

“With Heart and Hands and Voices”: Integral Ministry of Word and Deed from a *Missio Dei* Perspective

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Abstract

Missiological reflection indicates that mission organizations and churches worldwide are reconsidering the biblical foundations of integrating word and deed in proclaiming the gospel. The Lausanne Movement in its 2010 Cape Town congress, the Micah Network, the Gospel Coalition through its journal *Themelios*, the World Reformed Fellowship, and several recent missiological publications all address the relationship between words and deeds in the mission of the church. This article attempts to make a contribution to the debate by analyzing key biblical terms in which God reveals himself through the integration of word and deed, calling for a holistic approach in missions, in which words and deeds are not separated when proclaiming the gospel.

Missiologists, missionary organizations, and churches are rethinking the biblical foundations of integrating word and deed when proclaiming the gospel and structuring the ministry of local churches. Examples from the Lausanne Movement, the Micah-network, the Gospel Coalition,

The title of this article is taken from the well known hymn “Now Thank We All Our God” which is a translation from the German “Nun danket Alle Gott,” written circa 1636 by Martin Rinkart (1586–1649).

and the World Reformed Fellowship serve to illustrate this.

The Lausanne Movement held a congress in Cape Town from October 16 to 25, 2010, where 4,200 participants assembled from 198 countries. The object was to raise awareness among churches worldwide about their unfinished missionary task and “to bear witness to Jesus Christ and all his teaching—in every nation, in every sphere of society and in the realm of ideas.”¹ The congress held discussions on the best way to deal with the issues of poverty and injustice in a biblical manner. It also considered how to counter the false teachings of the so-called prosperity gospel in contrast to the true proclamation of the gospel. Thus, the relationship between word and deed was central.

The Micah-network, a growing coalition of churches and Christian development-aid organizations worldwide, was born out of a concern for holistic mission and reflection on how “to grow together in our understanding and practice of Christian discipleship in a global world affected by consumerism, injustice, and oppression,” a concern rooted in Micah 6:8. Such a concern, again, demands that the integration of word and deed be worked out in such contexts.

The Gospel Coalition is a network of theologians aiming to stimulate believers in deepening their faith in the gospel of Christ and fulfilling their ministry with a theocentric and Christ-centered focus. The goal is to proclaim the reign of Christ over all of life with a persevering hope through the Holy Spirit in such a way that individuals, congregations, and cultures are transformed. When this is accomplished, there will be agreement in believers’ proclamation of the gospel “between our entire lives and God’s heart, words, and actions, through the mediation of the Word and Spirit.”² The foundational principles of holistic mission work are discussed in depth during conferences of the Coalition and expounded in its publications. Their holistic mission, as indicated in the statement above, focuses on the relationship between one’s heart, one’s words, and one’s deeds.

As a third example, the newly approved Statement of Faith of the World Reformed Fellowship clearly states that believers, in obedience to their God-given mission, should reach out to all people with both hands.³ The one hand beckons people to embrace Christ in faith, confess their sins,

¹ S. Doug Birdsall and Lindsay Brown, *The Lausanne Movement: The Cape Town Commitment—A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action*, 1 October 2010, <http://www.lausanne.org/docs/CapeTownCommitment.pdf>.

² Ben Peays, “The Gospel Coalition: Foundation Documents,” 12 April 2011, [http://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/Foundation%20Documents/FoundationDocuments\(English\).pdf](http://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/Foundation%20Documents/FoundationDocuments(English).pdf).

³ Samuel Logan, “A Proposed Statement of Faith,” World Reformed Fellowship, 15 March 2010, <http://wrfnet.org/articles/2010/03/proposed-statement-faith#.VOt4pEJPr6B>.

repent, and believe, so that they may receive everlasting reconciliation with God through Christ; the other demonstrates, by concrete deeds of mercy and compassion, the goodness of God's kingdom in Christ's Name. This is the example that was set by Christ himself. By following his example, believers prove that they are being transformed into his image and that they have received through the Holy Spirit the firstfruits of God's future, the coming of God's new creation. In the paragraph from the Statement of Faith that deals with "The transformation of human community," this commitment is formulated as follows. Note the connection here between words (calling people to love) and deeds (social involvement).

Our proclamation of the gospel has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. Likewise, our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world, we betray the great commission by which God sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore this commission, we have nothing to bring to the world.

In addition to these examples, a large number of recent publications reflect on integrating word and deed in holistic mission work from a biblical perspective.⁴

In light of these examples, the search for a foundational theory of holistic mission work indicates that people are increasingly uncomfortable with dualistic thought patterns when pinpointing the focal point of evangelistic outreach. The main issue is whether the focal point of care for the poor should be compassion or justice.⁵ This question has led to a heated debate between evangelical and ecumenical Christian denominations. Ed Stetzer criticizes remaining tendencies of a dualistic approach in Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert's work.⁶ John Battle, Tim Chester, Keith Ferdinando, and

⁴ The following theological publications have been published in the past decade on the topic: Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity Press, 2011) and *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010); Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Dutton, 2010), Gerhard Verbeek, *Recht in overvloed: Gerechtigheids en professionaliteit in de ontmoeting tussen arm en rijk* (Budel: Budel, 2005); Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Tetsunao Yamamori and C. René Padilla, eds., *The Local Church: Agent of Transformation: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission* (Buenos Aires: Kairós, 2004); Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody, 2009).

⁵ Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 5–25; Verbeek, *Recht in overvloed*, 45–90.

⁶ Ed Stetzer, review of *What Is the mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*, by Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/review/what-is-the-mission-of-the-church-making-sense-of-social-justice-shalom-and#page=>.

Bennie van der Walt offer a variety of views on integrating the proclamation of the gospel and social engagement.⁷ Van der Walt advocates the routing out of dualism altogether, due to its unscriptural tendencies, as well as the separation of the gospel's proclamation from social engagement.⁸

This article aims to demonstrate, by discussing and analyzing key biblical concepts, how word and deed are integrated in God's self-revelation and why this implies the need for a holistic approach, which avoids separating word from deed in the proclamation of the gospel. In what follows, we note how these concepts require the integration of word and deed by looking at them from the perspectives of God, creation, Christ, the church, and the Holy Spirit. Before we get to these concepts, however, a few words are required on the biblical-theological foundation of the *missio Dei*, since that is the biblical locus for integrating word and deed.

I. *The Missio Dei and the Integration of Word and Deed*

A biblical-theological foundation will help us establish the starting point of the unity between word and deed and to clarify how word and deed can be integrated when proclaiming the gospel from a *missio Dei* perspective.

1. *Missio Dei*

In his definition of *missio Dei*, David Bosch mentions that the theological origin of this concept is to be found in covenantal Reformed Theology of the post-Reformation.⁹ The Latin term *missio Dei* was coined as early as the fourth century by Aurelius Augustine to describe the sending acts within the Trinity, the Father's sending of the Son. From then on, *missio Dei* became a major term employed in Catholic and Orthodox dogmatics.¹⁰

In 1952, the term was adopted by the WCC Missions Conference in Willingen and became popular in Protestant missions theology through George Vicedom's book, *Missio Dei* (1958) and through other German Lutheran

⁷ See John A. Battle, "A Brief History of the Social Gospel," *Western Reformed Seminary Journal* 6 (1999): 5–11; Tim Chester, *Good News to the Poor: Sharing the Gospel through Social Involvement* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004); Keith Ferdinando, "Mission: A Problem of Definition," *Themelios* 33.1 (May 2008): 46–47; and Bennie J. Van der Walt, "Ontwikkelingsamewerking vir Afrika, met besondere aandag aan 'n vennootskapsverhouding," *Koers-Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 72 (2012): 468–504.

⁸ Van der Walt, "Ontwikkelingsamewerking vir Afrika."

⁹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 8.

¹⁰ See Karl Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction with Contributions by Hans-Werner Gensichen and Horst Rzepkowski*, trans. Francis Mansfield, *Studia Instituti Missiologici Societatis Verbi Divini* 39 (Nettetal: Steyler, 1987), 66–67.

theologians and missiologists involved in ecumenical agencies, for example, Karl Hartenstein and Walter Freytag.¹¹ George Vicedom explains that “*missio Dei* declares the sending to be God’s own concern, which He began in His Son and which He continues through the Holy Spirit in His Church till the end of time.”¹² Thomas Schirrmacher adds that “the term is valid to be used by Reformed and Evangelical Christians also, because it belongs to the heart of Christianity, no matter whether this term is used for the fact that God sent himself for the redemption of the world, or for the fact that missions of the Church is the outcome of God’s mission.”¹³

Amidst this larger appeal to *missio Dei*, however, several writers make it clear that there is hardly any agreement about the different terms used within the missional debate.¹⁴ For this article, the term *missio Dei* will be defined as follows:

Through Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, God, for his own glory, is uniting people from every tribe, nation, kingdom, and language to worship him forever in the New World.

2. Criteria

This article poses five questions as criteria to consider and discusses key concepts from a *missio Dei* point of view, demonstrating the close connection between word and deed. In other words, these questions will serve as perspectives on the integration of word and deed for each of the key biblical concepts we discuss.

1. Who is God?
2. Why did God create the earth?
3. Why did Jesus Christ become man, die, and rise from the dead?
4. Why was the Holy Spirit sent to earth?
5. What is God’s purpose with the church in the world?

II. Key Concepts

Now that we have laid a foundation for the *missio Dei* and set out the questions that will shape our understanding of word and deed relations for key biblical concepts, we are ready to examine the concepts themselves: *word*, *blessing*, *godliness*, *fear of the Lord*, and *peace*.

¹¹ George F. Vicedom, *Missio Dei* (Munich: Kaiser, 1958).

¹² *Ibid.*, 352.

¹³ Thomas Schirrmacher, *World Mission: Heart of Christianity* (Beese: Reformatorischer Verlag, 2008), 22.

¹⁴ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective, Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 17.

1. *Word*—*dabar*, *logos*, *rēma*

A biblical study of the term “Word” reveals that verbal proclamation (e.g., preaching, teaching, and prophesying) is inseparable from proclamation by works (demonstration). In this sense, “Word” does not preclude “deed.” Both *dabar* and *logos* can be translated with *word*, as well as *deed*.¹⁵

Earl Kalland points to the repeated use of *dabar* in the Old Testament to indicate that God speaks and that his Word has consequences.¹⁶ The one who speaks (*dabar*), acts accordingly.¹⁷ To “grasp the word is to grasp the thought. But the word is also dynamic. It is filled with a power which is felt by those who receive it but which is present independently of such reception.”¹⁸ “Word” is both the message as such and its application. The message is specific, but in practice its effect is dynamic. How does this tell us more about God himself?

(a) *God*. God makes himself known through his *dabar* in a self-authenticating way, so that people experience his divine power. This revelation is not only addressed to Israel, but to all the nations of the world (Jer 31:10; Ezek 36:4), who will eventually come to hear the word of the God of Jacob (Mic 4:1–2) and to sing about what they have heard and seen (Exod 20:18). Even the deaf will hear, and the blind will see; people will rejoice in the Lord, and the poor will sing praises for the holy God of Israel (Isa 29:18–19).

In addition to God making himself known through his *dabar*, we see that God is present through his *dabar* since he is his *dabar* and reveals himself through what he accomplishes.¹⁹ The word of the Lord has an effect and operates as he chooses, according to his will (1 Kgs 13:26). God told Isaiah that his *dabar* will accomplish what he wants it to and that it will establish what he desires. The word that God speaks and its concrete effects are connected.²⁰ F. J. Pop makes it clear that the word is God’s heavenly creative power, which is operating on earth.²¹ The grounding of the meaning of “word” in God himself is crucial in order to understand the unity between word and deed in the missionary situation. And we find that unity in the context of God’s creation. So, it is fitting to ask next, “In what sense does God’s *dabar* tell us something about why or how God created all things?”

¹⁵ F. J. Pop, *Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim: Verklaring van een aantal Bijbelse woorden* (’s Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1984), 581.

¹⁶ Earl S. Kalland, “399. דָּבָר (*Dābar*),” *TWOT* 1:178–80.

¹⁷ Pop, *Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim*, 579.

¹⁸ Otto Procksch, “C. The Word of God in the OT,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 508 (abbreviated *TDNTa* hereafter); cf. *TDNT* 4:92.

¹⁹ Pop, *Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim*, 579–80.

²⁰ Kalland, *TWOT* 1:180.

²¹ Pop, *Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim*, 581.

(b) *Creation and people*. God created both heaven and earth through the spoken word (Gen 1:3; Ps 33:6; John 1:3), demonstrating the Semitic equivalence of word as speech and as fact or act.²² The world becomes a reality through the creative divine Word.²³ According to Allen Myers, Paul concurs with this in Romans 10:17–18: the spoken word awakens faith.²⁴

According to Pop, for the Israelites, the spoken word formed a unity of events and their impact, expressed by the use of the word *dabar*. A word should not merely convey the matter under discussion to someone; it should do it in such a way that the hearer can be assured that the matter is what the word describes; word and matter should be interchangeable. Then the hearer will attest that the word is true (Deut 27:15–26; Num 5:22).²⁵ Thus, *dabar* tells us not only how God created (he acted through his word), but how we relate to the world and to others; our words and deeds are united. Our primary example, as always, is the person of Christ.

(c) *Jesus Christ*. Pop shows how Jesus's words and works form a unit. His word is both a promise of salvation and a word of judgment.²⁶ These two aspects generate in Christ the power of salvation as well as justice. Through his words, Jesus healed the sick, called disciples, judged unbelievers, and foretold the future. His words and miracles inspire awe. Jesus Christ himself embodies these words through the unity of his person and his work.²⁷

In addition, and adding Trinitarian depth to union of word and deed, Myers interprets Jesus's incarnation as the revelation of God's most significant word.²⁸ According to the witness of John 1 and Hebrews 1, Jesus is the personification of God's Word by whom everything that exists originated.²⁹ One can infer that Jesus embodies the integration of words and works: his word goes hand in hand with his work.³⁰ This is confirmed by Henk Medema, who notes that the Word is never simply theological, but always relational and personal.³¹ This is because the truth *came to man* incarnated in

²² Allen C. Myers, ed., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 1064.

²³ Procksch, *TDNT* 4:99–100 and *TDNTa* 509.

²⁴ Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 1064.

²⁵ Cf. Pop, *Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim*, 580.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 582.

²⁷ Gerhard Kittel, "Word and Speech in the NT," *TDNT* 4:107 and *TDNTa* 510; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 33.100, 260 (abbreviated hereafter as L&N); Pop, *Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim*, 585.

²⁸ Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 1064.

²⁹ L&N 33.100.

³⁰ Kittel, *TDNT* 4:107 and *TDNTa* 510.

³¹ Henk P. Medema, *Totaal christendom: Zending in de hele wereld, van Kaapstad tot Lausanne* (Heerenveen: Medema, 2011), 56.

Immanuel. The word addressed to man is *the Word* himself and is himself God. This Word, however, should not be considered apart from the Holy Spirit. How does the third Person of the Trinity bear on the union of word and deed as exemplified in the Word himself?

(d) *The Holy Spirit*. The word of God works as a dynamic power through the activity of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 1:18). By this power God realizes and accomplishes concrete things. According to Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida, *logos* and *rēma* primarily refer to the content of the communicated message of the gospel,³² as well as to the content of the proclamation of Jesus.³³ Gerhard Kittel points out (using Eph 1:13) that the Holy Spirit seals those who accept God's word and is inseparably connected to the process of integrating the word with works.³⁴ In this sense, the Spirit is always bound up with the Word. This has important implications for the church.

(e) *Church*. In the New Testament, Christians constitute the church as believers and respond to the word of salvation in all aspects of their life, becoming bearers of the Word through whom God himself speaks (1 Pet 4:11).³⁵ The Word entails a verbal account and proclamation about Jesus Christ. This includes the Word of the cross, of reconciliation, and grace, of life and truth—and is not a random concept.³⁶ Life includes events and is an account of things that have been received and accomplished (Matt 12:36; 18:16; Acts 8:21; Phil 4:17; 1 Pet 3:15; cf. L&N 13.115). When God expresses his word verbally through man, it causes man to come alive: “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creation” (Jas 1:18 ESV). From a *missio Dei* perspective, the church brings the Word of God to all through audible words and visible works, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The holy life and righteous lifestyle of believers also aims at gaining the respect of people outside the congregation (1 Thess 4:12; *pros tous exō* has the meaning of *unbelievers*).³⁷

Verbal proclamation of the word does not exclude, but initiates witnessing through works, so that words and deeds together present a testimony of God's healing and transforming grace. There is no tension between speaking and acting, words and works, because they are one.³⁸ The church is a community that witnesses to God's Word through its heart, voice, and

³² L&N 33.98.

³³ L&N 33.260.

³⁴ Kittel, *TDNT* 4:119 and *TDNTa* 512.

³⁵ Pop, *Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim*, 582.

³⁶ Kittel, *TDNT* 4:117, 119 and *TDNTa* 511–12.

³⁷ See L&N 11.10, Heinrich Greeven, “Ἐὐσχήμων,” *TDNT* 2:770–71 and *TDNTa* 278.

³⁸ Pop, *Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim*, 582.

hands (Deut 30:11–14; Rom 10:8–10). This triad of heart, voice, and hands is central to the *missio Dei* and will be referenced continually in the remainder of the article.

This is in agreement with the revelation to John in which the prophetic Word of God and the testimony of God's Word becomes fully and tangibly real in Jesus Christ: "Receiving the word, when authentic, involves doing." Christ is the incarnation of *logos tou theou*—God's Word in incarnate action.³⁹

In this respect, our words must be offered to make God and his grace known through Jesus Christ and by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is why the integration of word and works is paramount in missiology.

2. *Blessing*—*brk*, *eulogeō*, and *makarios*

The second key concept we can examine is *blessing*. The notion of the Lord's blessing provides, from a *missio Dei* point of view, a crucial perspective on the relation between word and works. The Bible uses a variety of words to indicate God's blessing: *brk*, *eulogeō*, and *makarios*.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God's blessing has a spiritual as well as practical application. According to W. W. Wessel, this points towards the spiritual fruit (Rom 15:29; Eph 1:3) that the gospel brings, as well as material blessings (Heb 6:7; 12:17; 2 Cor 9:5), through which someone receives kindness and favor.⁴⁰ The goal is to enable someone to be successful, prosperous and productive, and enjoy a long-lasting life.⁴¹ According to Louw and Nida, such a fruitful life indicates divine favor, implying that the verbal act itself constitutes a significant benefit.⁴² Hermann Beyer adds to this by emphasizing the active aspect of transferring this blessing through words and works.⁴³ The result is acceptance, happiness, and prosperity.⁴⁴ Again, we ask, "How does blessing tell us more about who God is?"

(a) *God*. Word as well as works are anchored in God, who is both the blessing and the one who grants or takes it away. Because he alone is God, everything finds its origin with him: death and life, sickness and health. The sovereign God alone grants true freedom and offers countless blessings.

³⁹ Cf. Kittel, *TDNTa* 512 and *TDNT* 4:123–24, 119.

⁴⁰ W. W. Wessel, "Blessed," in *NBD*³ 142–43; Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 162–63; cf. Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 1999) (Logos Bible Software, version 4).

⁴¹ John N. Oswalt, "285 בָּרַךְ (*bārak*)," *TWOT* 132.

⁴² L&N 33.470.

⁴³ Hermann W. Beyer, "εὐλογέω, εὐλογία," *TDNT* 2:755 and *TDNTa* 275.

⁴⁴ Beyer, *TDNT* 2:756 and *TDNTa* 275; Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998) (Logos Bible Software, version 4).

The presence of God itself is a blessing for creation as well as man, who, without it works in vain (Ps 37:22; Prov 22:10).⁴⁵ God is a personal Being and, therefore, has the power to provide blessings for persons.⁴⁶ His blessing is a concrete indication that he wishes to grant freedom and grace. God reveals himself as the sovereign one of the universe who, in contrast to the heathen idols, wields both salvation and doom, as in Deuteronomy 32:39 (NIV): “Look! I am the One! There is no other God except me. I put some people to death. I bring others to life. I have wounded, and I will heal. No one can save you from my powerful hand.” Such a passage highlights the sovereignty of God as blesser.

This is also shown in our requests for blessing. The blessing of the high priest is a prayer to God, asking for his presence, grace, and healing power over the spiritual and physical lives of his people.⁴⁷

Lastly, blessing also expresses adoration, when people kneel in prayer and worship before God (1 Kgs 8:54; 18:42; Ezra 9:5).⁴⁸ So, blessing calls for a response in word and deed.

(b) *Creation*. As for creation, Christopher Wright demonstrates that blessings are linked closely to it and that God’s gifts to his children are meant to be enjoyed: abundance, fruitfulness, long-lasting life, peace, and rest.⁴⁹ People are meant to experience blessings in the context of a healthy relationship with God and their neighbor. These blessings are always linked to obedience and trust in God and his law.⁵⁰ By appropriating the received blessings, a Christian glorifies God.⁵¹

The greater blesses the lesser, in the same way that a father blesses his sons or a king his subjects.⁵² Similarly, the rich are to bring blessing to the poor, the strong to the weak, and the healthy to the sick in a prosperous, significant, and productive life. In response, blessings are also used to express

⁴⁵ Beyer, *TDNT* 2:756 and *TDNTa* 275; Oswalt, *TWOT* 132.

⁴⁶ Beyer, *TDNT* 2:756 and *TDNTa* 275; Franklin H. Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs, eds., *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1972) (Logos Bible Software, version 4).

⁴⁷ Oswalt, *TWOT* 132.

⁴⁸ Cf. Beyer, *TDNT* 2:756, 758 and *TDNTa* 275–76; Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000) (Logos Bible Software, version 4); James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009) (Logos Bible Software, version 4).

⁴⁹ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 221.

⁵⁰ Beyer, *TDNT* 2:757 and *TDNTa* 275.

⁵¹ Beyer, *TDNT* 2:758 and *TDNTa* 276.

⁵² Oswalt, *TWOT* 132.

thanks and recognition to the one who made a prosperous and meaningful life possible.⁵³

The range of blessings offered by God, and the contrast they have with God's curses, tell us even more about God's blessings in creation. According to John Kselman, the wide range of blessings includes vitality, healthy and long-lasting life, fertility, and plentiful offspring.⁵⁴ By contrasting blessing with curse, he clarifies the intent of blessing: a curse can entail any utterance that eventually leads to death, be it sickness, childlessness, or natural or other disasters, such as drought, famine or war.⁵⁵ Carpenter and Comfort point out that God blessed the people of Israel with rain, safety and security, the law, health, and "many other things."⁵⁶ According to Psalm 67, God's people received his blessings in order to be a blessing to other nations so that the whole world might honor and fear God. Blessings, in other words, serve a purpose that extends beyond personal satisfaction.

Referring to Jeremiah 29:7, Christopher Wright stresses that Israel did not only receive blessings, but had to *be* a blessing, even during exile among her enemies.⁵⁷ By seeking prosperity for the city and praying for its inhabitants, Israel was not only a favored people, but also an instrument to bless all humankind according to the promise God made to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3). God's blessings include hope for Israel's future, both spiritual and practical. At the same time, Israel was commanded to make God's blessings visible by means of her words and works. While Israel, God's son (Exod 4:22), failed to do this, Jesus Christ, God's true Son, succeeded in every way.

(c) *Jesus Christ*. When God blessed his children in Jesus Christ, people showed joy as a result of Christ's redemptive work, the arrival of God's kingdom on earth.⁵⁸ Christ became flesh (John 1:14) in order for his flock to have life in abundance (John 10:10). Such abundant life is closely related to the calling of God's people to *be* a blessing to others, for the concept of *eternal life* (Greek, *zōēn aiōnion*) does not only allude to life after death. It points to a qualitatively better life than that which one may already have inherited and experienced on earth.⁵⁹ This happens when one truly believes in Jesus Christ

⁵³ Oswalt, *TWOT* 132.

⁵⁴ John S. Kselman, "Curse and Blessing," in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 199.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Carpenter and Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words*.

⁵⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 99–100, 221.

⁵⁸ Beyer, *TDNT* 2:763 and *TDNTa* 276; Carpenter and Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words*; Friedrich Hauck, "μακάριος," *TDNT* 4:367 and *TDNTa* 548.

⁵⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, "ζάω, ζωή (βιόω, βίος)," *TDNT* 2:865–66 and *TDNTa* 294; Hermann Sasse, "αἰών, αἰώνιος," *TDNT* 1:205–6 and *TDNTa* 32.

(John 5:24; 6:47; 20:21). For a believer, true life in abundance is analogous to a tree planted near a stream (Jer 17:8). Such a person can withstand the storms of life and drinks from the source of God's living water, turning to offer word and deed ministry to one who is weary (Isa 50:4; Matt 25:31–40). This is the life of abundance that Jesus refers to in John 10:10.

Notice again the theme of the unity between heart, hands, and voices. This becomes clear when martyrs are called "blessed" (Matt 5:10) because of their enduring faith in Jesus Christ.⁶⁰ Their faith (heart) led to testimony (voices) and corresponding action (hands).

In all of this, Jesus Christ *is* the incarnation of God's blessings poured out over humankind, anticipating the redemption of heaven and earth. Christ embodies *and* administers God's blessings through his atoning sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice becomes instrumental in believers' proclamation and ministry, which is oriented towards eternal victory. The inseparable bond between word and deed in God's blessings is thus embodied in Christ. But, as with our discussion of *dabar*, blessing through the Word does not occur in isolation from the Spirit.

(d) *The Holy Spirit*. The blessing of the Holy Spirit is integrally connected to the proclamation of the gospel in terms of heart and hands and voices. Wright highlights the following events: Jesus's mission, the ascension, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, relating them to God's promise to make Abraham a blessing for all people as part of the *missio Dei*.⁶¹ In this process, the Holy Spirit, as Paraclete, fulfills a key position in the propagation of God's blessing to humankind, filling our hearts with praise that works itself out in words and actions.

Continuing on this line of discussion, we find that, according to Psalm 104:29–30, God's Spirit renews creation by uniting word and deed.⁶² Genesis 27 describes the blessing of Jacob and Esau, in which the Holy Spirit directly connects blessing with life. According to Gijsbert van den Brink and Cees van der Kooi, blessing is vital to life, especially in the Old Testament times, because it relates to growth, bloom, progress, progeny, vitality, and power.⁶³ Cursing, on the other hand, entails the stagnation of life, crops, a lack of health, and limited offspring.⁶⁴ The Holy Spirit is essential in connecting words to deeds, then, because he brings creation to new life.

⁶⁰ Cf. Hauck, *TDNT* 4:368 and *TDNTa* 369.

⁶¹ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 189.

⁶² Gijsbert van den Brink and Cees van der Kooi, *Christelijke dogmatiek: Een inleiding* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012), 447.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 448.

⁶⁴ Magdalene Frettlöh, *Theologie des Segens: Biblische und dogmatische Wahrnehmungen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 55–57.

Taking a step back, we see that God gives commands and blessings in the name of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:13). Jesus teaches that the Holy Spirit will glorify him by proclaiming him as God's embodiment (John 16:14), and the Holy Spirit explicitly points to Jesus's victory over sin and Satan, which he achieved as the Christ through suffering, death on the cross, and resurrection. Due to this victory and passion, believers already taste victory in Christ. The Holy Spirit leads believers to experience the reality of Christ's love, and to become, through their words and deeds, a channel of love directed towards a broken world. The blessing of the Holy Spirit entails giving believers joyful assurance in the present, and making them the first-fruits of God's future glory. So, those who receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit become channels of received compassion in order to bless others who are suffering in a broken world (Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:3–7). The Holy Spirit provides a guarantee and a foretaste of God's great future, which moves people to become a blessing to others in all aspects of their lives (heart, hands, and voices). The holistic implications of the Spirit's blessings become clear when we read that "the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now" (Rom 8:22 ESV). A believer who is filled by the Holy Spirit develops a vision of the cosmic impact of the gospel and becomes a witness to God's blessings in heart, hands, and voice. This points us to the implications that blessing has for God's church.

(e) *Church*. From the perspective of *missio Dei*, the church fulfills an essential and holistic role in passing on God's blessing to others. The most distinctive way in which the church expresses its faith is by blessing God visibly as well as audibly, by praising him with heart, hands, and voices (Ps 103:1; 134:1–2), and this has a ripple effect in the world at large.⁶⁵

John Oswalt points out that believers should transmit the blessings received from the Lord, by caring practically for the well-being of others (Gen 27; 48:9, 15, 20; 24:60; 31:55; 1 Sam 2:20; Acts 2:42–47).⁶⁶ This demonstrates that God blesses his children so that these blessings are passed on in visible, audible, and tangible ways. In this sense, the view of Carpenter and Comfort is too limited when they state—based on Ephesians 1:3—that blessings are not physical, but merely spiritual matters.⁶⁷ Blessings *are* spiritual, but with tangible *effects* such that those who are blessed may thank God and serve his eschatological purposes.

⁶⁵ Cf. Beyer, *TDNT* 2:758, 761–62 and *TDNTa* 275–76; Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes*.

⁶⁶ Oswalt, *TWOT* 133; cf. Matthew G. Easton, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (London: Nelson & Sons, 1894), 102; Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 162–63.

⁶⁷ Carpenter and Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words*.

The comprehensive eschatological impact of blessings often surfaces in the prophetic books. Isaiah looked forward to a time when God's blessing would be realized in the present, rather than only anticipated for the future (Isa 19:23–24; 61:4–11). The blessings of the kingdom of heaven are promised to people in specific circumstances: the poor, the hungry, mourners or those who are hated and despised, who already experience the arrival of the kingdom as a blessing (Matt 13:16–17).⁶⁸ The Beatitudes, in this light, are not only oriented towards future life and consolation. Friedrich Hauck rightly points out that the early church experienced blessing when they collected contributions for the congregation in Jerusalem.⁶⁹ Paul typifies this deed of unconditional love as a peace offering. Augustine, on the other hand, emphasizes that one's life cannot be blessed when it is detached from eternal life.⁷⁰ The blessing of eternal life provides consolation and a godly perspective in this life. As a result, the church acts spiritually, physically, and materially so that those who suffer may find comfort in a new way of living.

In this perspective, the sacerdotal blessing of the Lord is an indicator, an imperative, and a promise. Matthew Henry refers to the task of the priests in correlation to the high priest's blessing in Numbers 6:24–27. The priest, as God's voice to His people, teaches, commands, and blesses them.⁷¹ Whoever receives and lives out the law also receives blessing. Therefore, when 1 Peter 2:9 refers to the faithful as a priesthood, one can rightly deduce that the church, as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, is given the task of proclaiming, commanding, and blessing in terms of heart and hands and voices (Matt 28:18–20). The realized promise of the blessing becomes even clearer in Revelation. The visions depict scenes in which every creature in heaven and on earth is involved in the praise of him who sits on the throne, and of the Lamb.⁷²

In the broadest sense, God's blessings reach back to before creation and stretch into the future age. They include both the spiritual and physical life of believers and also all that is on earth and in heaven. The response is to praise his glorious grace, which he has given the elect freely in the one he loves (Eph 1:3–11). In this sense, believers already experience eternal life in their hearts and actualize it with their hands and voices. Paul refers to this as receiving the "firstfruits" or "deposit" (Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:22) of God's eternal blessing. The church thus functions as God's instrument to bring and to *be* this blessing to others in his Name (Matt 25:34–46). According to

⁶⁸ Beyer, *TDNT* 2:763 and *TDNTa* 276; Hauck, *TDNT* 4:368 and *TDNTa* 549.

⁶⁹ Hauck, *TDNT* 4:369 and *TDNTa* 549.

⁷⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity* 13.8.11 (*NPNF*¹ 3:173).

⁷¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (New York: Fleming & Revell, 1900), on Num 6:22–27.

⁷² Beyer, *TDNT* 2:763 and *TDNTa* 276.

the New Testament, the church fulfills this role by proclaiming the gospel holistically, by using hearts, hands, and voices.

3. *Godliness—eusebeia*

The next concept we will explore is *godliness*. Godliness can also be translated as “devotion” or “dedication.” From the perspective of *missio Dei*, godliness integrates the fruits of the Spirit as a result of living in fellowship with God in total devotion. John Calvin states in his commentary on 1 Timothy that godliness is the beginning, middle, and end of the Christian life.⁷³ If one’s life manifests godliness, then nothing is lacking.

Godliness is expressed as “good deeds” (1 Tim 2:10 NIV), “piety” or “devout practice” (1 Tim 4:8), and “spiritual exercise” (Phil 4:8 GNB). A believer’s entire existence becomes a living expectation of God’s final judgment. This way of life is characterized by *eusebeia* (2 Pet 3:11–12), a term that denotes a loving, revering, dedicating, and surrendering frame of mind towards God himself. In this way, God lays claim to the total life of the believer, and impacts human relationships by believers’ behavior, reflecting right religious beliefs and attitudes.⁷⁴ Once again, we ask what we can learn about who God is from the concept of godliness.

(a) *God*. Godliness is honoring God as the Creator and Savior, the one who demands active obedience to his revealed will. It entails personal dedication surpassing lip-service in fear and admiration (Prov 1:7; Isa 11:2; 33:6; Luke 2:25).⁷⁵ Thomas Strong describes godliness as respect for God that influences one’s entire way of life.⁷⁶

Yet, godliness without God as its source and foundation amounts to moralism. An attitude of total devotion has great value in every aspect (1 Tim 3:8), but a mere outward appearance lacks the essence of true godliness. Therefore, genuine godliness grows from faith (*pistis*), has its roots in Christ, is empowered by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23), and is expressed in all aspects of believers’ daily lives with a focus on glorifying God.⁷⁷

⁷³ See L&N 53.5–6 and John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries: The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 244.

⁷⁴ Phillipus J. Buys, “Vorming van ’n man van God: Evaluering van internasionale debatte oor predikantsopleiding in die lig van perspektiewe uit 1 en 2 Timoteus,” *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 44.1 (2012): 58.

⁷⁵ Cf. Werner Foerster, “Εὐσέβεια,” *TDNT* 7:182–83 and *TDNTa* 1012; D. G. Peterson, “Godliness,” *NBD*³ 422.

⁷⁶ Thomas Strong, “Godliness,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 662–63.

⁷⁷ Foerster, *TDNT* 7:183 and *TDNTa* 1012.

(b) *Creation*. With regard to creation, God created humans to be fruitful by working, inhabiting, and keeping the earth. As the *imago Dei*, man was placed on earth to bear fruit in glorifying God (Gen 1:26, 28). Revelation concludes with a similar perspective: God's elected people bearing fruit as part of the new heaven and earth (Rev 22:1–5). For Werner Foerster, godliness designates respect for the divine created order and is a practical way of living.⁷⁸

In contrast, a Gnostic view promotes ascetic life and takes creation to be evil and malicious. Foerster assumes that these ideas originated from the belief that the resurrection (2 Tim 2:18) had taken place already.⁷⁹ An integral understanding of creation and its total redemption, however, makes it clear that content and practice, doctrine and life, are inseparable. Heart, hand, and voice are never sundered from one another, as we see with Christ himself.

(c) *Jesus Christ*. First Timothy 3:16 sketches God's complete plan of salvation through Jesus Christ as the majestic mystery of true godliness. Jesus's life embodied godliness: in the incarnation, the confirmation by the Holy Spirit, his appearance to angels, proclamation in the world, and his exaltation. John Janzen, therefore, argues that true godliness is only possible through Jesus Christ, referring to 2 Peter 2:13, according to which God grants humans all they need to live and serve him.⁸⁰ Paul also points out in 2 Timothy 3:12 that a godly life (*eusebōs zēn*) is lived in Christ. A godly life has a clear Christological foundation as seen in several texts on *eusebeia* (Titus 1:1).⁸¹ And wherever Scripture discusses Christ, the Spirit is close at hand.

(d) *The Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruit in the lives of believers (John 5:5, 8, 16; Rom 7:4; Gal 5:22; Col 1:10). Several texts contrast godliness (Gal 5:20–21; 1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7–8; 6:11) with the practices of man's sinful nature (Acts 3:12; Gal 5:20–22; 1 Tim 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5–6; 2 Tim 3:5). Paul typifies godliness as the believers' walk in faith (Rom 8:4). These references confirm Lambert Floor's thesis that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit cannot be a hidden matter, seeing that the Holy Spirit stimulates a radical new attitude to life and regenerated activity in believers.⁸² In other words, the Holy Spirit integrates godliness with the holistic dimensions of heart, voice, and hands, because when the Spirit dwells in believers, his activating power also makes Christ's stature increasingly visible in their lives.⁸³

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ John F. Janzen, "Godliness, Godly," in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. Achtemeier, 352.

⁸¹ Cf. Buys, "Vorming van 'n man van God," 58.

⁸² Lambert Floor, *De doop met de Heilige Geest*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Voorhoeve, 1989), 19.

⁸³ Ibid., 138.

This integration of godliness with the holistic dimensions is evident where *eusebeia* is used. This is especially true of the Pastoral Epistles, in which pastoral counsel is given to the congregations. Floor describes the purpose of this: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the congregation is revealed when the Spirit's fruit takes form in an individual believer's life.⁸⁴ The Holy Spirit thus plays an essential role in integrating godliness with the holistic dimensions of existence. It is important to consider J. C. Conell's comment that godliness derives from a right attitude to the Lord and does not run parallel to it—as two railway tracks.⁸⁵ In this sense, the Holy Spirit cultivates right attitudes in believers, who comprise the church, the body of Christ.

(e) *Church*. Godliness is the manifestation of a living faith in Christ. For believers, this is the outward expression of an inner experience.⁸⁶ Seen from a *missio Dei* perspective, the church is God's instrument that radiates glowing love and awe towards God arising from a disposition of love, dedication, reverence, and devotion. Christians are to lead consistent, godly lives, showing godliness by being continually conscious of God's presence in every aspect of their lives.⁸⁷ This flows from the absence of greed and from an attitude to life in which people are satisfied that their basic needs are met.⁸⁸

Such a way of life is in stark contrast to that of the false teachers whom 1 Timothy 6:3 condemns as opposing Jesus Christ himself by being conceited, ignorant, and having a sickly craving for quarrelsome questions. They are filled with envy, strife, blasphemy, evil suspicion, and exploit *eusebeia* for profit. On the other hand, the man of God (*anthrōpos tou theou*) is characterized by an inner longing to be righteous (*diakaiosunē*) before God and man in godliness (*eusebeia*), faith (*pistis*), love (*agapē*), perseverance (*hypomonēn*), and affection (*praupathian*).⁸⁹

From the explanation above, one can deduce the godliness of the church as God's instrument. The church's task is to model, through hearts and hands and voices, a lifestyle honoring God together with fellow worshipers. This lifestyle arises from a true knowledge of God and his grace in Jesus Christ (1 Tim 3:16; 4:7–10; 2 Tim 3:10–12; Titus 1:1; 2:11–12). A sincere dedication to God changes and transforms relations and behavior in all

⁸⁴ Ibid., 139

⁸⁵ J. C. Conell, "Godliness," *NBD*³ 432.

⁸⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, *Sermon Starters*, vols. 1–4 (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992) (Logos Bible Software, version 4).

⁸⁷ Clive Anderson, *Opening up 2 Peter* (Leominster: Day One, 2007), 29.

⁸⁸ Buys, "Vorming van 'n man van God," 58.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

respects.⁹⁰ Believers should direct their lives toward glorifying God, at the same time winning their neighbors for Christ (1 Pet 3:1–2).⁹¹ Janzen links to godliness the characteristic biblical terms such as righteousness, justice, love, steadfastness, affection, virtue, knowledge, self-control, and brotherly love (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Pet 1:5–7).⁹² Hereby they prove that godliness is integral to the church’s task: affecting all human relations through words and deeds, from a disposition of love, awe, devotion, and a total surrender to God. First Timothy 4:8 provides another clear example of this integration. Paul directly connects the spiritual and daily life, as well as present and eternal life and confirms that godliness has great value and holds a powerful promise for eternal life, for the present and the future.

In this light, the church is God’s instrument that favors human lives with an integrated godly ministry. The aim is to effectuate godliness in this life as well in the next.⁹³ Athanasius explains this form of integration as follows, “For of these two things we speak of—faith and godliness—the hope is the same, even everlasting life.”⁹⁴ Foerster states, “The reference is to the positive effect of this mode of life.”⁹⁵ The eschatological perspective of godliness is clearly seen when Paul connects it specifically to the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11–13). Therefore, godliness is closely linked to the hope of eternal life (Rev 22:2).

Here, the church has to be constantly aware of the core responsibility of holistic godliness as an instrument of the *missio Dei*. This implies the task of revealing God in terms of hearts and hands and voices to all the nations and serving him. Godliness is not just aimed at the individual believer or at the church as institution. It entails an attitude of constant awareness of the impact that Christian life has on the life of unbelievers.⁹⁶

In sum, only because God is proclaimed as the source of godliness can the lifestyle of believers who are saved in Christ follow his example of true godliness. As a result, they prove in all aspects of their lives that they are empowered by the hope of eternal fruit, the new earth and the new heaven. By demonstrating godliness through grace, people fulfill their creational command as images of God.

⁹⁰ Peterson, *NBD*³ 423.

⁹¹ Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 296.

⁹² Janzen, “Godliness, Godly,” 352.

⁹³ Strong, “Godliness,” 662.

⁹⁴ Athanasius, *Festal Letters* 11.10 (*NPNF*² 4:536).

⁹⁵ Foerster, *TDNT* 7:182 and *TDNTa* 1012.

⁹⁶ Foerster, *TDNT* 7:183 and *TDNTa* 1012.

4. *Fear of the Lord—yr', pkhd, and phobos*

We now come to the *fear of the Lord*. Fearing God implies a combination of holy respect and fervent love. This experience is at the same time (1) a consciousness of being in the presence of true greatness and majesty; (2) a thrilling sense of privilege, (3) an overflow of respect and admiration; and perhaps supremely, (4) a sense that God's view of one's life is the only thing that really matters. This attitude to life clearly characterizes, according to Acts 9:31, the spirituality of the first Christian church. While living with deep respect before God and acting in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the congregation grew in number (*poreuomenē tō phobō tou kuriou kai tē paraklēsei tou hagiou pneumatos eplēthuneto*).⁹⁷ Childlike fear of the Lord describes a core aspect of Christian spirituality and is fundamental to morality and integrity. This fear also grounds a missionary vision which flows from appropriating God's faithfulness, grace, and love. Profound awe, respect, and reverence for the Lord describes the church's reaction to the great deeds the Lord has done.⁹⁸

(a) *God*. Applying this to our knowledge of God, we find that he, as the almighty and sovereign Creator, Judge, and Keeper, compels people to fear him, either out of anxiety and fearfulness, or with honor and deep respect. God instills fear by proclaiming his majesty and grace, but also by his mighty deeds in nature and his amazing power. Fearing God means one's heart is sensitive to both his God-ness and his graciousness. His people experience great awe and deep joy when they begin to understand who he really is and what he has done for them. They get a taste of his astonishing forgiveness (Ps 130:4)—a gift that determines their behavior and their whole attitude to life, a life that is surrounded by God's creation.

(b) *Creation*. After man fell into sin, the childlike, loving, and respectful fear of the Lord changed into terrified anxiety. This caused the first humans to hide from God out of shame due to their nakedness. From then on humans were fearful of God's punishment because of their disobedience. Perfect love and harmony were expelled by anxiety because of the wrath of the Lord caused by the fall into sin (1 John 4:18). The Bible ends, however, with the prospect of the new heaven and earth. In this new creation, people will live

⁹⁷ Phillipus J. Buys, "Strome van lewende water: Nuwe Testamentiese perspektiewe op die missionêre karakter van die kerk," *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 47.1 (2012): 7.

⁹⁸ L&N 53.58–59; Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) (Logos Bible Software, version 4); James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997) (Logos Bible Software, version 4); J. D. Douglas, "Fear," *NBD*³ 365.

not in fear or anxiety, but in awe, honor, love, and respect towards God. In this regard, the Bible begins and ends with a childlike fear of the Lord.

Through this God-given holy fear, people are able to show honor and respect for God's authority, obey his commandments, and reject all forms of evil (Jer 32:40; Heb 5:7).⁹⁹ Douglas adds that the fear of the Lord can be seen as the principle of wisdom and sincerity.¹⁰⁰ Such an attitude even determines the type of person whom God loves, which means that man's life into all its dimensions is service to God. Therefore, true filial fear of God is expressed through God-centered worship. The fear of the Lord brings people in the right relationship to God as they come to obey and serve him with their entire life (Exod 20:20). The fear of the Lord is integrally interwoven with the believer's words and deeds. This is the main reason to obey the Great Commission; being a blessing to the nations means that the ends of the earth will fear the Lord (Ps 67:8), for judgment has come by the righteousness of Christ (Rom 1:17–18).

(c) *Jesus Christ*. Jesus Christ emphasized the fear of the Lord, by pointing out that God can destroy one's body and soul in eternal damnation (Matt 10:28; Luke 8:50).¹⁰¹ Horst Balz points out that Jesus continually stressed the relation between the fear of the Lord, on the one hand, and faith and obedience radiating from the lifestyle of believers, on the other.¹⁰²

According to John 14:1–11, Jesus presented his words and deeds as a challenge to his disciples: they should follow him in deference and glorify the Father. While the fear of the Lord determines the implicit tone and attitude to Jesus's words and deeds, this attitude is directed at glorifying the Father, and it is also complemented by the work of the Spirit in us.

(d) *The Holy Spirit*. For believers who have come to know the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit, the fear of the Lord loses the element of anxiety. It is worth noting that the early church, increasing in number, was characterized by fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). These believers no longer experienced the anxious fear of suffering (1 Pet 3:14; Rev 2:10) or of death (Heb 2:15); they were set free by Christ's death and knew that God was their Helper in all things (Rom 8:15, 28–30; Heb 13:6).¹⁰³

The Holy Spirit applies to believers' hearts the freedom that Christ achieved on their behalf, and so they serve and follow God, through words

⁹⁹ Cf. Günther Wanke, "φοβέω," *TDNT* 9:201–2 and *TDNTa* 1274.

¹⁰⁰ Douglas, *NBD*³ 365

¹⁰¹ Cf. W. Mundle, "Fear," *NIDNTT* 1:623.

¹⁰² Horst Balz, "φοβέω," *TDNT* 9:213 and *TDNTa* 1276.

¹⁰³ Cf. Balz, *TDNT* 9:214 and *TDNTa* 1276.

and deeds in their daily lives, which is manifested in the church as a whole.

(e) *Church*. Seen from the perspective of *missio Dei*, the fear of the Lord should typify the attitude of the church's words and deeds; it is part of the church's teaching of the Word as in Psalm 34:11, and it shapes a sensible and purpose-driven life (Prov 10:27; 14:26–27; 19:23; 22:4).¹⁰⁴ This shows that the fear of the Lord is integrated into the spiritual as well as the ordinary daily lives of believers. In this sense, the church functions as God's instrument that calls people to live in childlike fear of the Lord (2 Cor 5:11). First Peter 1:17–19 points out to church members that awe and reverence for God, which is expressed in holiness and prayers, are intertwined, because believers know that (cf. “knowing that” [*eidotes hoti*] in verse 19) the precious blood of Christ—the Lamb, spotless, without sin or blemish—redeems them.

Childlike fear of the Lord is also a comprehensive way to describe Christian spirituality. It grounds morality and integrity and integrates the faith, love, and deeds of the church. According to Acts 9:31 and 2 Corinthians 5:9–11, this has practical effects. Firstly, it encourages the emergence of a missionary vision in the church through which believers' numbers grow. Secondly, this attitude means rest and peace. The prospect that everyone will appear before the judgment seat of God was for the early church an incentive to such a mindset, and the fear of the Lord serves God's great purpose for his full counsel.¹⁰⁵

But fear of the Lord also brings joy and blessing. God wishes to restore honor and glory in a broken and corrupt world in order for believers to “taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!” (Ps 34:9–10 ESV). God gives eternal joy to all whom the Holy Spirit has brought to know God through Jesus Christ. In response, they obey God out of love and reverence with all their heart and through their hands and voices.

5. *Peace—shalom and eirēnē*

The final concept we will explore is peace, *shalom*. Academic publications on missional matters regularly debate the meaning of *shalom* and the consequences it holds for the scope, the nature, and purpose of mission. An example is the debate about the book by DeYoung and Gilbert regarding the true nature of the church's mission, the locus of social justice, peace, and the role the Great Commission.¹⁰⁶ They emphasize that the gospel is proclaimed to

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Balz, *TDNT* 9:216 and *TDNTa* 1276.

¹⁰⁵ Buys, “Strome van lewende water,” 11.

¹⁰⁶ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*

make disciples; thus, they regard social responsibility as being of secondary importance.¹⁰⁷ Stetzer, however, rightfully indicates that they constrict the focus of *missio Dei* by their view that practical justice for the poor and practical peace do not form part of the church's missional task.¹⁰⁸

The gospel testifies that God reveals himself as the God of peace. Christ himself embodies, brings, and makes peace (Eph 2:14–16); he calls upon his followers to be peacemakers (Matt 5:19), and as a result the church is commissioned to live in peace (Acts 9:31). The holistic dimensions of heart and hands and voices are integrated into the *missio Dei* perspective expressing God's nature, character, and activity, revealed in the ministry of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the ministry of peace seeks an integrated approach in the nature, character, and activity of the church in accordance with the *missio Dei*.

(a) *God*. With reference to our knowledge of God, we can note that Gideon calls the Lord *YHWH-Shalom*—"The Lord is Peace" (Judg 6:24 ESV). This identification is echoed several times in the New Testament (Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20). God in his nature, being, and character is the God of peace who brings peace.¹⁰⁹ The mutual relation of the Triune God is one of godly peace. "God makes peace in his high heaven," according to Job 25:2 (ESV). Paul writes, "the mind of the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom 8:6 ASV). Peace is God's gift to man (Num 6:26) and bestows wholeness, including welfare, health, favor, perfection, well-being, rest, and restoration to responsibility. Peace is grounded in God's revelation and deeds.¹¹⁰ Revelation, we recall, includes creation.

(b) *Creation*. Although the biblical account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 does not mention the term "peace," peace did exist. Timothy Keller argues that God created all things in a good, harmonious, mutually dependent, close relationship.¹¹¹ As thread is woven into a dress, harmonious relations are woven into a community. This interwovenness makes it clear that peace cannot only be limited to a spiritual condition between God and humans or among people.¹¹² Without righteousness there is no peace (Ps 72:3–7; 85:9–11; Isa 32:17). The meaning of peace in Scripture is holistic peace between all forms of existence.

¹⁰⁷ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 20, 62.

¹⁰⁸ Stetzer, "Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert: What Is the Mission of the Church?"

¹⁰⁹ Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick: Bridge-Logos, 1998).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 173.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

The heavenly fullness and richness was realized—with heart and hands and voices—in the creation before sin ended the perfect communion between God, humans, animals, and the rest of nature.¹¹³ Sin, as broken relations, is absence of peace in the whole of creation. Keller points out that, although *shalom* is translated by *peace*, the term has a much broader meaning.¹¹⁴ It describes full reconciliation and a state of full bloom in various dimensions—physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. All relations are perfect, good, and filled with joy where the peace of God reigns, and peace that is now being restored by the work of Christ.

(c) *Jesus Christ*. The protevangel in Genesis 3:15 promised that a Savior would make peace by destroying evil. Christ is offered as God’s merciful gift of peace so that humans may experience peace with God (Rom 5:1). Christ’s redemption reconciled creation with God by making the new covenant a reality. This salvation-historic event is summed up in the concept of peace.¹¹⁵ In John’s gospel, Jesus comforts and encourages his disciples by announcing that he will leave them heavenly peace (14:27; 16:32; 20:21), referring to Isaiah 60:17 (NIV): “I will make peace govern you. I will make godliness rule over you.” God speaks about the restoration and glory of his restored people in Zion, and to encourage his suffering people God promises that peace and justice will prevail instead of corrupt dictators.¹¹⁶ A central feature of the new community is described metaphorically by the word *shalom*. The connection of mental and physical reality is evident.

Peace is an act from God for sinful human beings redeemed through Christ (Rom 12:18). Bringing further clarity to our understanding, Foerster highlights three concepts of peace (*eirēnē*) in the New Testament, namely a sense of peace and tranquility; a state of reconciliation with God; and the redemption of the whole person in an eschatological sense, this latter one being foundational.¹¹⁷

We must be careful not to think of peace only in negative categories. Peace does not merely mean absence of disasters, war, and injustice.¹¹⁸ Peacemaking ushers in a time, place, and condition in which love, justice and political and moral uprightness thrive. When God’s peace rests upon his people, they enter the highest state of grace.¹¹⁹ God’s people will experience welfare,

¹¹³ Ibid., 173–75.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Phillipus J. Buys, *A Biblical Response to Poverty and Social Justice: A South African Post-Apartheid Reformed Perspective* (Unpublished, 2010), 7.

¹¹⁶ Carpenter and Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words*.

¹¹⁷ Foerster, “εἰρήνη,” *TDNT* 2:412–16 and *TDNTa* 209–10.

¹¹⁸ Carpenter and Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words*.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

prosperity, peace, security, and safety. For missional ministry from the *missio Dei* perspective, an integral understanding of peace is essential and opens multiple views, leading to a more holistic approach to mission.

(d) *The Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit integrates words and deeds in missional ministry and makes peace. The Holy Spirit is proclaimed as the God of peace (Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20), which becomes clear in the Spirit's actions. He gives obedience, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17); strengthens believers' hope, filling them with joy and peace (Rom 15:13; 8:6); and guides their daily behavior by the fruits of peace (Gal 5:22–25). The Spirit brings believers an experience and awareness of well-being, satisfaction and completeness, irrespective of their external circumstances.

The Holy Spirit also establishes peaceful mutual relations between people (Eph 4:3) as well as between people and God. The Spirit gives believers peace instead of fear (Rom 8:1–2, 11, 14–17), bringing peace of mind to those who have to endure difficult situations (Hag 2:5; John 16:5–21; 20:21–22). With reference to 1 Thessalonians 5:23–28, Knowles summarizes the Holy Spirit's integration of peace: "Peace is what happens when we align our hearts with heaven. Peace is a wholeness of body, mind, and spirit, so that we are at one with Christ in the will and purpose of God."¹²⁰

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, peace emerges in words as well as through deeds, in a ministry of peace by acts of mercy, thus contributing to the glory of God.

(e) *Church*. Lastly, from a *missio Dei* perspective, the church is bearer and worker of peace. The believer's task is to establish beacons and signs of the rich diversity of God's peace, the eternal peace of Zion (Isa 60:17). First Corinthians 3:9 depicts the church being where God cares through his servants, and where God himself bestows his blessings.¹²¹ God employs the missional ministry to proclaim his peace in the world by word and deeds. In the process, men are called to develop peace to its fullest in all contexts of life, be it economics, politics, health or nature, but the church never develops such things in isolation.

The church must constantly seek and pray for peace, and act as peacemaker. Several biblical passages confirm this commission (e.g., Eccl 17:1; Matt 5:9; Mark 9:51; Rom 12:18; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Tim 2:2), and the concept of peace is applied in practice in a variety of ways.¹²² Mutual peace is found in unity, unanimity, and harmony, and it impacts everything. In Psalm

¹²⁰ Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2001), 642–43.

¹²¹ F. W. Grosheide, *Korte verklaring der Heilige Schrift met nieuwe vertaling: Paulus' eerste brief aan de kerk te Korinthe opnieuw uit den grondtekst vertaald en verklaard* (Kampen: Kok, 1933), 42.

¹²² Cf. Buys, *A Biblical Response to Poverty and Social Justice*, 7.

85:11–12, David connects love, faith, peace, and justice—qualities that are actualized by words and deeds. In light of all that Scripture teaches, the anticipation of an eternal state of peace is an eschatological focus throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

God employs righteousness and justice to restore peace. Only righteousness can bring true peace.¹²³ The restoration of *shalom* means that believers combine their time, possessions, power, and resources as sacrifices offered to benefit the life and needs of others.¹²⁴ In line with this, Cornelius Plantinga’s summary of peace reveals its nature and effect: “In the Bible *shalom* means universal flourishing wholeness, delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder at its Creator and Savior, opens doors, and welcomes the creatures in whom He delights.”¹²⁵ The church is thus the bearer, instrument, and worker of the divine peace, and does this by integrating Word and deed in its ministry.

It is evident that peace begins with God—who he is and what he does. When God brings peace in and through Christ, he reconciles man by Word and deeds to himself, and restores the broken relation with humans. This is worked out in practice in terms of the various relationships in which believers are involved. The promise of eternal peace results in the church accepting the call to spread peace here and now, in the diverse relationships in which people find themselves. Through its proclamation, peace is an eschatological beacon and sign of the final coming of the kingdom. According to the *missio Dei* perspective, God shapes peace in the present as the foreshadowing of eternal peace; the church is Christ’s instrument in announcing it.

III. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, it is seen that these key biblical concepts integrate aspects of word and deed. Put differently, God intertwines the holistic dimensions of heart and hands and voices in his greater design for people, and for his glory. Our conceptual analysis shows how words and deeds are integrated in God’s self-revelation and calls for a holistic approach in which both aspects are inseparable in the proclamation of the gospel. From the perspective of *missio Dei*, the concepts discussed in this article provide a basis for a holistic understanding of word and deed, as inextricably linked. The key words analyzed

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁴ Keller, *Generous Justice*, 175.

¹²⁵ Cornelius Plantinga, *Not The Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 10.

are interwoven like the different threads of a spider's web. When one touches a single thread, the entire web moves. Likewise, all of the biblical concepts discussed above are implied when one of them is in question.