, believed, and in which we now walk forward.

- As Christians who have responded to the gospel of sonship, why do we continually need to hear and respond to the call to come and be a son of God?

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- Have you known the love of God toward you? What impact did it have on you?

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When we appreciate the love of God and His call to sonship, we respond and step forward to meet Him and be the son He has named us to be. We are now beginning to worship.

- Why do we sing and worship when we gather together at the communion table?

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- How do you prepare yourself to participate in worship at the communion gatherings?

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## Come! and Be a Son of God

Kane McNally

## A VERSE 1

Rubato hymn style

*mp* 1. In the be - gin - ning, \_\_\_\_\_ be - fore the earth was made, God planned for all of us, \_\_\_\_\_

6 *Dm* *Gm* *C7* *F* *F/A*

\_\_\_\_\_ to be His sons But we were born as *mf* dead to Him, on - ly sons\_ of

11 *Bb* *G<sup>9</sup>/D<sup>b</sup>* *F/C* *Dm* *Gm7* *C7* *F* *B<sup>b</sup>/F* *B<sup>b</sup>m/F*

men *mp* He is call - ing you, 'come be a son to - day'.

## B VERSE 2

16 *F* *C* *a tempo* *F* *F/A* *B<sup>b</sup>Maj7* *F/A* *Gm7* *C11*

2. God's serv - ants, \_\_\_\_\_ preach to us this good news, And when we

21 *F* *Dm7* *Gm7* *C* *F/A* *F/G* *F*

hear it and ans - wer His call, We are made a *mf* live to Him

26 *F7/A* *Bb* *rit. G<sup>9</sup>/D<sup>b</sup>* *a tempo F/C* *Dm* *Gm7* *C7*

and join His \_\_\_\_\_ fam - i - ly, *mp* He is call - ing you, 'come be a son to -

## C CHORUS

31 *rit. F* *B<sup>b</sup>/F* *B<sup>b</sup>m/F* *F* *C* *a tempo* *S* *F* *B<sup>b</sup>/F* *F* *B<sup>b</sup>/F* *F* *C/E* *F*

- day'. \_\_\_\_\_ *mp* Come and be, *mf* come and be, *f* come and be a son of

36 *C7* *C* *B<sup>b</sup>/C* *Gm/C* *C* *F* *C*

*mf* God *mp* Come and be, *mf* come and be, *f* come now and be a son of *mf* God *mp* He is

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MLC

41 F  $\frac{Bb}{F}$  F  $\frac{Bb}{F}$  F  $\frac{C7}{G}$   $\frac{F7}{A}$   
 call - ing you, *mf* the Fath - er's draw - ing you, and now He says *f* "Come be a

44  $\frac{Bb}{A}$   $\frac{D}{A}$   $\frac{Gm}{D}$   $\frac{G#}{Db}$   $\frac{F}{C}$  Dm Gm7 C7 rit F  $\frac{Bb}{F}$   $\frac{Bbm}{F}$  F Fine a tempo C7  
 son", *mp* He is call - ing you, come be a son to - day 3. He heals the

**D** VERSE 3

49 F  $\frac{F}{A}$   $\frac{BbMaj7}{F}$  Gm7 C11  
 brok - en heart, He heals the wound - ed Yes,

53 F Dm Gm C  
 fam - lies are re - stored, when they be - come His sons, The Fath - er

57  $\frac{F}{A}$   $\frac{F}{G}$  F  $\frac{F7}{A}$  Bb rit.  $\frac{G#}{Db}$   $\frac{F}{C}$  Dm  
*mf* calls to you from His house to - day, *mp* I am call - ing you, 'come

**E** VERSE 4

62 Gm7 C7 rit. F  $\frac{Bb}{F}$   $\frac{Bbm}{F}$  F C a tempo F  $\frac{F7}{A}$   
 be a son to - day'. 4. We walk full of joy, men and wo - men, sons and

67 Bb Gm7 C11 F Dm7  
 daught - ers Re - joic - ing as we re - ceive from Him grace to do His

71 Gm7 C  $\frac{F}{A}$   $\frac{F}{G}$  F  $\frac{F7}{A}$  Bb  
 will, And now we are walk - ing on, as His peo - ple

76 rit.  $\frac{G#}{Db}$  a tempo  $\frac{F}{C}$  Dm Gm7 C7 rit. F  $\frac{Bb}{F}$   $\frac{Bbm}{F}$  F C D.S al Fine a tempo  
*mp* Yes we re - joice this day 'we are His sons to - day'. *mp* Come and



# GLOSSARY

## Keywords

Appreciation	An understanding and honouring of something, or someone.
Beauty of holiness	The beauty of an individual who is set apart to their sonship, and to the work of their sonship.
Corruptible	Living by the process of decay. Our natural bodies live by the process of corruption. We derive energy from the food that we eat and, subsequently, break down. 1Co 6:13.
Eternal	That which has a beginning point but no end; also called everlasting.
Eternal Spirit	The seven-fold Spirit of God.
Fellowship	The result of our appreciation and worship together. The highpoint of our fellowship is the communion of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Germination	The process by which seeds begin to grow. An individual seed contains all the capacity to germinate, grow, multiply and bring forth seed after its own kind.



## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

<b>Incorruptible</b>	Living by a process other than decay. As it was for Jesus' immortal body, our immortal bodies will not be sustained by the principle of corruption in the new heavens and new earth.
<b>Messiah</b>	Hebrew word meaning 'Anointed One'; carries the same meaning as the word, 'Christ'.
<b>Natural person</b>	One who is not born of the Spirit of God. Mankind was firstly created <i>natural</i> . 1Co 15:46.
<b>Offering love</b>	The love that is demonstrated by God the Father and His Son where one is of the other, conformed to the other, revealing the other, and then revealed by the other.
<b>Prevenient grace</b>	A grace that is previous, ie coming before a response.
<b>Robe of righteousness, garment of priesthood</b>	The mandate to do the will of God the Father concerning our lives.
<b>Spirit of grace and supplication</b>	The capacity and compulsion to pray and join the travail of Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane.
<b>Spiritual person</b>	One who is born of the Spirit of God. The spiritual man is <i>illuminated</i> to see and know the things that are freely given by God, because they are taught by the Spirit of God. 1Co 2:12,13.
<b>Stewardship</b>	An administration. The stewardship that we receive from God is the work of priesting our name, works and <i>zoe</i> -life which are hidden with Christ, in God.
<b>The bread of life</b>	The word of God spoken to us in the fellowship of the body of Christ.
<b>The circumcision of Christ</b>	The conforming process by which God the Father made God the Son, His Son.
<b>The divine nature</b>	The life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the Seed of the divine nature.
<b>The Lamb's book of life</b>	Record of names, work, will and purpose of God.

## *Glossary*

<b>The offering of Christ</b>	The process by which God the Son gave up His own rights as God the Son and submitted Himself to become all that the Father asked of Him.
<b>The waters of purification, or separation</b>	In the Old Testament, the ashes of a red heifer (cow) burned with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet, mixed with pure running water. Today, the waters of purification are made up of all the elements that Christ provided for us from His offering, primarily the water and blood that flowed from His side after He had died.
<b>The water of the word</b>	The will of God that the Father has for each one of His sons.
<b>Worship</b>	The giving of worth, especially to God, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and ourselves.
<b>Yahweh Elohim</b>	The three Persons of the Godhead – Yahweh Father, Yahweh Son and Yahweh Holy Spirit.

