

# NBS | THE MIND SET ON THE SPIRIT

## PART 2

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Prepared by David Baker, 4 October 2021  
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

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### **The Spirit helps in our weaknesses**

We will come now to ‘the spiritual prayer meeting’. It would be good to get us all delivered by the end of this session!

Paul wrote, ‘Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses’. Rom 8:26.

This is plural because we have multiple weaknesses. We will not explain these today; but Paul has systematically identified all of these various *points of weakness*.

### **FOUR POINTS OF WEAKNESS**

#### **The other law and our inability to remove it**

We have considered the first, expressed in Romans Chapter 7: We have another law in our heart. This is a problem. In addition to this problem, we have *no way of removing it* from our heart. We cannot perform the ‘heart operation’ ourselves! That is our weakness.

#### **The weakness of our mortality**

Paul also spoke about the weakness of our mortality. We are living in a world that is subject to bondage, to corruption. Even though we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even though we are sons of God, we are still living under these constraints.

The whole world is groaning, and we also are *groaning in ourselves*. This includes the nature of our mortality and the ageing process, our death – all of these things. It is a ‘groaning’. This is also a weakness. Rom 8:19-23.

#### **We do not know the daily will of God**

Having highlighted the groaning, Paul then also spoke about our *hope*, which we know is in heaven – but which *we do not yet see*.

We know that Jesus Christ has fulfilled the works of our sonship; He has learned our obedience; there is grace for every day – but when we wake up in the morning, *we do not yet know* the nature of the will of God for today.

So, it is hope which *we do not yet see*. As Paul explained, this is *the nature of hope*. Rom 8:24-25.

### **We do not know what to pray for, nor how to pray**

This is a weakness – not knowing the will of God for each day, we do not know *what* to pray for. Rom 8:26.

In addition, we do not know *how* to pray.

‘The spiritual prayer meeting’ joins us to a prayer meeting which is already happening – the prayer meeting between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are to join *this*, so that it becomes ‘the prayer meeting of four’, as we like to call it.

But we have no capacity in the flesh to join it. We can only do so *by the Holy Spirit*. This is also part of our weakness.

### **Prayer in the Spirit**

As we choose, as a son of God, to set our mind on the things of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit helps our weakness by joining us to this prayer meeting.

‘The Holy Spirit converts the groaning that we experience because of our weaknesses [plural], to *prayer in the Spirit*. As we persevere by praying in other tongues, in cooperation with the leadership and burden of the Holy Spirit, we are strengthened with the capacity of Eternal Spirit [and, this is through the Holy Spirit] to pray more earnestly [in the same way that Jesus Christ Himself was strengthened in the garden of Gethsemane, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, to pray more earnestly]. Our prayer in the Holy Spirit becomes like a river of tongues, or languages, that is flowing from the innermost part of our being.’<sup>1</sup>

Remember that Jesus said, ‘He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water”.’

‘But this He spoke of the Spirit.’ Joh 7:38-39.

### **Praying from the flesh – anxious prayer**

In contrast to praying *in the Spirit*, ‘we are setting our mind on the things of the *flesh* when our prayer is an expression of our *own* will.

1. Victor Hall with Peter Hay and David Baker, 2021, *The Mystery of Godliness*

‘When we pray this way, we are often motivated by *anxiety*’. It may be anxiety for our own lives, or it may equally be anxiety concerning the lives of others – family members, friends, or whatever the case may be.

We read in the Scriptures that we are to cast all of our anxiety, or our cares, upon the Lord. 1Pe 5:7.

However, this does *not* mean that when we are worried about something, we are to ‘dump’ all our cares ‘in the Lord’s lap’, by praying to Him about what we are worried about; and that because we have ‘got it off our chest’, we feel better about it.

This same cathartic principle works amongst ourselves, doesn’t it? When we are worried about something, we talk about it; we get it off our chest.

But, it does not find any resolution!

The Lord is not listening; and the Lord is not responding to our anxious prayers. Even though we may *feel better*, our prayer is just bouncing off the ceiling! It is prayer by anxiety.

### **Relinquishing control to the Holy Spirit**

How do we cast all our cares upon the Lord? We need to read the preceding verse: ‘Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him’. 1Pe 5:6-7.

We cast all our anxiety upon Him by *relinquishing control* and *humbling ourselves* under His mighty hand, recognising that *He is Lord*.

As we let go of *control*, we let go of the anxiety.

‘Our natural inclination to become anxious when we are confronted by certain situations is part of our weakness. [This is part of our reality. We know this.] We cast our anxiety upon the Lord by relinquishing control of our prayer to the Holy Spirit. As we continue to pray in the Holy Spirit, we are being delivered from the ‘mind chatter’ that consumes our thinking when we are preoccupied with our own circumstances.’

### **Praying in the Spirit – keeping ourselves in the love of God, the fellowship of Christ’s offering**

Jude exhorted, ‘But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith’. Jud 1:20. This is the faith that we have received as a gift in

the word of God that is proclaimed to us; because ‘faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of [Christ]’. Rom 10:17.

We *choose* to set our mind on the things of the Spirit; we pray in the Spirit; and we are building ourselves up on our most holy faith.

This begins to answer all of our other *identity verification mechanisms*.

‘Building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God.’ Jud 1:20.

This means that doing this brings us, or joins us, to the fellowship of the *offering of Christ*, which is the *full expression of the love of God* for us.

And, it is *in His offering* that His love is being *poured into our heart*.

### **We are delivered and His life formed in us in the fellowship of His prayer and offering**

‘Waiting anxiously [or, looking with eager expectation], for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life’, which is *our deliverance from the body of death*. Jud 1:21.

There is deliverance; but this is a process that is operating only *in the fellowship of His offering*.

We are finding deliverance and, at the same time, His *life* is being *formed* in us.

We are ‘keeping ourselves in the love of God’, because the Holy Spirit *joins us to the prayer of Christ* in Gethsemane, which is the prayer, ‘Not my will, but Yours, be done’.

In this way, we are being delivered from our propensity to live according to our *own* will. This is in the circumcising events of the cross.

### **Jesus Christ searches our hearts**

‘Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.’ Rom 8:27.

We know that ‘He who searches the hearts’ is Jesus Christ.

This is the way in which He addressed the presbytery and the church in Thyatira. He spoke specifically concerning the judgement of Jezebel, and then, all of her spiritual children. He said, ‘I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches

the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.' Rev 2:23.

So, He is not only searching the heart. He also searches the mind; or, He exposes both the *motivations* and the *thoughts* of our heart.

Jesus introduced Himself at the beginning of His admonition to Thyatira as the One 'who has eyes like a flame of fire'; this is the way in which He searches our heart. Rev 2:18. It is with 'eyes like a flame of fire'.

When the apostle John saw Jesus Christ seated in the middle of the seven lampstand churches, he identified that His eyes were 'like a flame of fire'. Rev 1:14.

### **Jesus searches our hearts by sending His messengers to proclaim to us the word of the cross**

The important point is that Jesus Christ does not primarily search our heart, and reveal the condition of our heart, while we are on our knees in the morning in prayer. We may receive understanding from the Lord; but the primary way in which He searches our hearts, and the primary way in which He responds to the intercession of the Holy Spirit, is that He sends His *messengers* to *proclaim His word to us* – and it is *the word of the cross*.

*That word* pierces our heart, right to the division of soul and spirit, and everything is then laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account. Heb 4:12-13.

As we receive the word of the cross, and it is coming with a spirit of grace and supplication which *enables us to turn, we meet Christ, eye to eye, heart to heart*.

'A presbytery in the right hand of Christ is also likened to the seven lamps upon a lampstand church that shine before the face of Jesus Christ. As messengers of Christ, they are sent before His face to proclaim the word of the cross to us.'

### **By the conviction of the Holy Spirit as the word is proclaimed, we meet Christ and see the true condition of our heart**

It is not just the *proclamation* of the word; it is the *conviction of the Holy Spirit* which works in our heart as the word is being proclaimed to us. This is because, if we are sons of God, the Holy Spirit Himself *bears witness* to us that we *are* sons of God,

as the word is proclaimed to us, by *convicting us* concerning *what* the Lord is addressing in our heart and *how* we are to respond.

'It is this relational interaction with Christ Himself, in response to the word [and the conviction of the Holy Spirit], that reveals the true condition of our heart ... the fruit of meeting Christ eye to eye is "the fear of the Lord" [as we have been considering].'

### **His wrath, His jealous love and the fear of the Lord**

The fear of the Lord is our deep appreciation of who He is and the nature of His fellowship, the fellowship of Yahweh, which is holy ground.

'We understand that His wrath abides on us because of our sin.' This is the first thing that is revealed to us when Christ meets us with eyes like a flame of fire – it is *His wrath* upon us, because of our sin and our uncleanness.

And *His jealous love* for us, His jealous love for our sanctification as sons of God, *is His wrath* upon us, because of our sin and uncleanness. These are not two conflicting or opposing elements in Yahweh. His jealous love *is His wrath*.

There is nothing more *true*, nothing more *righteous*, nothing more *just*, nothing more *pure* than His wrath upon us because of our sin. We do need to *appreciate* this, to *learn the fear of the Lord*.

The fear of the Lord is also a spiritual grace which 'compels us [because this is the most confronting and uncomfortable experience that we encounter] to flee to Him for refuge. We are saved from His wrath as we mourn for our sin ... and then demonstrate the fruit of repentance.' Mat 3:8.

### **Respond to the Lord while He is speaking**

We have been considering the nature of our response and we recognise, as those who are setting our mind on *the things of the Spirit*, that there is an *imperative* to respond to the Lord *while He is speaking* to us.

This is because the Holy Spirit convicts us and says to us, as the word is being proclaimed to us, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart.' Heb 3:7-8.

We are able to respond when the Lord is speaking, because that is when He has *come to meet us*. We cannot respond once He stops speaking.

This is true on every matter in our life and in every season of our life. There are *seasons of visitation* when the Lord is coming to *meet* us and to *deliver* us on certain points.

So, we are not crying out, 'Who will deliver me?'; but we *are* recognising, as those who set our minds on the things of the Spirit, that when Christ comes, and when He is speaking, *that* is the day of our deliverance on that point, as we *respond* to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

### **Confident that God who has begun a good work in us will complete it**

We also recognise that if the Lord is *not* speaking to us, we can *relax* on all the other issues that we are aware of in our life, knowing that God, who has begun a good work in us, *will complete it*. Php 1:6.

The circumcising work *will be complete* by the time we breathe our last and fall asleep in Jesus, if we *continue to walk* in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Do not be anxious or worried about what tomorrow's issue is. There will be grace to respond to *tomorrow*, when the Lord speaks to us *tomorrow*.

This is what it means to 'set our mind on the things of the Spirit'.

### **Fleshly alternatives to meeting Christ**

Now, there is a whole range of alternatives that we employ, in place of the *simplicity* of responding to the word, and to the *conviction of the Holy Spirit*, as the word is *proclaimed* to us.

If we are setting our mind on the flesh, there are alternatives that we look to, and even give preference to, in terms of trying to understand, 'What is the Lord saying to me?' We have nominated a number in the book, but there are numerous alternatives.<sup>2</sup>

### **Seeking interpretation from a spiritual 'benefactor' rather than meeting Christ**

One of them is to hear the word that is proclaimed, but then to go and look for an *interpretation* of what that word means for us from some kind of '*spiritual guru*' or spiritual 'benefactor'. Instead of hearing the word preached, and receiving the conviction of the

Holy Spirit, and *meeting Christ*, we want someone *else* to *explain its implications* for us.

### **Preferring past understandings over today's word**

Another alternative is that we prefer the *familiarity* of our own religious history, heritage, experiences.

In one sense, our testimony from ten, twenty, thirty years ago can very easily become the *enemy* of what the Lord is saying to us *today*. We give preference to a *historic experience* over the necessity to *respond today*.

### **Preferring our own interpretation of the Scriptures**

Or we give preference to our *own interpretation* of the Scriptures.

Peter declared, speaking as part of a presbytery who were proclaiming the word, 'We have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you would do well to pay attention'. 2Pe 1:19. We are to give even more *earnest attention* as we see the day approaching, because this is a *lamp* that is shining into the dark place of our heart. 2Pe 1:19. Heb 2:1. Heb 10:25.

He said, 'Knowing first of all [our first lesson, in terms of knowing what the Lord is saying to us – knowing *first of all*] that the Scriptures are *not* a matter of *personal interpretation*'. 2Pe 1:20. So, we do not preference our personal interpretation over what the Lord is *actually* saying to us *by the Spirit*, as He continues to lead us forward.

### **Choosing self-diagnosis rather than meeting Christ eye to eye**

Another common alternative is our own *self-analysis* and *self-diagnosis*. We are all familiar with our propensity to be introspective and to want to diagnose our own issue. And, of course, this can overflow to our propensity to want to diagnose the issue in others!

However, our self-analysis, our self-preoccupation, the Scripture is very clear, is *completely futile*.

It does not matter how much *insight* we are able to attain into the nature of our own heart, we will *never* get deeper, in terms of the nature of the fallen human condition, than Adam understood in the beginning, when he said, 'I heard Your voice and I recoiled from fellowship, because I was

2. *ibid.*, p 45

afraid; because I was aware of my nakedness – so I hid myself.’

We will not get deeper than that, from a fallen human perspective, with our mind being set on the flesh.

Did that bring *any deliverance* to Adam whatsoever? No, it did not! None whatsoever! It left him completely *bereft*, with no remedy, no pathway forward.

He did not get even remotely close to what the core issue was, which was his disobedience, despite all of the insight – still darkness.

This is a completely fruitless exercise! We should begin at the beginning of the Scripture and realise that we have known from the very beginning that *this does not work* – so, we let it go.

‘The fruit of self-examination may be a form of sorrow in relation to our own perceived failures or shortcomings. However, it is only the godly sorrow that is the fruit of meeting Christ eye to eye [and heart to heart] that leads to genuine repentance without regret.’

### **Interpreting life’s circumstances as signs from the Lord**

‘Many Christians also set their mind on the things of the flesh by trying to interpret the events and circumstances of their life as though they are *signs* from the Lord.’

This inclination, to try to interpret our circumstances as signs from the Lord, is a lot more prevalent than we probably concede or realise.

We know that the religious person seeks a sign. We are not referring here to wanting the *messenger* to *prove himself* by a sign.

We are referring to our *interpreting* our circumstances as ‘God trying to *talk to us*’ *through our circumstances*, as opposed to realising that God is talking to us *by talking to us*!

He talks to us very clearly. He talks to us continually. And, it is usually pretty plain what He is trying to say.

The Holy Spirit *yearns jealously* within our heart *whenever* the word of faith is proclaimed to us, to bring *conviction*, if we are a son of God, concerning *what the Lord is saying to us*. We come every week to

hear the word proclaimed, because this is our faith.

Yet there is the propensity for us to encounter some difficulty in our life, or some circumstance, and think that this must be ‘a sign from the Lord’.

Why is this? It is because we have an inclination, or predisposed idea, that if we are in the will of God, everything *should* be running *really well* for us; it should all be *streamlined*.

The moment we encounter some kind of opposition, we think, ‘Is this the Lord resisting me? Is this the Lord trying to tell me that I’m going the wrong way?’

For example: I get up in the morning; I go outside; my car has a flat battery. I was due to go to church this morning. Is the Lord saying to me, ‘I don’t want you to go today?’ No, of course He is not! He is saying, ‘Don’t forget to switch the lights off the night before!’ And, ‘Make a good response as you have to go and jump-start it!’

Or, certain things happen and we immediately jump to a conclusion concerning what the Lord is trying to say. For example, I wake up in the morning with a sore hip: ‘Well, the Lord’s obviously talking to me about Jacob!’

What the Lord is talking to me about is *what is being proclaimed* to me, and *that* is what the Lord is asking me to respond to.

### **Finding understanding of what the Lord is saying**

We know that we do need to *find understanding* in the midst of our circumstances. As the Lord is chastening us, we need to know what He is addressing, how we are to respond, what the nature of our *repentance* is, and how we can *make straight paths* for our feet.

But we have to know *how* we find that understanding. It is not through our own *subjective interpretation* of our circumstances.

It is by *hearing the word proclaimed* and by receiving the *conviction of the Holy Spirit*; and then, by *engaging fellowship*, which is in the *agape meal*, around the word that we are hearing and the conviction that the Spirit is bringing. This is how we find understanding.

‘When the word of faith is proclaimed to us, we receive illumination through the convicting work

of the Holy Spirit in our heart. We then receive further illumination when we present ourselves to discuss the word that we have received in the fellowship of the *agape* meal. The apostle Paul tells us that we are to examine ourselves in the fellowship of the *agape* meal.’

It is interesting, in terms of our discussion in the *agape* meal, how inclined we are to default to all of the various things that have happened through the course of the week, sometimes giving preference to that, rather than to the word that we have just heard.

We are to ‘examine ourselves’. ‘However, this is not an exercise of self-analysis or subjective reflection on our present circumstances. We examine ourselves, by the Spirit, in the light of the word that we have received. In this fellowship with our brethren in the *agape* meal, we are being delivered from every other futile method of trying to interpret what the Lord is saying to us.’

### **God works all things together for our good as we are joined to the travail of Christ’s offering**

‘When we are rightly connected to our brethren in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, we know that Jesus Christ, Himself, is making intercession for us to the Father.’

As we confess His name before our brethren, in the fellowship of the word at the *agape* meal, in a worthy manner, responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is *making intercession for us*. He is confessing our name before the Heavenly Father.

‘In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ prayed that the will of God would be accomplished for every son of God through His one offering.’

Jesus Christ is joining us to, or ministering to us a *participation* in, the *travail* of that *whole offering journey*.

It is on *that* basis, and that basis alone, that God is working all things together for our good. Rom 8:28.

As I said previously, this is not automatic. God is not working all things together for our good just because we want Him to or we believe that He is.

He is working all things together for our good *if* Jesus Christ is making intercession for us so that we are joined to the fellowship of His prayer, the

travail of His offering, where the will of God was done.

Then, ‘God working all things together for our good’ includes the *circumcision of the other law* and the *destruction of sin in our flesh*, as we are joined to the physical, crucified body of Christ. And, the *love of God* is being poured into our heart.

### **The sentence has already been passed – full provision in the offering of Christ**

As we close, we will read directly from the Scriptures, from the end of Chapter 8 of the book of Romans – and I commend this to you.

I would like to convey the sense here of Paul, at the conclusion of his letter to the Romans. Here he was. He had preached his sermon. He had identified the nature of the carnal prayer meeting. He had identified the nature of the spiritual prayer meeting. And now he was sitting down, around the table of the *agape* meal.

He said, ‘What then shall we say to these things? What is our response? What is the nature of our faith in relation to this proposition? How do we live? Are we setting our mind on the things of the flesh or are we setting our mind on the things of the Spirit?’ Rom 8:31.

He then went on to describe – we could think of it this way – a courtroom scene: ‘Here we are, in the courtroom. God the Father is seated as Judge – the Ancient of Days, seated – and there is a whole host of adversaries or opponents at law. Chief of them all, right at the front of the queue, is Satan himself, who stands before the throne of God, accusing us day and night.’ Rev 12:10. ‘So, we have an adversary and a whole list of charges.

‘“Here are the charges against you!” And, there is a *sentence* to be passed, on the basis of these charges. So, there is *condemnation*. Then, because there is condemnation, there is the *execution* of a sentence. There is a *death*. This is the nature of it.’

But, Paul said, ‘What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?’ Rom 8:31.

There are all the adversaries; there is Satan, at the front of the queue. But, if God is for us, then who can stand as our adversary?

This does not mean that God is *excusing* us. In fact, the sentence has *already been passed* by God. He interjects and says, ‘Hang on! I think this whole

process here is a bit unnecessary, because I have already passed judgment! Already dead! Already gone! I don't even need to hear the charges – already gone!

**God is for us, to give us all things, as we lay hold of our fellowship in Christ's offering**

But, God is for us because there is *an offering* here. There is a *full provision* in the *offering of Jesus Christ*.

Paul said, 'If God is for us.'

This is not some kind of carnal notion that God *supports* every kind of *fleshly initiative* that we take.

God is 'for us' because He has provided for us an offering. It is the offering of Jesus Christ.

'If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son.' Rom 8:31-32. Jesus Christ became the body of sin, and then was condemned; suffered, under the curse of the Law, the judgment of God.

'He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all [to be hung on a tree: 'Cursed is every man who hangs on a tree' – delivered Him up for us all], how shall He not with Him [*with Him*] also freely give us all things?' Rom 8:32.

This is the provision of an *offering*.

When we lay hold of our fellowship in that offering, in His death, there is the provision of '*all things*' – 'all things pertaining to life and godliness'. 2Pe 1:3.

God is for us, wanting to give us all things *in the context of this offering*. Is this our faith? This is point one.

**If we set our mind on the things of the Spirit, we are joined to a finished work**

Then Paul continued, 'Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?' Rom 8:33. Where are the charges now?

We need to know that we are God's elect. We *are* sons of God, and He has *predestined* us to be sons of God. He has *called* us to be sons of God. We are *born* as sons of God.

But, we still need to *choose*. This is 'making our calling and election sure'. 2Pe 1:10. We still need to choose to *set our mind* on the things of *the Spirit*. If we set our mind on the things of the Spirit, we are *joined to a finished work*.

So, Paul could say, 'Who shall bring a charge against God's elect [or the person who is setting their mind on the Spirit]?' This is because 'It is God who justifies.' Rom 8:33.

The work is finished. Christ was 'delivered up because of our transgressions', but He was also 'raised because of our justification'. Rom 4:25.

His *physical resurrection* is the *guarantee* that He learned our obedience, and fulfilled the works of our sonship; we are perfected, glorified *with Him*.

'It is God who justifies.' There was *an offering*. It is a *full provision* and it is a *finished work*.

Then Paul said, 'So, where is he who condemns?'

'Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.' Rom 8:34.

Do you see that there is a *finished offering*; and that if we are electing, or *choosing*, to set our mind on the *things of the Spirit*; and are then *responding* to the *word* as Christ proclaims it to us, and to the *conviction* of the Spirit, then *He* is making *intercession* for us?

He is ministering to us our *participation in that finished work*, and *sin is being condemned in us* as we are dying *with Christ*.

These are the points of our faith.

Where is he who condemns? Christ is making intercession.

**Dying with Christ is saving our life – nothing can separate us from the love of Christ**

Then Paul said, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter".' Rom 8:35-36.

The sentence is being executed; we are dying, but we are dying *with Christ*. We are not the victim of this. This is *saving* our life, and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

In fact, the point of separation is *between us and our sin*, which is being *destroyed*.

The only thing that can separate us is *if we choose* to set our mind on the things of the flesh.

### **Paul's confession of faith**

I love these last two verses. We will read them together. It is as though Paul had preached his sermon; he was engaging the fellowship around the table; and he was listening to the responses.

Then he himself threw in, right at the end, the confession of his own faith to say, 'As for me, personally, this is what I am persuaded of; this is what I am convinced of; this is the confession of my faith.' He said, 'For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Rom 8:38-39.

Is that your faith today, as we conclude?