

You are the
Elect!

ASPECTS OF YOUR PARTICIPATION
IN THE BRIDE CITY

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YOU ARE THE ELECT!

Aspects of your participation in the bride city

National Youth Seminar – September 2022

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Contents

ARTICLE 1

Pastoral care at the tree of life Richie Kaa	3
Agape fellowship within the family	4
The word is polarising	5
The 'family-first' gospel	6
Identity verification in the family - shallow-born	7
Agape fellowship from house to house	9
Agape fellowship with the presbytery	11
Have fellowship with us	11

ARTICLE 2

A servant of myself Jonathan Thompson	15
Routine and culture	16
Discretion will guard you	17
Service in the home	18
Dealing with shame	19
Cultivating the culture of service	21

ARTICLE 3

Serving another by the grace of God Lachlan Perrin	23
Introduction	23
Christ offered Himself for us by grace	24
Entering the most holy place with clean hands	26
We are not of those who shrink back	27

ARTICLE 4

Participating in agape by grace Lachlan Perrin	29
Grace to participate in the four foundations of agape fellowship	29
The apostles' doctrine	30
The fellowship of offering	30
Prayer	31
The breaking of bread	33

ARTICLE 5

The four dimensions of the love of Christ Luke Pomery	35
The width and length	36
A person's 'natural name'	36
Under the sun	37
Madness and wickedness	38
The depths	38
The heights	39
The experience of Jonah	40
Conclusion	41

ARTICLE 6

Profiles of carnality Luke Pomery	43
Understanding your propensity	44
Seven pillars of wisdom	46
Seven profiles of carnality	47

ARTICLE 7

Understanding fallen desire and envy Tim Maurice	49
Love or envy	51
Satan inverts the accountability for suffering	52

ARTICLE 8

Delivered from being bewitched Tim Maurice	55
Walking wisely instead of foolishly	55

ARTICLE 9

The cost of first love Tim Maurice	59
Counting the cost	63
The cost to God	63

ARTICLE 10

Coming of age and the dignity of choice David Hall	65
The first family; Genesis 3-4	66
Coming of age	68
The dignity of choice	69

Article I

Pastoral care at the tree of life

Richie Kaa

- The aim of this article is to strengthen and support sons of God, particularly those who are journeying through the young adult season of life, to grow in their awareness, appreciation, and participation as citizens of the bride city.
- To do this, we will give attention to three discrete relational settings that are fundamental to the growth and development of every son of God.
- Importantly, we are exhorted to participate in *a worthy manner*, which describes those who are growing in their capacity to discern or to positively discriminate between the distinct elements of His body, including their own unique contribution. 1Co 11:29.
- This describes a maturing awareness and appreciation of the sanctification of each member of Christ's body, which has implications for the manner and the mode in which they relationally engage with one another, and for the changing nature of that engagement as they mature through each season of life.

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- Imagine the difficulties that a person might experience if they sought regular medical advice from their mechanic, and parenting input from their butcher. It's a silly and simple example, but it is important that we understand that the Lord takes great issue when His sons either lose touch with, or simply show no regard for, the sanctification of their brethren.
- Sanctification, in this sense, is the positive discrimination that allows us to appreciate each one as being distinct from another in their own sanctification. This is a necessary 'bottom line' reality for every son to know and grow in if they are to be effective, or fruitful, citizens in the bride city.
- The apostle Paul described the body as being a single unit composed of many parts. 1Co 12:12. Every member makes a distinct and valued contribution; and any confusion (lack of clarity), refusal (unwillingness to take their place) or reclusion (preferring solitude, avoiding people), does damage to the whole body.
- When a *mind is controlled by the other law*, it is self-centred. On the other hand, the fruit of a *healed, or renewed, mind* is the capacity and motivation to serve and to properly relate within the community of His body. In fact, the sanctified works of a person's name, in the context of a many-membered body, are always other-centred, and are given to them to minister by the proclamation of God's word. Those who lose sight of, and no longer value, the sanctification of their brethren, demonstrate their *disconnection from the headship of Christ*.
- It is important to remember that a lack of regard for the sanctification of any member dishonours the Father's naming, the Son's training, and the Spirit's sanctifying work. This, in turn, invites the judgement of God to come upon those who transgress. His judgement is then *chastening*, in the hope that they will turn and be trained toward their proper participation, so that they may not be condemned with the world. 1Co 11:31.

Agape fellowship within the family

- The first of these settings in which we must learn our proper participation is as *part of the family* in which we are nurtured as a son, and as a citizen of the bride city.

- In very simple terms, every covenant home will be established in the culture of agape fellowship, which honours the word of the Lord as their primary reference point for all priorities and activities concerning the program of their household.
- This confirms that the headship of Christ is established in the home, because husband and wife testify of their deliverance from the fallen dynamics in their marriage, and they confess, through word and deed, that they are both submitted to the order of headship. 1Co 11:3.
- This is practically expressed as they participate in their daily routine, where they meet at the tree of life in a conversation of daily prayer, in faith to receive the necessary provision of grace which is equipping them for their works of ministry – the raising of God-fearing children.
- This daily routine confirms that they are honouring and abiding in the word that the Lord is presently proclaiming through His presbytery, ensuring that His commands are upon their hearts. It is from this place that they will then teach His commands diligently to their children, speaking of them when they sit at home (for a meal), when they walk along the road (heading to and from school), when they are preparing to go to bed and when they are rising for a new day. Deu 6:7-8. This is how they nurture *the conversation and conduct of faith*.
- Practically, this resolves any obligation to a ‘blood is thicker than water’ gospel which presumes that the priorities of the family – where they are other than the present truth word – ‘trump’ those that the Lord defines through the word of His presbytery. Further, they do not presume that God would permit believing families to accommodate cultures and practices that are misaligned with the culture of godliness.

The word is polarising

- Jesus took great care to warn of the potential corruption and destruction within believing homes. He said, ‘Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to “set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law”; and “a man’s enemies *will be* those of his *own* household”.’ Mat 10:35-36.

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- Jesus, by His word, gives *every person* the opportunity to *choose!* There is no such thing as ‘family choice’; or that someone can choose on behalf of another. God gives to every person a choice, and He dignifies what they choose.
- This connects us with our recent emphasis on the polarising effect of the word. To ‘polarise’ means to ‘divide people into two completely *opposing* groups. And the word of the cross divides every person into one of two opposing groups. It is important that we do not hear that as being two different groups who espouse ‘differing opinions’. Polarising means to divide into *completely opposite groups*.
- Jesus gave us a clear statement on this point. He said, ‘Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death.’ Mat 10:21. At another time, He said, ‘From now on, five in one household will be divided (polarised), three against two and two against three.’ Luk 12:52.
- Jesus was clear and uncompromising concerning the outcome for a believing household if they depart from placing the priority of obedience to the Lord and to His body above all else. He said, ‘He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.’ Jesus was addressing children, including adult children, regarding remaining loyal to their parents, over and above their obedience to Christ. He continued, ‘And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.’ In this scenario, Jesus was speaking to parents who remain obligated to, and even supportive of, their children, including adult children, even after the children have chosen other than that which the Father had chosen for them. Mat 10:34-38.

The ‘family-first’ gospel

- Those who are *not* joined in one Spirit with the Lord and His people will typically find another ‘food’ source, and another way to verify their identity and the covering that they have chosen for themselves; evidence that they are no longer eating from the tree of life, each day, in fellowship with Yahweh.
- When a family is not submitted to the headship of Christ but, rather, prefers to source their own food and to define their own agenda, they will reveal a will and priority other than the Father’s will for them. They may achieve many noble and noteworthy things but, unless they

return to the obedience that comes from faith, and do the will of the Father, Jesus will say, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness.' Mat 7:23.

- The approach to life that places the agenda of the family before that of the Father's will and imposes an obligation upon its members to remain loyal to the family and its priorities, is an alternative, or false, gospel. In fact, it is 'a fortress', to which the messengers of Christ have no access and where the pastoral initiative of Christ is absent.
- Those who are born of God have *no obligation* to serve the agenda of their natural family when their natural family members refuse friendship with Christ by refusing the yoke of His discipleship.
- Jesus Himself was required to address 'the family-first' issue among His own natural family. 'Then His mother and brothers came to Him and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You." But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it".' Luk 8:19-21.
- By implication, Jesus was saying that his natural family was not yet obedient to the word of God, believing that their family connection trumped any discipleship obligation. Accordingly, Jesus' response conveyed to the crowd that His only obligation was to those who heard the word of God and were obedient to it.
- This remains a significant matter among us in the church. Until the issue of family obligation is resolved, and every family is reordered according to what God has chosen for each member, there is no way that a family can be joined in *true friendship*. Friendship among a family can only be established when each one has first resolved their friendship with Christ, where His friends are those who do as He commands.
- Until the idol of family obligation is removed from our hearts, we will continue to be compromised in our affections, hesitating between His table and the familiar table of demons.

Identity verification in the family - shallow-born

- A further complication to the family-first gospel is when children are born and reared for the verification of their parents' identity.

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These children are abused, because their identity is reduced to a pre-defined label (typically by the father), as part of their projection.

- Such children commonly face developmental crises in their later years, as they confuse over-regulation in their younger years with rejection. This is typically accompanied by regular punishment in an effort to craft the desired reputation of the parent.
- Children who are raised in such homes carry a perpetual sense of guilt, believing that they have failed their parents. Consequently, the children withdraw and become an enmeshed subculture, typically engaging their mother, who then leans on the strongest male member among her children, seeking acceptance, protection, and identity verification.
- This is the making of a family fortress, which every member is compelled to join and to remain loyal to at all costs. However, when this subculture fails, the reaction is acute and severe. Failure is defined when a member of the cohort breaks free and receives faith to stand in their own sonship, putting off the labels, expectations and obligations.
- The point is that every person must know their own name and must receive faith for their own sonship. Therefore, those who reject the supposed safety of the fortress, and refuse to remain loyal to the dysfunctional family dynamics – and, instead, receive faith to walk in their name and grace – become the enemy of their siblings, who begin to gnash their teeth at them for refusing to live by their unspoken expectations.
- Amazingly, those who are freed from this dynamic are viewed as being traitors because they did not remain loyal in upholding the family-first approach to the gospel.
- As we adjust our heart to receive this understanding, it will free every member of a nuclear family to the reality that they must personally meet and know the Lord, receive His faith for their own sonship, and find their own name.
- When this is *not understood*, the family will presume and expect that their definition and works are the product of family dialogue and are not the outcome of body-centric fellowship under the headship of Christ. Anything less than this is the complete corruption of a presbytery within the lampstand administration.

- Such families then become antagonistic toward those whom they view as being their betrayers because they did not uphold the unspoken obligation to the family-first gospel.
- Such families will typically manifest self-depreciation, and even suicidal tendencies, as a result of psychological pain, believing that someone must 'pay' for their pain. This follows the belief that the most senior or able member among the sibling cohort should be looking after them. As such, they become 'blood-guilty', and carry within themselves a murderous spirit and a relational mode that has little awareness of their impact on others, because they are never accountable. This is a very stark demonstration of the polarising effect of the word.

Agape fellowship from house to house

- The second of these settings in which we must learn our proper participation is as part of *a network of believing households* which the New Testament authors simply referred to as 'house to house'. This describes the network of households who are joined to the fatherhood of presbytery in any given location.
- Every household that is joined to this network has entered by 'the door of the sheepfold'. They are joined in right relationship with the doorkeepers who are set apart to oversee Christ's sheep. How does this happen?
- On the Day of Pentecost, when the house to house network of the bride city was first established, many among the gathered crowd were cut to the heart by the proclamation of Christ's word. This compelled them to lift their voices for understanding, asking aloud, 'Men and brethren what must we do?' Act 2:37.
- This response to the word will be familiar to many, as it describes the proper response when a son of God is illuminated by the word of Christ's messengers. Their intent is to lift their voice for understanding in order that they might apprehend a pathway forward.
- Peter's response to their cry was to call them to *repent and be baptised, and to receive the Holy Spirit*. This he spoke to the whole crowd at one time, which released a wave of sound (of the 'many waters' variety), as worthy brethren came alongside those who

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

responded, and sought to walk in obedience to the word of Christ that Peter had expressed.

- The proclamation of the word defined the ground of fellowship, compelling them to 'sell all' in order that they might 'buy'. And it was here that each seeker was met by a worthy household who invited them to 'speak back' the word of faith that they had heard, as well as its personal challenge to them.
- This would have included both the encouragement from the word, as well as the changes in their life that the word was calling for. It would have also included the request for prayer concerning any need for healing that illumination stirred within them. It is also likely that those who responded to the word would have entreated their newfound brethren to help them to understand what further they needed to do in order to remain joined to this fellowship, to see made complete the work that God had begun.
- Key to their response would have been a prayer of thanksgiving for the effective work of the water of the word. But water was not enough; they needed to instruct the new converts to *believe* for their full and proper *participation*. This was to believe for Christ's blood to flow, cleansing them of their sin and uncleanness while, at the same time, giving to them the capacity of resurrection life. By this means, they were given capacity to be obedient, with the obedience of Christ, to the doctrine of baptism to which they had been delivered.
- When a believer speaks at the agape meal, they do not bring a 'commentary' on what they have heard. Rather, they confess the faith that they have received, and the illumination concerning how His blood is now flowing for them.
- Were it not for the messenger word, each worthy home would remain ready, but quiet. However, when His word sounds forth, each son first asks, in simple humility, 'What must I do?' This invitation activates their brethren to minister, and they speak the truth in agape fellowship. And those who receive, rejoice as they believe that they are eating of the fruit at the tree of life.
- Fellowship is, then, hearing and receiving the instruction of Christ as it is spoken and multiplied through those brethren whom the Lord ordained to be seated together. So, enjoying morning tea, they are bringing to remembrance the word of Christ that is clear for each one,

in the same way as when Peter looked and saw Christ's eyes burning as a flame of fire.

Agape fellowship with the presbytery

- The final of these settings in which we must learn our proper participation is *with the doorkeepers of Christ's sheepfold*.
- It is very unlikely that a person can sit in a church congregation and receive any substantial or ongoing transaction of God's life while they remain disconnected from those who are set apart to oversee and shepherd a given church community. Therefore, an important aspect of being joined in one Spirit with the Lord and His people is that of being known 'at the gates' among the elders.
- The apostle Peter wrote to those whom Christ had appointed as under-shepherds, who were overseers of the lampstand churches, saying, 'Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.' 1Pe 5:2.
- This provides us with an important qualification for being part of His flock. Peter explained that the flock of God are among those who are elders and under-shepherds who serve under Christ, the Chief Shepherd, as overseers.
- Accordingly, the flock of God demonstrate that they are the sheep of the Lord by accepting the feeding and tending care that is extended to them by Christ's under-shepherds.
- This means that *connection* to Christ's shepherding initiative is firstly found through fellowship with the under-shepherds who are proclaiming the word of present truth.

Have fellowship with us

- This connects us to the key statement of the apostle John in his first epistle, 'Have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son'. 1Jn 1:3. John was writing as part of a presbytery, inviting the church to have fellowship with them.
- He went on to say that if they would walk in the light of illumination that comes by His word, they would be joined to the fellowship of the Father and the Son; and it is in this fellowship that the blood of Christ

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

is effective to cleanse them of all sin. 1Jn 1:7. This means that when we are joined to the fellowship of illumination by receiving the word, we receive faith that joins us to His (suffering) blood which is able to cleanse us of sin.

- Importantly, John was not directing the church to insist on direct and exclusive contact with ascension graced brethren like himself. That was already the case and continued while ever they remained current in the word that the presbytery were proclaiming. Rather, he was conveying the importance of *fellowship*, and the order by which God's grace flows to every member of His body.
- In this respect, fellowship is only effective as we *honour the order of headship*. And the first thing that must happen as we set our houses in order is that Christ is set as Head of His church, which establishes the headship of each home. This means that we will be growing in the knowledge of our own name and the name of our brethren, because we are joined in fellowship with Christ and His shepherding care *only* as we recognise the authority of the name that belongs to each servant in the Lord's house. Mar 13:34. Heb 13:7,17.
- This means that we offer our obedience to those who rule over us, and we are submissive, knowing that they watch out for our souls as those who must give account. Heb 13:17. In the same way, Peter encouraged those who are younger to submit themselves to their elders. 1Pe 5:5.
- This begins at the earliest age, when godly parents place their child into the hands of the elders – the shepherds, or watchmen – before the congregation, when they testify and dedicate their child to the Lord.
- It continues when the child engages the elders, in fellowship with their parents, when they step forward to be baptised. Here, they are taken in hand by the shepherding brethren and are baptised in the name of Christ and into His body.
- In their primary and early teenage years, the child will be trained as they join the offering priorities of their parents, working alongside them at the church working bee and enjoying regular fellowship with a variety of homes.
- By their late teenage years, they are ready to present themselves individually to the elders at the gates with their confession of faith,

and the motivation to make offering. This is where every son will prove the will of God concerning their sanctification and is where they will learn to serve in the administration of the church, under the care of various deaconing brethren.

- It is also where they will offer themselves to honour the headship of Christ, conveyed to them by the word of presbytery, granting them faith for their daily participation in the offering of Christ, where they will receive resurrection life.

Article 2

A servant of myself

Jonathan Thompson

Love is expressed through service. The way in which we show love varies, depending on its motivation. A mother who loves her child will care for and nourish that child. She will serve the child out of the necessity for their survival. This may not necessarily be God's love, but it would be true to say that it is, in fact, a natural, and even profound, love. We can also love evil more than that which is good, being motivated by our own darkened perspectives. Psa 52:3. If we love what is evil, that is what we will serve. The love of God, however, is expressed through our participation in the offering of Christ. That is, we agape-love Yahweh and one another through the culture of offering, which we learn from Christ in our unique participation in His offering and suffering. Heb 5:8. Love is expressed through serving, as we lay down our life for others. Joh 15:13.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul explained that God's Law is fulfilled through the one commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Rom 13:9. Being able to love our neighbour as ourself means that we prioritise choosing the sanctification of our own name.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

'The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. I will bless the Lord who has counselled me.' Psa 16:5-7.

We cannot love another unless we are first finding joy in where the Lord is drawing the lines of sanctification for us. We express this joy by choosing, each day, to receive the mercy of the Lord, and to give attention to our routine and culture. We make His culture ours by giving attention to our own name and, in so doing, are then able to bless others by offering as an authentic son. Authenticity in who we are is shown in how we behave in secret. If we do not 'serve ourself', as part of our culture, the foundation all other service will be fraudulent.

This does not mean that we take a time out for ourselves and become lazy. Or that we search for our 'name' as though we can build a bridge between where the Lord is calling us and the desires (or emotions) of our own heart.

Routine and culture

Giving attention to our name requires us to examine our routines which, in the end, make up our culture. Those who are laying hold of their name start each day by inclining their ear to what the Spirit is saying. 'Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.'

Rom 13:11. Right from the start of the day, a son of God begins to order their steps by arising at an appropriate time to devotionally present themselves for fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. They are oriented to the works that belong to their sonship.

In order to begin the day with the Lord in such a way, much preparation is required. It works back from at least the night before, where there has been preparation toward getting out of bed, and having what is needed to start the day without confusion or distraction. Not having a mobile or smart device as the first point of stimulation when waking up is a wise decision. Staying up late distracted exacts the same level of distraction also. 'The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore, let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.' Rom 13:12. A certain vulnerability comes with not being deliberate with the allotted timeframes for each day. Such carelessness in staying awake late into the night will overrun us with the works of darkness, especially as fatigue sets in. Our fatigue will undermine our capacity to fulfil God's will for our

life as a son of light. 1Th 5:4-8. 'Playing catch up' is never the Lord's answer to our busy life.

The solution to putting off such habits resides in putting off laziness and in choosing, instead, to nurture and care for the precious name that the Lord has bestowed upon each of us. We are called as *sons of light*, and that is where our fellowship and deeds are accomplished.

Discretion will guard you

'Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.' Rom 13:13-14. As we 'put on' the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no room for obligation toward the flesh. Instead, we put on the armour of the Lord, which sheds light on every unclean thing. We are finding an understanding of our own person, as well as regarding our impact on others.

This will include the very basic fundamentals of how we live, such as: schedule, hygiene, stewarding of quarters (bedroom etc) and other areas we are accountable for in the home, prayer and devotions, punctuality, conversation, being friendly, listening, hospitality, discipleship, tithes and offering, and many more.

An example that would be helpful to consider, could be in hosting a couple of young adults during regional youth seminar. It could be that the house has a frantic week of playing catch up with all the housework, so that it can be brought up to a presentable standard which we would like others to believe is how we always live. In the chaos, a couple of areas of care may become overlooked. The bathroom doesn't get the keen eye it deserves, or the bedrooms cupboards hide a build-up of mess that has been long since neglected. Perhaps the frustrations that have boiled over through the stress of getting everything ready has created an air of tension between the family household that puts a strain in conversation around the word. We could develop this scenario in many ways. Either way, as the house seeks to project based on what it believes it should be presenting, hypocrisy can easily discredit any response that tries to continue the charade. This house could still of course, put off the desire to present well and instead come poor in spirit, receive the faith of the word and choose to not cover its shame, but walk in the light. This would be a tremendous opportunity to be delivered from a culturally deficient way of living.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

It could also be that the entire week leading up simply consisted of maintaining the culture of how the house always lives but with a few extra focuses that would be involved in hosting a couple of other young adult friends. There may have been some day to day 'mess' as a result of a house that functions with members ranging from teens at school, a couple of young adults and the parents. They will still of course consider whom they are hosting and how best to nurture the ground for fellowship after each of the meetings. The priority is the fellowship of word of God being ministered. There will be care to consider where their guests will stay, what they can eat, amenities available for hygiene, if they have everything they will need to get to the meetings on time, and can return to a house ready to receive further fellowship. This house demonstrates how they live each day by engaging with each other and their guests in a fellowship of the word that has proceeded from the seminar, giving room for every person to participate. This is a house that is displaying the virtues and excellencies of Christ as they have chosen Him and His culture to be established as their own.

As we walk in obedience to how the Spirit is leading us in these areas of our life, we are guarding our heart, and are counting the cost of discipleship. It is worth highlighting that seeking to control our life through self-improvement and anxiety does not guard our heart but, rather, exposes it to all manner of uncleanness, which is accompanied by demonic oppression. Obedience to what the Spirit is saying for the day enables a son of God to grow and mature in each season, which, in turn, increases their capacity to bear the load that is commensurate with their name. This also multiplies their capacity to meet at the agape feast with friends who are also obeying the commands of Christ. 'Greater love has no-one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.' Joh 15:13-14. This is how we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ - by obeying His commands.

Service in the home

We each need to find fellowship with messengers and the shepherding administration, that is separate from our families. We choose what the Lord has chosen for us by practising in our houses what is ministered to us from the Lord's table. We are giving attention to make sure we know how to conduct ourselves in the house in which we live. It is here that the routine of a son of God is established and proven day by day. As we receive the ministry of the Father to us in His house, we are then able to

have our minds transformed and renewed, proving His will as acceptable sons. Rom 12:2.

As each member of a firstfruits house accountably presents themselves in the body of Christ, there is a multiplication of His testimony, which is able to flourish in the fellowship of the home. We honour the members of the house in which we live, by giving all diligence to accountably establish the culture of offering in the way in which we live.

There cannot be any disconnection between the serving of ourself, and our participation in the home. A son of God who is serving himself will also be serving others. This will start in the house in which they live, though this culture will not originate from there. Unless we can be diligent in the fellowship of the house, we are only fooling ourselves if we think we can do this in any other context.

Also addressing the nature of our conduct as Christians, the apostle Peter wrote, 'But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.' 2Pe 1:5-7.

Diligence is essential to our establishing and maintaining a solid routine. There is a time to complete every task for the day, and there is grace only to complete what each person has been sanctified to complete. Therefore, it is with all diligence that we add virtue to our faith. This is the virtue of someone who demonstrates excellence. The contrast would be a wicked and lazy servant whose attention and focus is not toward the foundations of their sonship but, instead, is to their religious projections.

Dealing with shame

Religious projections occur when a person is overcome with shame and condemnation. Instead of sowing towards the establishment and foundation of their culture, such a one will be devoted to 'wicked schemes'. Psa 37:7. As the Holy Spirit exposes these coverings of shame, He is exposing the craftiness of such projections, calling such a one to repentance, and to recovery from dead works.

Another mechanism of shame is when one leans on their own understanding and expectations of where they think they, or everyone else, 'should be at'. This complexity leads to 'mind chatter' that resists

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

fellowship at the tree of life, out of a fear of death, and tries to outmanoeuvre the eyes of the Lord from such exposure.

'Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Heb 12:1-2.

Our security is in abiding in the fiery gaze of Christ. This is the way of the wise, who hold the fear of God before their face and refuse to look into the emotional delusions of the flesh. Being secured in the fear of the Lord disempowers shame and condemnation. This is because Christ has joined us to Him as the One who overcame as the Son of man. In this way He has suffered with us! He has shared in all of our sufferings and is the God of all comfort. 2Co 1:4.

A life lead by projection is difficult, strenuous and hazardous to say the least. In contrast, the yoke of Christ is easy and His burden is light. As we join the 'labour' of Christ in the sanctification of our name, we find rest. Matt 11:28-30. The joining of Christ's reproaches is not difficult. *'For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you'*. 2Co 4:12. We find difficulty as we try and bridge the gap between our own desires and the 'labour' [sanctification] set before us by the Lord. We cannot serve two masters and so we cannot find rest for our souls unless we are fully joined to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ each day. Living as a son of God is simple, uncomplicated, joyful and peaceful. Living in simplicity means our yes is our yes and our no is our no. We are faithful in our sonship and are of those who do not draw back, and so are being completely delivered from our complexities, insecurities and of course our projections.

We do not become offended at the simplicity of how the word is needing to come to us in these matters. Especially where there may be high levels of competence in how we steward our time and house. The Lord is meeting us in the culture of offering, which is in our conversation and conduct each day. Our competence and efficiency are not what confirms the culture of a son of God, though each son will have grace to be obedient, and competent, in how they live.

Cultivating the culture of service

As we apply 'all diligence' to grow and cultivate the culture of serving ourselves, we begin to exhibit a tidy and efficient life. We are without complexity or craftiness. Our 'Yes' is 'Yes', and our 'No' is 'No', revealing our faithfulness. They can just be themselves. The proving of this is an opportunity that is granted to each son, as we read, '*Everyone* will be salted with fire'. Mar 9:49. The Lord does come to test by fire and to see what remains. This is not strange to those who are preserving the Lord's statutes by having 'salt within themselves'. This is part of the diligence of a son of God who is giving attention to their responses to the word so that what remains is not lame, and is able to stand the testing of fire. They are confident in the name which the Lord has called them by, because they continue to present themselves in the offering of Christ.

The testimony for every son of God is that their offering is authentic and sanctified, being commensurate with how they live from day by day. This is how we regard and know one another, as well. We can testify of one another by our conduct and by our conversation of the life of God that is present in their members.

'For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.' Luk 6:44-45.

Article 3

Serving another by the grace of God

Lachlan Perrin

Introduction

In our previous article, we considered how every son of God is to serve themselves with all diligence. Every son of God is personally responsible for establishing a daily routine that supports the fulfilment of their sonship. We also highlighted the apostle Paul's explanation of how the *whole* Law of God is fulfilled. Namely, that every commandment is summed up in the one commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Rom 13:9. Gal 5:13. Love is expressed through *servicing*. So, in order to love another, we must first learn to serve, or to love, ourself. Importantly, if our service of others is not an authentic expression, or extension, of how we serve ourself, then our initiatives of care toward one another, together with our participation in service teams at church, will be a projection.

In this article, we are building on the lessons taught in 'Servant of myself' and are moving forward to consider our mindset and culture when we

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

come to serve others. Paul taught that the key to having a caring, warm and fellowshiping community of close friends is to have the same mind of Christ. Php 2:1-8. Jesus revealed His mindset when He said, 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' Mat 20:28. The apostle Paul understood this mindset, and was quite deliberate to quote the words of Jesus when he testified to the Ephesian elders, saying, 'In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*".' Act 20:35.

Christ's offering for us was an exercise of *obedience* which was *motivated by love*, and *enabled by grace*. Luk 22:42. Eph 5:2. Heb 2:9. Similarly, if our care for another is not an exercise of obedience, in the love of God and by grace, then, despite appearing to serve others, we will actually be expressing self-centredness! This will always be the case when the parameters and limits of being a servant of others are sourced from within ourselves. Our flesh will always err toward selfish, self-preservation. In other words, serving according to the 'good' ideas of our flesh will only ever be an expression of self-righteousness.

Thankfully, when the pathway on which we walk and the serving we do are enabled by the grace of God, we learn to trust beyond the limits that we perceive in our flesh! This is what it means to walk, live and serve by the Spirit. Gal 5:16. As we will see, whether we are a servant to ourselves or a servant to others, to serve in the same manner as Jesus requires us to serve by the grace of God.

Christ offered Himself for us by grace

The apostle Paul taught that it was the *grace of God* that enabled Christ to serve and to offer His life as a ransom for many. We read in the book of Hebrews, 'But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, so that *by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone*'. Heb 2:9. Serving one another by the grace of God is the primary focus of this meditation. We will take a moment to revisit our understanding of 'the grace of God'.

It will be helpful, first, to state what grace *is not*. Grace is not a mysterious 'additive' given to Christians when they experience distress or difficult circumstances in life. Viewing grace in this way may cause a person to believe that grace is a supplement that strengthens the flesh.

But grace does not assist a person to try harder in their flesh. Nor is grace God's willingness to forgive and receive a person who feels badly about their sin and the way in which they live their life, but who lacks any real commitment to participate in a process that would change their spiritual condition.

Instead, we can understand grace to be the very nature of God's life; a continual fellowship of offering. A person who is 'receiving grace' is finding access to and abiding in the fellowship of God's life. They have received this access by obeying the word of faith, which invites them to take up their place of participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Another helpful way to say this is that our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings is the *context* where grace is ministered to us.

The apostle Paul summarised this definition of grace when he wrote, 'We have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ* [i.e. He has established a fellowship in God's life and holiness, by His offering], through who also we have obtained our introduction *by faith* [i.e. by obedience to the word of our sonship, proclaimed from the cross] into this *grace in which we stand* [i.e. grace is a context in which we abide as spiritual sons of God]; and we exult in hope of the glory of God'. Rom 5:1-2.

By grace, Christ has gathered up, into His offering and death, the sufferings that we experience during the time of our mortal life. He has also gathered up the frustrations that we experience because the limitations of our flesh render us unable to fulfil the will of God. Wonderfully, God has established a *throne of grace*, which we can approach in order to obtain the *very* same grace that Jesus received to endure our sufferings and to fulfil our righteousness. We read in the book of Hebrews, 'Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need'. Heb 4:16.

The foremost reason why we need grace to help in our time of need (which is our entire mortal life!) is so that, when faced with adversity, we remain joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. We are strengthened during these sufferings so that we *continue* to journey on the pathway of salvation that Jesus has pioneered for us, rather than drawing back in doubt or unbelief.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

As we remain joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering, He is sprinkling our heart with His own blood, and is making the grace and peace of God available to us in fullest measure. 1Pe 1:1-2. We are progressively strengthened by the Lord to do the works that belong to our sonship. 1Pe 5:10. Grace fills the gap in our limitations – both perceived in our flesh; and real in our mortality – so that we possess the capacity to do the works of sonship that the Father has predestined for us.

As we have already noted, the righteous works of our sonship can be summarised by Christ's example: *to serve others*. Serving others should be the overflow of Christ's virtues and the life of God that we receive in the fellowship of Christ's offering. This is how we serve another by the grace of God.

Entering the most holy place with clean hands

King David wrote prophetically about accessing the same throne of grace that we read about in the book of Hebrews. David asked, 'Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?' Psa 24:3. As we have already noted, responding with faith obedience to the word of the cross grants us access to the grace of God in which we stand. Rom 5:2. Rom 1:5. David proceeded to tell us who may stand in His holy place, writing, 'He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.' Psa 24:4-5. The phrase 'clean hands' comes from a Hebrew word that means 'free from', 'innocent' and 'blameless'.

We recall that, in the days of the tabernacle of Moses, Aaron and his sons were required to wash their hands and feet at the bronze laver when they entered the tent of meeting and when they approached the altar to minister. Exo 30:17-21. Washing their hands was a life and death matter! Similarly, Jesus proclaimed to Peter at the last supper, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.' Joh 13:8. To 'have no part with Christ' means that we have no place of participation on the pathway of salvation that He has pioneered for us. Christ is currently seated on the throne of grace in the most holy place of the true temple in the heavenly Jerusalem. Unless we are walking blamelessly before God, joined to Christ's offering for us, we cannot journey with Him to the throne of grace. Psa 26:6.

Throughout the lampstand church age, sons of God are washed by the water of the word of present truth as they *respond to and find fellowship*

with Christ's messenger administration. Eph 5:26. Mat 24:45. It is important to realise that *the washing of the water of the word describes a relational process*. When the word is proclaimed, it is accompanied by a spirit of grace and supplication. This enables a hearer to receive illumination concerning Christ's eyes upon them. His word is confronting, revealing our failures, our familiars, our uncleanness, our other law and our sin. But the very same anointing of the spirit of grace and supplication ministers hope, causing us to believe for our recovery to the heights of our sonship.

The key point to note is that the washing of the water of the word requires a dialogue in order to effect this process of recovery. This washing occurs in the conversation of faith when we testify about our repentance. For this reason, those who hear the word but choose to remain distant from the fellowship of the messenger, are not being washed. When we *are* properly joined to the fellowship of the word, we will, despite any sufferings that we are experiencing, possess a testimony of grace and peace being our portion in full measure. Alternatively, a person who is not actively participating in the washing of the water of the word will find themselves bereft of the grace of God. Without the assurance of God's mercy and the strengthening of grace, they are at risk of stumbling backwards in their faith, being broken, snared and taken captive by Satan. Isa 28:12-13.

We are not of those who shrink back

As we conclude this article, a practical encouragement concerning the grace of God may be helpful. The grace of God abounds toward us while we continue to choose to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this way, grace is quite observable! It *does* miraculously bridge the limitations of our flesh.

In the book of Acts, we read about Barnabas being sent to Antioch when news of the first believers in that region reached Jerusalem. 'Then when he arrived and *witnessed the grace of God*, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.' Act 11:23. How did Barnabas *witness the grace of God*? He witnessed the large number of believers who had turned to the Lord, and who had begun to give according to their ability, and *beyond their ability*, for the sake of fulfilling the works of God.

In contrast, we read in Hebrews about those who turn away from the Lord and draw back from the fellowship of offering that is available in the

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

body of Christ. 'But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.' Heb 10:38-39. Those who 'shrink back to destruction' cease from fellowshiping in Christ's offering. And they cease receiving grace! In the stretching times when we think, 'I can't continue to serve' or 'I just need some time to myself', we are on the cusp of withdrawing from the context of God's grace.

There is no grace for us to be self-seeking or selfish. Busy seasons are the times when we must choose to continue pouring ourselves out for the sake of revealing another. We must choose to continue serving, otherwise we will find ourselves bereft of grace. The Lord is not with us when we prioritise ourselves! These busy times are when we accept that 'all things [whether joyous or trying] are for our sakes, so that the *grace which is spreading* to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God'. 2Co 4:15.

Article 4

Participating in agape by grace

Lachlan Perrin

Grace to participate in the four foundations of agape fellowship

Over the past two and a half years, the Lord has been restoring our understanding of *fellowship to the culture of His table*. We have come to appreciate four foundations of agape fellowship – the apostles’ doctrine, the fellowship of offering, the breaking of bread, and prayer. This culture of agape, with its four dimensions, is the practical expression of our pilgrimage in the community of Christ’s body. We are to approach all four aspects with the mindset of *a servant who participates by grace*. This was the focus of our last article. Christ demonstrated this culture among His disciples when, at the last supper agape meal, He dressed as a servant, took a towel and washed His disciples’ feet. Joh 13:1-17.

After girding Himself with a towel, pouring water into a basin, and washing and drying the disciples’ feet with the towel with which He was girded, Jesus said, ‘I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.’ Joh 13:15. Jesus was identifying Himself as a servant by using the towel that He clothed Himself with, as an instrument with

which He washed and dried the disciples' feet. In that sense, His serving the disciples was always connected to Him, personally.

Through this action, we observe the diligent detail that Christ went to as a servant. Christ fully gave Himself to this servant task and completed the work of hygiene properly. His example and instruction concerning the serving of others and, indeed, personal hygiene, was for the purpose of establishing His disciples in the culture of agape. The Scriptures teach us that our participation as servants, in all four dimensions of agape fellowship, is enabled by grace.

The apostles' doctrine

For an agape meal, whether public or from house to house, to be an expression of Yahweh's own table, it must be ordered by the word of God that is ministered from the presbytery. This word - *the apostles' doctrine* - establishes the ground, or context, of fellowship. We can appreciate, then, that grace is firstly ministered from the throne of grace whenever the word is proclaimed. This is a prevenient anointing of the spirit of grace and supplication which grants a hearer the capacity to receive the word as spirit and life. Zec 12:10. Joh 6:63. Prevenient grace enables a hearer to fix their eyes upon Jesus. They are enabled to turn from their self-righteousness and to receive the word of faith that is bringing illumination to them.

Those who hear and receive the ministry of the apostles' doctrine obtain faith to 'speak', or participate, in the fellowship of the presbytery, which is with the Father and the Son, by the Holy Spirit. Rom 10:17. 1Jn 1:3. 2Co 4:13. This is what it means to 'receive an introduction by faith into the grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of obtaining our sonship'. Rom 5:2. When our conversation is a testimony of the faith that we have received in the apostles' doctrine, *our speech can serve another*. Pro 22:11. We are serving another because, by grace, the words that we speak are working with the impress of the Holy Spirit concerning the life and circumstances of those with whom we are sharing. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, 'Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to [i.e. serve] each person'. Col 4:6.

The fellowship of offering

The next foundation of agape culture is *the fellowship of offering*. This describes both our conversation, as discussed in the previous section,

along with the practical initiatives that we take to serve the Lord and our brethren. When the apostle Paul testified to the Corinthians concerning his ministry toward them, he said, 'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but *I laboured even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.*' 1Co 15:10. Paul was testifying that the grace of God enabled his service of ministry among the Corinthian believers. The expression of his sonship, name and works was a demonstration of the grace of God working within him.

God has predestined a unique point of offering and service within the fellowship of the church for every son of God. The apostle Peter taught that every member of Christ's body has received a unique 'package' of abilities and grace, according to their name and identity. He also instructed us to use these gifts for the purpose of serving others. He wrote, 'As each one has received a special gift, *employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*' 1Pe 4:10.

We do have to *choose* to serve - to serve ourselves and to serve others. There will always be pressures and excuses that could cause us to prioritise other activities above our service in the fellowship of Christ's offering. It is helpful to remember, however, that the fellowship of Christ's offering is also the fellowship of His sufferings! The truth is, maintaining the various commitments that we have made to offer in service teams at church, and maintaining a culture of serving others, will not always be convenient! If, however, we only ever offer and serve others when it 'works for us', then what need do we have for the grace of God?

Paul summarised this point when he wrote to the Corinthians, 'And working together with Him, *we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain ... giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses.*' 2Co 6:1-4. In the midst of our sufferings - when our flesh is screaming 'no more' or 'I cannot' - the grace of God bridges us from the weakness of our flesh, to the enabling that we require to fulfil the works of our sonship. Truly, the grace of God is sufficient for us! 2Co 12:9.

Prayer

Prayer is the third dimension of agape fellowship. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, 'Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is *received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*' 1Ti 4:4-5. When we gather for agape

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

fellowship, whether publicly or from house to house, we give thanks, in prayer, for the opportunity to meet with the Lord and with our brethren, *in one Spirit*. Through prayer, we are acknowledging that our meeting point is, indeed, the table of the Lord. And we are praying that, by grace, our conversation will *remain* a one-Spirit expression of the fellowship of Yahweh.

To understand how grace enables our prayer at the agape meal, it is helpful to revisit the subject of 'incense' in the days of the tabernacle of Moses. Every morning and evening, the high priest would burn incense on the golden altar. Exo 30:7-8. Then, on the Day of Atonement, incense from the golden altar was taken into the most holy place. A cloud of incense would cover the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant, and the high priest would meet with Yahweh in this cloud. Lev 16:12-13. Exo 30:36.

In recent times, we have come to understand that Christ's offering fulfilled the Day of Atonement. In the garden of Gethsemane, He was set forth as the mercy seat for our atonement. This means that, as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary, the picture of the cloud of incense covering the mercy seat was being fulfilled. As we have already considered, Christ gathered the living and dying of every person into His offering, by the grace of God. Heb 2:9. The key implication for us is that grace *is the incense* that established the fellowship of offering in Gethsemane.

At the same time, the book of Revelation teaches us that incense also symbolises the prayers of the saints! Rev 5:8. Joining these thoughts together, when our prayer at the agape meal is enabled by grace, the whole 'journey' of our conversation can remain connected to the fellowship of Christ's offering.

When we share with one another in one Spirit - meeting 'in the cloud of incense' - the Son is searching our hearts and making intercession for us according to the will of God. Rom 8:26-27. As the Holy Spirit prompts and sanctifies our sharing, our speech and prayer articulate the Son's intercessory prayer. This is an amazing point. Grace joins our conversation and prayer to the fellowship of Christ's own prayer to the Father. This is how our prayer at agape meals can serve another. We are praying according to the immanent fellowship and conversation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit concerning another's name and sonship. This is why the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, saying, 'Let no unwholesome word [i.e. prayer] proceed from your mouth, but only such

a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that *it will give grace to those who hear.*' Eph 4:29.

The breaking of bread

The fourth and final dimension of agape fellowship is *the breaking of bread*. In the first case, this refers to our participation together in the body and blood of Christ. 1Co 10:16-17. This *spiritual* eating and drinking occurred in the early church as the believers met, *physically*, to break bread from house to house. On the flip side, as they met together to feed and nourish their physical bodies, they were also serving one another spiritual food and drink! This reality was modelled by Jesus Himself as He ate with the two disciples who travelled to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection. The Scriptures account that the disciples' eyes were opened (they received *spiritual* illumination) and 'they knew Him [they beheld the glory of their sonship in the face of Christ] *in the breaking of [physical] bread*'. Luk 24:30-35.

Concerning the provision of *spiritual* nourishment, in recent times we have appreciated how we - the sons of God - become the bread and wine for our brethren as we share together over agape meals. 1Co 10:17. Php 2:17. Earlier, we considered Paul's summary statement, 'By the grace of God I am what I am'. 1Co 15:10. As grace enabled Paul to fulfil the works of his sonship, his very testimony of Christ's life being multiplied within him was spiritual food for those with whom he shared. Similarly, Paul concluded his exhortation to the Philippian believers regarding the mind as Christ (the mind of a servant), saying, 'But even if I am being *poured out as a drink offering* upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.' Php 2:17. In this, the grace of God enabled Paul to be the bread and cup of the agape communion meal.

Concerning the provision of *physical* food as being a platform for spiritual nourishment, there is also a portion of grace that enables us *materially*. As the Lord has restored our church movement to the culture of agape fellowship, many have obtained a testimony of God's provision, enabling their household to facilitate hospitality initiatives. Some have had a renewing of their mind regarding the priorities of household budgeting, while others have received promotions or extra income. The outcome is the same. As they have responded, in faith obedience, to the shift to agape fellowship, they have received grace to enlarge their program of hospitality.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

We are reminded of Paul's letter to the Corinthians and his report concerning the generosity of the churches in Macedonia. He concluded this encouragement with a reference to the nation of Israel gathering enough manna (physical food) each day, in the wilderness. 2Co 8:15. He commended the Macedonian believers, saying, 'For I testify that according to their ability, *and beyond their ability*, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favour of participation in the support [i.e. serving] of the saints.' 2Co 8:3-4. Grace enabled the Macedonians to give *beyond the limitations* of their physical means, in accordance with the faith that they had received to serve others. Paul continued, 'I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. For *you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.' 2Co 8:8-9.

Article 5

The four dimensions of the love of Christ

Luke Pomery

We come to the knowledge of the four dimensions of the love of Christ - the width, the length, the depth, and the height - through agape fellowship at the tree of life. In his letter to the Ephesian church, the apostle Paul urged each person to apprehend with vigour *all four* dimensions of Christ's love; for it is all four aspects that describe the *fullness* of each person's sonship. He wrote, 'That you, being rooted and grounded in love [agape], may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God'. Eph 3:17-19.

Christ traversed and accomplished the full extent of all four of these dimensions for each person, in His one offering. The Scriptures describe this as Jesus 'filling all in all'. Eph 1:23. Eph 4:10. Each dimension of the love of Christ then becomes substantial in our life through our personal participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Heb 10:14. It is by

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

this means that we grow up into the full stature of Christ's sonship. Eph 4:13. We will consider the nature of our participation by which we can lay hold of these four dimensions of the love of Christ.

The width and length

The *width* and *length* of the love of Christ encompasses the reality of our *human experience* as 'sons of men' on this earth. Solomon described these parameters as our existence 'under the sun'. Ecc 1:9. Even though we are born as sons of God and are citizens of the heavenly city, our works, day by day, are done 'under the sun'. The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes bring a truthful reality to our human experience. Said simply, life is not 'a fairy tale' that is played out in accordance with one's own imagination. The width and length of the love of Christ includes a person's natural name; the reality of life 'under the sun'; and the madness and wickedness in the heart of every person.

A person's 'natural name'

The *width* and *length* of the love of Christ defines the reality of a person's natural name and their relational impact, or sphere. A person's natural name includes their abilities, intellect, temperament, as well as the unique frailties of their identity. The limits, or boundaries, for every person are already known; for these limits have been set by God. Act 17:26-27. For this reason, we are not to contend with God by pushing against these boundaries. Solomon wrote, 'Whatever one is, he has been *named already*, for it is known that he is man; and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he'. Ecc 6:10. As we embrace this reality by the love of God, our confession becomes, 'The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.' Psa 16:6.

Our relational sphere has also been determined by God the Father. 1Co 12:18. We choose, by faith, these relationships, and accept that we have a substantial impact upon others - both positive and negative - in our day to day life. It is also important that we do not seek a relational context that is *beyond* that which is given to us by God. As Paul testified, 'We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us - a sphere which especially includes you!' 2Co 10:13.

For us to truly fellowship together, we need to accept the reality of the *width* and *length* of the love of Christ toward us. It is helpful for us to realise, that, 'just because we are talking' does not automatically mean

that we are participating in *fellowship*. Our discussion must firstly be sensible and genuinely connected with reality. Solomon explained it this way, 'Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire.' Ecc 6:9. It will be impossible to truly meet a person who continually *projects* an image of themselves, which they desire others to affirm. Likewise, it will be impossible to meet a person who continually *controls* the interaction through relational manipulation, flattery, conquering techniques or their emotions. In contrast, we are able to properly meet when we accept the reality of our natural name and converse without projection or control.

Under the sun

Solomon began the book of Ecclesiastes by asking the question, 'What *profit* has a man for all his labour in which he toils under the sun?' Ecc 1:3. In other words, 'What is the outcome of seeking identity validation through the many works of our hands which are all done under the sun?' Solomon answered his own question by saying, 'There is *no profit* under the sun for all the works that my hands have done and the labour in which I have toiled.' Ecc 2:11. He then described the work of man as being vanity and grasping for the wind. 'Vanity' means emptiness, or meaninglessness, and 'grasping for the wind' describes the experience of never being able to obtain the goal or advantage for which you strive; like the wind, it can never be caught!

Solomon summarised everything under the sun as 'vanity of vanities' - literally meaning 'the absolute emptiness of meaninglessness'! Ecc 1:2. In the end, what happens to the fool also happens to the wise. Ecc 2:15-16. *Time and chance* happen them all. Ecc 9:11. And, for all the works that a person does on the earth, there is no remembrance of it after they pass away. Ecc 1:11. People take nothing with them to the grave. Ecc 5:15. After all their hard work, people leave their hard-earned riches to their children, who have not laboured for it and could foolishly squander it all! Ecc 2:18-21. Indeed, for all their labour and the striving of their hearts, mankind can never truly find satisfaction. Ecc 4:7.

How do we cope with such harsh realities under the sun? Shall we, then, in the light of Solomon's teaching, become a recluse in order to minimise the risks of being harmed? Of course not! The fear of the Lord and the love of God poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit is indeed *something new* under the sun! Ecc 1:10. We don't have to live according to the carnal drive of our 'familiar', whereby we seek *personal gain* from the works that we do under the sun. Rather, the proceeding word exposes this fundamental fleshly motivation, or drive, within us. Ecc 12:11.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

What's more, we come to learn that the culture of agape is giving! Hence, in Solomon's closing statement, we read, 'Fear God and keep His commandments [which is *to love our neighbour* as ourselves], for this is man's all'. Ecc 12:13. Mar 12:29-31.

Madness and wickedness

Solomon explained the reality that *madness* and *wickedness* are two fundamental elements that are in the heart of every person! Psa 53:2-3. Ecc 9:3. The Scriptures define *madness* as 'believing in the veracity of a complete unreality'. Simply, we are *mad* to choose anything less than what God has chosen for us. Solomon explained that madness causes a person 'to try anything' in order to know its outcome, even if it causes themselves or others injury. Madness is insane or irrational thinking, and it incorporates every kind of psychological condition and spectrum that is identified by modern medicine.

The prophet Jeremiah explained that *wickedness* is the evil that is bound in one's heart. It is each person's incorrigible opposition to the will and nature of God. He wrote, 'The heart [of man] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' Jer 17:9. It is the Lord who searches our heart and tests us to expose our wickedness as being the cause of our aberrations. Jer 17:10. For this reason, it is important to recognise that it is not *our* work to 'stamp out' the wickedness that we perceive in others. Such a pursuit is a self-righteous crusade that results only in harm.

Solomon wrote, 'And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know *madness* and *folly* [or wickedness]. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.' Ecc 1:17-18. Ecc 7:25. Every person must interface with the grief and sorrow of this reality in themselves and in others. However, like trying to grasp for the wind, this is a difficult task, and it is beyond the wherewithal of our natural perception. Christ, however, was fully acquainted with the grief and sorrow of *our madness and wickedness* that was a sin against the Father. Isa 53:4. We must meet Jesus to obtain insight, healing, and deliverance from these two realities.

The depths

The *depths* of the love of Christ describes the descending journey of His offering from the garden of Gethsemane to Calvary. Eph 4:9-10. By midday, Christ had descended to the depths of our fallen

human condition. Our iniquity, which is our helpless addiction to going our own way, had been fully laid upon Him. Isa 53:6. Solomon described our iniquity as walking in the ways of our heart and according to the sight of our eyes. Ecc 11:9. Walking in this manner causes us to become unclean and to commit abominable deeds. Rev 21:8. Rev 22:15. An abomination is a practice or attitude which is detestable to God, for it is a violation of the culture of fellowship.

Christ then took us, in our fallen condition, with Him, into the depths of Sheol. During the next three hours, Christ endured the interminable judgement and wrath of God upon our sin and iniquity. He suffered the anguish of Sheol that awaits all those who forget God. Psa 116:3. Psa 9:17. He constrained our sin at the bottom of the sea of God's forgetfulness. Mic 7:19. Psa 88:12. Unless we are joined to the four dimensions of His love, so that we are cleansed of our sin and iniquity, this is the certain expectation that awaits us. Heb 10:27. Hence Jesus said, 'Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Mat 10:28.

Through fellowship in the light of the word, we are illuminated to the depths of Christ's love for us, personally. We receive a love of the truth and allow the word to expose our evil deeds. 2Th 2:10. Joh 3:19. The fear of the Lord enables us to *not draw back* from the depths of Christ's journey; nor do we look for someone else to touch these depths on our behalf. Rom 10:6-7. Having been illuminated to the depths of Christ's love, Christ's confession then becomes our own, and we pray, with Him, 'Lord, I have called daily upon You [from the depths]; I have stretched out my hands to You. Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You?' Psa 88:9-10. Our deliverance comes as we are joined with Christ in the extent of His descending journey for us, personally. Psa 86:13.

The heights

Having descended to the lowest parts of the earth, Jesus learned the obedience of our sonship, and fulfilled all the works of our sonship - both for this lifetime and also for all of eternity. Isa 26:12. Psa 138:8. Furthermore, He has fashioned our resurrection bodies and has perfected the days that have been written for us. Psa 139:15-16. In so doing, *He has filled the heights of our sonship*. At the conclusion of His offering, Christ was raised to sit at the right hand of the Father. Heb 1:3. The Father highly exalted Christ by giving Him the name which is above every name. Php 2:9.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

The *heights* of Christ's love refers to the glory of our names as sons of God. When Christ ascended to the Father's right hand, He took all our names with Him, saying, 'Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!' Isa 8:18. The implication is that our names are written in the book of life, in heaven. We recall that Jesus said to the seventy-two disciples, 'Do not rejoice [in your works which are done under the sun] ... but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Luk 10:20.

The expression of our new creation sonship is reflected to us in the face of Christ as we abide in the fellowship of the agape meal. We are being progressively changed into the substance of this sonship. 2Co 3:18. Jesus explained that we are not to come to the agape meal presumptuously, by defining our own expression. Rather, we are to come humbly to receive, from Christ, the nature of our participation. Luk 14:10. We come to 'learn from Him' the heights of our sonship which He has learned for us, in His offering journey. Mat 11:28-29.

The heights of the love of Christ also describes the culture of Yahweh's *fellowship* and the nature of our *participation* in the heavenly city. Having been born of God and baptised into the fellowship of Christ's death, we have been made citizens of the New Jerusalem. Eph 2:6. We participate in agape fellowship at the tree of life, with God, and with one another. These are 'the heights' to which the presbytery of Ephesus was being recovered, by Christ, as we read in His letter to the seven churches. Rev 2:5.

The experience of Jonah

As we shall consider, the prophet Jonah touched all four dimensions of the love of Christ. During the storm, on the boat, Jonah acknowledged his sin and made confession before the Lord and in the presence of others, regarding his own disobedience. Jon 1:9. However, despite his confession of repentance, Jonah was not delivered from touching the *depths* of Christ's offering journey. In the belly of the great fish, Jonah cried out to the Lord, acknowledging that he was joined to Christ's descending journey to the bottom of Sheol. Jon 2:2-6. It was from this place that Jonah offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord. Jon 2:9.

The Lord delivered Jonah from the depths of Sheol and commissioned him a second time. Psa 86:13. Jon 3:1. Jonah touched the *heights* by proclaiming God's call to the sons of men in Nineveh. Amazingly, the Ninevites heeded Jonah's word which proclaimed God's judgement upon

their evil way, and they began to mourn and repent! Jon 3:5. Luk 11:32. God saw their repentance and did not bring calamity upon them.

Jonah, however, was greatly displeased that God did not bring about His judgement upon them. Despite their repentance, Jonah still personally viewed the Ninevites as being a wicked group of people who were worthy of God's judgement. Jonah's personal irritation and anger were even further aroused, in the heat of the day, when a worm came and destroyed the very plant that had previously been Jonah's provision for shade from the sun. The troubles of 'time and chance' were pressing in on Jonah as he was left to experience reality, quite literally, 'under the sun'! Jon 4:6-9.

We note that although Jonah had genuinely connected with the depths and heights of the love of Christ, at this point, he still struggled to cope with the realities of life under the sun! Jonah needed to continue to meet the Lord to also know the *width* and *length* of the love of Christ - so that he could accept the *everyday realities* and *relational circumstances* of his life. He was learning to meet the Lord in all four dimensions of His love.

Conclusion

As we considered at the beginning, all four dimensions of Christ's love - the width and length and depths and heights - belong to the fullness of our sonship. Our baptism as a new creation son of God is our immersion into these four dimensions of Christ's offering journey. New creation sonship touches all four dimensions of Christ's offering journey (not *only* the heights!). For this reason, we do not endeavour to escape from some aspects of our participation, while happily embracing others. Rather, as sons of God, we are learning to meet Christ in the reality of *all four dimensions* of His love for us.

Article 6

Profiles of carnality

Luke Pomery

The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes identify various *types of people*. In these books, Solomon, along with the other collectors of wise sayings, presented an ongoing narrative of a set of definitive ‘characters’, giving vivid descriptions of their typical kinds of behaviour. Ecc 12:10-11. These descriptions are a collection of ‘riddles’ that have been given so that the reader will learn and grow in understanding. Pro 1:5-6. We are invited to consider each character, looking at their *behaviour*; considering the *endpoint* of their way of living; and understanding the specific point of *recovery* that applies uniquely to each of them.

Seven distinct characters are introduced in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. We can describe them this way: the *proud*, the *naive*, the *fool*, the *mocker*, the *lazy*, the *scoffer* and the *wicked*. Each character represents a particular ‘profile of carnality’. Each is a specific expression that is the result of setting our mind on the flesh. As we read, ‘For to be *carnally minded* is death, but to be *spiritually minded* is life and peace’. Rom 8:6. The apostle Paul explained that when we function according to our carnality, we are behaving ‘like mere men’. 1Co 3:3. In this regard,

these profiles of carnality are descriptive of the natural responses of *all* mankind.

Solomon explained the blunt truth that mankind has always functioned this way since the Fall. In this way, we recognise that these profiles are part of our everyday reality and relational interactions that occur 'under the sun'. And, without a connection to the offering and sufferings of Christ, mankind will *continue* to function in this way. Solomon stated, 'That which has been is what will be, that which is done will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new?" It has already been in ancient times before us.' Ecc 1:9-10.

It is helpful to understand that these profiles are not a product of the society, nor the era, in which a person lives. Rather, the nature of mankind has *always been this way*; and it continues to be so within in our current day society. For example, in Solomon's time, there was no social media as it exists today. However, the Scriptures written by Solomon teach us how mankind, in his own day, equally sought to project an image of themselves to be verified by others. Pro 20:6. Pro 25:14. Thus, the Scriptures teach us, in a timeless manner, how we are to overcome within the society and times in which we live. There is nothing that is not contained in the Scriptures.

Understanding your propensity

As we read about these various characters that Solomon described, we find it very easy to agree with his observations. This is because all of these descriptions, at first glance, appear to be *external* to us - we assume Solomon was describing 'someone else'. Thus, we quickly agree and concur with Solomon, thinking of all of the other people we know who exemplify these principles. However, Solomon is not, firstly, teaching us about how we are to interface with *everyone else*. He is firstly teaching us about *ourselves*. *We are* those seven profiles! And the key point is that we need *illumination and fellowship* to see and understand how these profiles uniquely appear in our own life.

All seven different profiles of carnality apply to *every* person, to varying degrees, due to 'the other law' that is within each of us. All seven profiles are a description of how we operate when the motivation of our heart is 'other than' the Law of the love of God. For this reason, everyone needs to overcome all seven of these profiles of carnality.

Our particular temperament, or personality, will cause us to *polarise* to some profiles more heavily than others. For this reason, every individual will find that a couple of the profiles are *more* applicable to them than others. For example, a person might be more of a lazy person, but somewhat less of a scoffer.

Even further still, certain profiles of carnality will become *galvanised* in our responses due to the familiar uncleanness that has been cultivated within our own family. This uncleanness provides a 'food source' upon which familiar spirits feed, causing us oppression. This galvanised carnality manifests as an *habitual and ingrained response*, which has an *emotive* weight to it. Initially, we are blind to the fact that we even have these responses, because they are *so* familiar to us! Furthermore, even when these responses are brought to our attention, we are still unaware of our complete inability, at this point, to respond in any other way! They have become innate, and are heavily entrenched within us.

The word of the cross exposes the darkness of our familiar uncleanness, and enables us to be delivered from the bondage of our ingrained, carnal responses. We learn to pray with Christ concerning the carnality of our heart - that which is earthly, sensual (or emotive) and demonic. Jas 3:15. These responses are progressively circumsised from us through our ongoing participation in the offering of Christ.

A man called Jabez is a good example of such deliverance. His family, and in particular his mother, viewed themselves as *being victims* of their sufferings. As a result, Jabez was literally named according to this familiar uncleanness. His mother named him Jabez, meaning 'He who causes pain'. As Jabez grew, he called upon the Lord because he desired a change of nature from this ingrained, victim response which had been nurtured within him from his birth. 1Ch 4:9-10. The Lord answered his prayer and Jabez was honoured among the families of the scribes. 1Ch 2:55.

It is important for us to recognise, however, that even if a person is delivered from the oppression of a familiar spirit, if they do not *continue* in the fellowship of Christ's offering, their carnality will become seven times worse. Pro 26:16,25. The endpoint of all carnality is demonically energised expressions of the other law. Jas 3:15. Jesus explained this principle, saying, 'The unclean spirit takes with him *seven other spirits more wicked than himself*, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this

wicked generation.’ Mat 12:45. The ‘seven other spirits’ are *all seven profiles* of carnality that are energised by the demonic host.

Seven pillars of wisdom

For each of the seven profiles of carnality, we are given the opportunity to obtain ‘the wisdom from above’. Wisdom herself calls out, ‘Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you ... whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil.’ Pro 1:23,33. The prophet Jeremiah explained that it is by the mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed by our carnality. Lam 3:22. ‘The mercy of the Lord’ directly refers to our connection to the offering of Christ.

If we *continually* choose to live by these carnal propensities, then, quite simply, *that* is the kind of person we will become! Every person eats the fruit of their own ways. This is an inescapable reality. Gal 6:7-8. As we read, ‘Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies’. Pro 1:31. For example, the person who continually scorns others will inherit scorn for themselves. As Solomon stated, ‘Surely He [the Lord] scorns the scornful.’ Pro 3:34.

The Proverbs speak of *seven pillars* of wisdom. As we read, ‘Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars’. Pro 9:1. These pillars are the foundation upon which we build our life. These seven pillars belong to the wisdom from above and refer to our participation in the seven wounding events of Christ’s offering. On His offering journey, Christ’s blood was sprinkled seven times as the full provision to deal with all carnality. The seven profiles of carnality can equally be understood as being the seven aspects of ‘an evil conscience’. Heb 10:22.

The seven pillars of wisdom also refer to the sevenfold Spirit of God. ‘The seven Spirits of God’ are descriptive of the *full* expression of the one Spirit in which Yahweh *Elohim* lives. Rev 4:5. The prophet Isaiah nominated the seven Spirits of God in this way: ‘*The Spirit of the Lord* [Yahweh] shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of *wisdom* and *understanding*, the Spirit of *counsel* and *might*, the Spirit of *knowledge* and of *the fear of the Lord*.’ Isa 11:2. Each unique expression of the sevenfold Spirit of God is essential in our overcoming a particular profile of carnality.

Seven profiles of carnality

In the attached chart, 'The seven profiles of carnality', we consider each of the profiles that Solomon described. We identify some examples of how these profiles are expressed and what is the endpoint of living by this mode of carnality. We also consider the specific point of recovery for each profile. This is by no means an exhaustive statement of what Solomon and the other writers have taught us; however, it is a helpful orientation in how to read and understand their proverbs. Pro 1:5-6.

Solomon also described the seven profiles of carnality as seven abominations. He wrote, 'These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.' Pro 6:16-19.

We can describe the abominations in this way:

- A proud look - this is obviously the *proud* person. Pro 15:25.
- A lying tongue - describes the *fool* whose complacency is deceit in their mouth. Pro 1:32. Pro 14:8.
- Hands that shed innocent blood - describes the *lazy* man who accuses the integrity of others. Pro 26:13-16.
- A heart that devises wicked plans - describes the *wicked* man. Pro 15:9,26. Pro 21:27.
- Feet that are swift in running to evil - describes the *naive* person who rushes into situations and inherits foolishness. Pro 14:18.
- A false witness who speaks lies - describes the *mock*er who uses slander and flattery to gain power over others. Pro 26:24-25.
- One who sows discord among brethren - describes the *scoffer* who creates contention within the group. Pro 22:10.

The 'elect' are those who *accept* the Lord's initiative to cleanse them of the filth of their abominations. Isa 4:4. Rev 21:27. The elect remain in the city! The apostle John explained that any person who causes an abomination eventually forfeits their right to enter the gates of the New Jerusalem and to eat of the tree of life. Rev 21:27. Rev 22:14. As a result of refusing the ongoing cleansing process of Christ's offering and sufferings, their rejection of the word progressively causes their departure from the heavenly city. At this point, the seven abominations listed by Solomon becomes the full expression of a person given over to their carnality.

Article 7

Understanding fallen desire and envy

Tim Maurice

'What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.' Jas 4:1-2.

'But each one is tempted when he is carried away [by his own desires] and enticed by his own lust. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.' Jas 1:14-16.

Eve was deceived by Satan when she believed the lie that she could be like God. Her belief of this lie immediately provoked covetousness in her 'members'. Once she believed the lie, she then desperately wanted what Satan had promised as the result of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Moreover, the way she saw the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had changed completely. It now fascinated

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

her, creating a sick longing in her for the one thing that the Lord God had forbidden. The fruit looked so good for so many reasons, and she had to have it.

This is how basic and powerful the lust in our members is. We are tempted when we are drawn away from our sanctification by a desire. That desire will have an emotional focus in view. It identifies something that we want, which is attractive according to our fallen perspective. This desire precedes any act of sin. The desire is driven, or put into motion, by the intensity which our flesh attaches to it. This intensity will vary; but 'the switch that is flicked' within our hearts is the same. Once we indulge a desire of this kind, the very next step is sin.

The example of Cain is instructive in this regard. Cain was deceived with respect to the nature of his offering. He had been trained by his mother, Eve, to subdue the creation by the sweat of his brow, and thus to till the ground. This deception caused him to be invested in the success of his offering. He believed that his offering was acceptable, and that God would naturally accept it. As a result, when God in fact rejected his offering, thus thwarting Cain's initial desire to be accepted, Cain began to be assailed by the emotions of other desires and other sins. He became angry. His unclean response began to give room in his heart to the influence of unclean spirits which desired to possess Cain's soul.

Recognising Cain's condition, the Lord spoke the simple wisdom of faith to him. 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.' Gen 4:6-7.

This was a word of faith which, if Cain had received it, would have delivered him from his uncleanness. More than that, the Lord gave Cain the assurance that he could be accepted, if only he would choose in that moment to abandon the desire for personal vindication that was rising in his heart.

The Lord's words here are very instructive. When we are being drawn away by our own desires, sin is already lying at the door of our heart. Sin lies like a crouching lion, seeking to devour us. That is because sin is the spirit of Satan. Sin has a volition and an agenda. That is to say, sin has its own desire; and that desire is directed toward our destruction. Sin desires to ensnare us so that we will be caught 'like a bird in a cruel net' and will become the food upon which Satan feeds.

However, there is hope! We can rule over sin and its desire for us. Cain could have done 'well' by engaging in an open-faced fellowship with Yahweh regarding the nature of his self-deception and the faultiness of his offering. In so doing, he could have had the desire of his heart unmasked. If it had surfaced again, he could have put it off easily and continued to set his face towards the Lord. Moreover, he could have been realigned to the true works of his name, which would have brought rest and satisfaction to his troubled heart.

In this way, Cain would have acquired the wisdom needed to arrest the intensity of the emotions of sin that arose within him. He would have ceased to be at war with everyone around him. As it happened, however, Cain did none of these things, and he became enslaved to the uncleanness which resulted in him murdering his own brother. Furthermore, this wickedness of violence and vengeance multiplied to the third and fourth generations after him. Cain's great-great-grandson Lamech declared to his wives, 'Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, even a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.' Gen 4:23-24.

Returning to the Scripture in the book of James, we read that the desire in our members is *the emotion of sin*. In many forms, the emotions of sin drive every person on the planet to covet, or to envy, and to murder as did Cain.

Love or envy

As a son of God, we are either going to be motivated by love, or we will be motivated by envy. When we 'put on love', we are able to dwell in the perfect bond of unity with other sons of God. This is the unity of the Spirit. On the other hand, if we live under the motivation of envy, we will fall into the bond of iniquity. This bond will lead us to judgement if we do not find repentance from the intentions of our heart through the sprinkling of our conscience and the washing of the water of the word.

In the fellowship of Yahweh, which for sons of God is found in the fellowship of light among their brethren, the testimony is that 'the lines have fallen in pleasant places'. A son of God who rejoices in their salvation and election will be thankful for the boundaries which the Lord has drawn around them. These are the lines of sanctification which circumscribe their walk and constitute 'what is written'. This person is

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

full of thanksgiving and they are known by the fruit of their lips. The coal of God's fire has cleansed their lips and they want to testify about it!

A person who refuses to join the fellowship of their brethren will do so because they *do not choose* to put on love. They resist the ministry of the Holy Spirit and retreat into the darkness of their own understanding. This means that they will be motivated by envy. An envious heart does not rejoice in the lines of sanctification which the Lord has drawn. In fact, an envious heart seeks constantly to redraw these lines in order to satisfy the lusts of their flesh.

As a result, the lusts of the flesh will be at liberty to conquer this person's heart while ever they resist the Spirit's entreaty of the word of God, 'today'. In other words, a person driven by envy will be constantly overcome by sin and uncleanness. They must receive the word with meekness for the salvation of their souls.

Satan inverts the accountability for suffering

Envy became the default of the human heart when Adam and Eve chose to believe the lie of Satan in preference to fellowship with and obedience to Yahweh at the tree of life. Satan is motivated by his envy of Yahweh, having aspired to ascend to the sides of the North and to be like the Most High, and then having been ejected from his place in the temple of God. He now has great wrath, and desires to make the sons of men 'vessels of wrath'. He distorts the *accountability* of men regarding their enmity with God, making it appear as though God is responsible for this enmity.

Satan's principal weapon in this project is the existence of suffering, which he employs as a justifiable reason for mankind to be angry with God. In other words, from this point of view, it is God's fault that suffering exists. We have seen already that Cain was snared at this same point of difficulty.

This inversion of true accountability is the distortion that wrath and envy produce in the human heart. When this distortion carries through to the body of Christ, it allows a person to become prey to the spirit of antichrist. Believing their suffering to be unjust, a person becomes filled with wrath and envy toward those whom they feel are the perpetrators of their misery. Of course, the ultimate perpetrator, from their perspective, is God Himself. Thus they become opponents of Christ, employing their sense of being a victim as the credible defence of their envious position.

This person is an enemy of the cross. An enemy of the cross is one who embodies the attitude of the thief on the cross, who railed with wrath at Christ. In order to be delivered, they must heed the words of the other thief, 'Do you not even fear God?' The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. As this person begins to fear the Lord, they will receive the wisdom from above.

'But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.' Jas 3:17-18.

The evidence that wisdom has begun to be sown into a person's heart is that they are able to *make peace*. They become 'a son of peace'. Instead of fighting the word and the messenger, they accept their culpability and come to silence. Their excuses for their bad behaviour cease and they fear the Lord. They are then able to be joined to the fellowship of the cross, which is the revelation of the wisdom of God.

Article 8

Delivered from being bewitched

Tim Maurice

Walking wisely instead of foolishly

As we now understand much more clearly, the word of God polarises its hearers to one of two extremes. Either we receive the word and become established in the kingdom as a son of God; or we reject the word proceeding from the mouth of God to go our own way. This polarisation is realised through our *choice*. We are accountable for what we do with what the Lord speaks to us through His messengers. When we choose to believe the word of God, we are wise. When we adulterate, or reinterpret, the word, we are foolish and crafty.

We have, therefore, the choice to live either as, what Paul called, 'mere men' or to be 'led by the Spirit'. 'Mere men' is a phrase employed by the apostle Paul in reference to believers who live carnally. By contrast, he wrote to the Romans that those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God. When we are carnal, we live as mere men. When we are led by the Spirit, we live as sons of God. Sons of God walk in the wisdom of God.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

These two alternatives are the two poles which the preached word identifies when we hear it. These two polarities are described by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. In this letter, we encounter again the foolish person - or, in this case, a foolish church. From Paul's perspective, foolish people are those who allow themselves to be bewitched by Satan. With respect to this problem, Paul asked the Galatians how they had come to believe a gospel other than the gospel of sonship. The answer was that they had become carnal.

'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?' Gal 3:1-2.

The manner in which we choose to receive the Spirit will determine whether we are walking in the Spirit or walking according to the flesh. If we receive the Spirit through the hearing of faith, it means that we are joined to, and are continuing to choose to join, the fellowship of our brethren. That is because faith works by love. The hearing of faith does not happen independently of receiving the love of God into our heart. In fact, the love of God is the ultimate source of all illumination, or enlightenment. Col 2:2. Eph 1:18. Eph 3:14-19.

The illumination of the love of God opens the doorway of faith. We *hear*, because we *love*. We can say the same thing the other way around. When we hear, by faith, the word of God proclaiming that He is Light, the eyes of our heart are illuminated and we can see what the natural eye cannot perceive. We can see Christ lifted up for us, laying down His life as an offering for our sin and iniquity. We see His body suffering because of the corrupt state of our heart. We see mercy triumphing over judgement, and we know the love of God toward us personally.

This knowledge constrains and compels us to make offering of our own body, and to despise the shame of our former separation from God because of sin. This knowledge should have led the Galatians in this way. Christ had been clearly portrayed as crucified 'before their eyes' through Paul's ministry. However, the bewitching of Satan caused their senses to become energised and excited by an alternative gospel. They were motivated to be spiritual, and to prove themselves to be spiritual, through their own actions. This is the nature of self-verification and covetousness, and it is the evidence that we are walking in craftiness. Craftiness is the mode of Satan, who also seeks to verify himself as a source of life, over and against God. This way of life is a lie which he

sows into the hearts of the sons of men in order to confound and lure them into accepting his fatherhood.

When we present ourselves to our brethren as one who is alive from the dead, we become a gift to them. When we are laying down our life in the fellowship of our brothers and sisters, we are making offering in the community of faith. This is where we learn the obedience of faith. In this context, we can receive the Spirit by hearing the word of present truth. We can also express the testimony of our faith at an agape meal, where faith works, because faith works by agape.

On the other hand, if we hear the word as a prescriptive statement of objective truth that we must keep, we will attempt to receive the Spirit by the Law. That is, we will feel provoked to perform works which verify our beliefs and make us acceptable to God and to other people. This will bring us under the power of condemnation. It will also lead to self-analysis and unbelief. We will lack the assurance that comes through faith. We will be uncertain as to how to relate in fellowship. Fearing rejection, we will either withdraw or we will attempt to summon confidence by being assertive or definitive.

The message of the gospel, when received by faith, liberates our will from its bondage to sin. This liberation enables us to serve God with a good conscience. The illumination of this wonderful truth is the testimony that we should, and will want to, bring to the agape meal. We will not come to the agape meal seeking prescriptive instruction on our obedience. We have been set free! We testify and give thanks that the Lord has visited us today with His precious word. We will not ask someone to lord it over our faith, even though there will be times when one of us says, in true humility, 'Men and brethren, what must I do?' Poverty of spirit is the mark of true testimony.

An example of a non-accountable response at an agape meal would be a young adult saying, 'I have heard today that I have not been a disciple. Tell me how to be a disciple.' Their answer is in the very nature of the question that they are asking. If they were receiving the Spirit by faith, they would know the answer. They have not been a disciple because their ears have not been opened. Their ears have not been opened because they keep turning the spiritual word of God into a law which they want to keep.

However, for a person who is hearing by faith, the wound of their repentance is also the profusion of their joy. They know that they were formerly blind to their sin, but now they are enabled to repent!

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

As a result of being able to repent, they can now choose their sanctification. This joy, when expressed in the fellowship of the agape meal, makes the joy of our brethren full. The word multiplies and grows.

So why would we not live this way? The reason why we choose to continue to receive the Spirit by the works of the Law is twofold. First, it means that we do not have to be accountable. Second, it means that we can avoid the cost of our discipleship, thereby obviating the need to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

When we live this way, every preached word must be transmuted into some kind of sacrament or law which a person can simply 'do', without accountability or illumination. This means that if the messenger does not transform the word 'magically' into a sacrament, the hearer will feel confused and aggrieved. They will feel as though they would like to believe, but that some vital piece of information eludes them or is being withheld from them. They would prefer to have their senses excited by some outward form of success, mysticism or religiosity.

This is what Paul referred to as 'the letter'. 2Co 3:6. The letter kills, whereas the Spirit brings life. The letter kills because it prefers 'another gospel'; that is, a gospel other than the gospel of sonship. The flesh craves another gospel, because envy within our 'members' desires to perform self-verifying actions which prove that we can be like God. This is the covetousness that resides in the flesh of man. His actions must be seen to spring *from himself*. He must be the *source* of some form of righteousness. This desire is the outworking of the bewitching lie of Satan. This lie will remain in our members as long as we attempt to satisfy its demand with legal, substitutional or sacramental observance.

Instead, we must fear the Lord and accept our personal culpability, giving our ears to the word that is coming to save our soul. This is an entirely relational orientation toward the word. We do not hear it in the hope that it will inspire us to take some verifying action by which we can console the emptiness, or void, within our heart. Instead, we are fleeing the attempt to fill that void, confessing that the fullness of God is found in Christ, whose precious blood is the only consolation that we need.

In the fellowship of the blood that He shed, we receive the personal communication of faith which requires no outward observance or intellectual satisfaction. We know in whom we have believed and we are completely satisfied in Him. As the Spirit comes to our heart by faith, we rest in the assurance of our salvation which is found in the finished work of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Article 9

The cost of first love

Tim Maurice

'If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish."

Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' Luk 14:26-35.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

An essential element of the gospel is that the love of God comes at the expense of all other loves. That is to say, when we are born again, the foundation that we lay must be the foundation of the love of God, not our own version of love. If a person refuses to hear this message, they cannot be a disciple of Christ. Their ears will never be opened to hear the word that He is speaking today, because their loyalties will be divided; and so will their house. As Jesus said, a person cannot serve two masters. They will, finally, love one above the other. The only way that we can learn to love the Lord our God is to forsake all other loves. When we do this, He is able to give back to us our other loves; but as servants to the spiritual life, not as the false masters of it.

The loves which Jesus addressed in this passage are familial. They fall into four categories: parents, spouse, children and siblings. These are the loves which operate within us at the most fundamental level of our life. They are so normal to us that we can easily take them for granted. Even when we see them at work, or celebrate them in family life, we tend not to understand how they work; nor why we should renounce their influence upon our discipleship.

'If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.' 1Pe 1:17-19.

If God really is our Father, our proper response to Him must be one of fear. As Jesus taught His disciples to pray, 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.' If we have been born from above as sons of the Father, our whole heart belongs to Him. The testimony of a new Christian is that they previously did not live this way.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.' Mat 22:37-40.

These two commandments are very exacting, and impossibly out of our reach as ordinary people. The very idea of loving God with all of our heart, soul and mind is beyond our capacity to understand as natural men and women. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, the comprehension of

God's love takes *illumination*. Once we are illuminated, the knowledge of His love brings other points of understanding with it.

For instance, as we see how much higher His ways are than our own, we also see how much greater His love is than ours. Love is described as a 'way' by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. A 'way' is one of the seven aspects of the word of God described in Psalm 119. From the perspective of the word, a way is something in which we walk; it is both directional and participatory in nature. We walk in a specific direction, and not in any other. We also must *apply* ourselves in order to walk; diligence to move and to keep moving is necessary.

'The most excellent way' that Paul described is the way of agape. 1Co 12:31. The most excellent way is also the fulfilment of Jesus' two great commandments. Agape is the fruit of the life of God and the evidence of the new birth, according to the apostle John. John summed up Jesus' two commandments in a single sentence: 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.' 1Jn 4:7. The evidence that we know God is that we are walking in the way of love. This love is 'first love', which is the love with which God loved us - from the first.

This love is first love because it is the basis of all other kinds of love. Unless this love, which is from God, is first in our heart, we will operate by another kind of love. More than that, we will tend not to notice that we have begun to function this way. That is why Jesus used such strong language when He instructed His disciples concerning what our attitude to familial loves should be.

The point is that we don't know how to love in our families until the love of God has broken through the depths of the selfish ambition and envy which reside 'in our members'. If we are merely applying principles, we will find that we are self-righteously attempting to love others. This is not the way of love; and nor is it first love. Love is 'of God'. It must be supplied to us daily by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, because the human loves are natural to us, until we learn to walk by the Spirit, we will not know how to do other than to be led by our natural inclinations and affections.

This is how uncleanness becomes entrenched in a household without anyone noticing it. A mother will need illumination to discern the difference between caring for her son appropriately, and being overprotective and controlling. A husband will need discernment to see

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

the difference between listening to his wife 'with understanding', and simply going along with what she wants to do.

Unless we are abiding in agape, the power of the other loves will always overwhelm our flesh. That is one problem. The next problem is worse. That is when we attempt to retrofit agape over the activities that we do in obedience to these other loves. In other words, we do what we do, functioning as 'mere men'; but then, by the application of the magic word 'love', we justify to ourselves that we are being spiritual.

If we live this way, we cannot be a disciple of Jesus. Instead of abiding in His love, we are merely functioning in the same way as an unredeemed person. We are still pleasing ourselves. We are not walking in the most excellent way of Yahweh. We are adopting a religious and sacramental approach, by which we convince ourselves that attending church, praying, giving money, and so on, qualify as loving God and our brethren.

In His mercy, the Lord has come to deliver us from this error, so that we can truly love one another 'from the heart', and love the Lord with all our heart. When we abide in His love this way, all of the other loves are able to be expressed to their fullest measure - in romance, affection and friendship - without them overrunning and becoming the primary, or first, love in our lives. Agape does not destroy the other loves; it *sanctifies* them, giving them their appropriate proportion and multiplying their expression and joy.

Returning to the love of our parents, it is very important that every person comprehends the extent to which they have been redeemed from the futile ways of their forefathers. If this is not so, we will remain wedded to the practices of our parents which define what is familiar and unclean.

'A futile way' refers to a practice that is sourced in earthly wisdom. Futility was an outcome of the Fall. God subjected us to futility in the hope that we would cry out to be delivered from futile and dead works. However, if we embrace futility as an end in itself, we choose to join ourselves to the old creation which has already been judged and brought to an end by the offering of Christ. This is a choice which will bring us under the same judgement that will be applied to the whole earth at the end of the age.

Futility is referred to by Solomon as 'chasing after the wind'. It provokes frustration in the heart as a person seeks to extract ultimate meaning out of what is passing away. They find that, no sooner have they achieved

something, the evidence of it has already disappeared. This is the nature of the vain traditions of our forefathers.

The Scriptures instruct us to honour our father and mother; but they are also explicit about the judgement that will come upon those who follow in the unclean practices of their families. Our honouring of father and mother is relational, pertaining to the honouring of their unique roles in our lives, and to their individual names as sons of God. We recognise that we have received 'a package' of good and evil from our parents, which constitutes the raw material of our humanity. As brethren in Christ (if we are walking together with our parents), we are able to share with our families in the wonderful testimony of Christ's redemption from that 'raw material' (being 'mere men'), to being inheritors of a great salvation which far exceeds our natural heritage.

Counting the cost

The cost of discipleship must be counted from the very beginning of a person's conversion. The 'cost' is the giving up of our souls as our own possession. We no longer belong to ourselves. Therefore, we no longer *live* for ourselves. We give up the whole *psuche* dimension of life to the Lord, so that we can be made alive by *zoe*. *Psuche* refers to the psychological, intellectual and emotional sphere of life.

'For whoever wishes to save his life [*psuche*] will lose it, but whoever loses his life [*psuche*] for My sake, he is the one who will save it.'
Luk 9:24.

'He who loves [*phileo* - our capacity for love] his life [*psuche*] loses it, and he who hates [aligning with hating the human loves] his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.' Joh 12:24.

This is the same principle by which we give up the earthly loves, which can only function according to the standards and capacities of *psuche*. By turning from these loves as the definition of what love is, we are able to be illuminated as to the nature of the love of God. We are not living by the measurements of *psuche*.

The cost to God

Jesus gave Himself up for us, and was separated from the Father. In natural time, this separation did not endure for very long. However, in terms of the ageless experience of Yahweh, we cannot quantify the

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

length, breadth, depth or height of this experience to the Lord Himself. We cannot measure the cost of what He gave up for us; nor how 'long' He had to endure the suffering that His offering journey entailed.

His sufferings separated sin from us as far as the East is from the West. This was the endless breadth of His offering, which removed the burden of sin from the old creation. When we walk as blameless participants in His offering, our sin is an infinite distance from us. It is not near to us; the Lord is near to us. We are holy and blameless in Him. When He became sin, He was removed an infinite distance from the Father, as far as the East is from the West. Moreover, the Father's face was turned from Him.

The depth of His offering was down in 'the lowest parts of the earth', to which He descended in order to bring everlasting judgement to an end. Here, the full weight of human ambition and corruption, which He embodied in Himself in that experience, reached its fullness and was put to death. This place of condemnation was the context of all darkness. Jesus was abandoned in this place, and was separated from the light of fellowship which He enjoyed with the Father. Instead of experiencing the fire of God as a place of delight and offering, He felt the full fury of the fire of God as judgement against all sin and uncleanness.

When He was raised from the death and judgement of sin, His body became the bridge between the depths of our depravity and iniquity, and the heights of God's great love for us. He walked in our ways and put them to death, so that we could be raised to walk in His ways by becoming members of His body. As we abide in Him, we are able to walk in the overcoming resurrection life that is motivated only by agape. We know agape in that He laid down His life for us.

The cost to God for our redemption is *immeasurable*. The breach in the love of God that was permitted in the Godhead, so that the Son could become sin, was beyond imagining. His ways are past finding out. Such is His love for us. As we see the cost to God for our redemption, we are invited to count the cost of our own discipleship so that we can live and walk in the most excellent way of love that Jesus has opened for us. We abide in Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Article 10

Coming of age and the dignity of choice

David Hall

Every person who is born of God can have a testimony regarding their crisis of 'choice'. This is not a competition of testimony with others concerning real or imagined 'lightning-bolt' experiences. It is, however, a testimony of faith regarding your understanding of the definition of your name and works that God has laid out for you. We call this 'predestination'.

In your late teens or early young adult years, it is normal to have a season in which you wrestle to settle the question of faith concerning your predestination. This 'wrestle' can look like many different things, but God's word will confront them all. It can mean putting off experimental personas that we employ to test how we are received when we feel insecure. That never works! It can be pursuing aspirations for achievements or careers beyond our reach. It can even be deliberately not achieving, for many different reasons.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

Whatever the wrestle is, this is the season when we observe that you are '*coming of age*'. You should find great confidence in this time, since it is God who initiates toward you to provoke this season of wrestling with Him. He is bringing a word of definition to you concerning your name and work as He defined it before the world began.

In this article, we will look at the account of Cain and his failure to choose what God had chosen for him. We will also consider what it means for us to 'come of age', and to choose to stand firm in Christ, even if our peers do not. First, we will look at some of the elements of the first family of God's creation and the first difficulty recorded for a young person who is coming of age.

The first family; Genesis 3-4

Before Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden, they were recovered by the Lord God to learn the culture of fellowship and offering that belongs to Him. It seems that Adam was diligent to invest in the godly fear which led him to repentance, and its commensurate change of culture. We might deduce this from the account of Abel's offering being accepted. Abel could have learned this culture of offering only from Adam's fatherhood. Scripture shows us that Eve was tardy with her diligence to repent of her carnality. Accordingly, she probably brought Cain up according to her own desire or 'image' for what a man should be.

Adam and Eve and their family would meet to worship at the gates of Eden, where the Lord God (Yahweh *Elohim*) would meet with them. It seems that this was the practice of the sanctified line of the antediluvian families from Adam through to Noah and his children. Scripture says that 'in the end of days, it happened that Cain brought an offering to Jehovah (Yahweh) from the fruit of the ground'. Gen 4:3 LITV.

Since Cain had been brought up by Eve in the image of a man, which she had crafted for him, he became a farmer. Cain adopted for himself this image that his mother offered to him, because it gave him verification. He wanted to be accepted by the work of his own hands.

Cain was probably a very successful farmer, perhaps using crop rotation so that food was constantly available in a physical economy that would be very foreign to us. For example, it did not rain until eight generations had passed, and Noah was 'elect' in his generation. Because there was no rain, it would have meant that the seasons of seedtime and harvest would

also have been very differently understood. Yet Cain understood the conditions of the earth and how to receive a harvest.

Cain was probably a major contributor to the sustenance of the family, being the only other food provider for the family apart from Adam. Mankind was vegetarian until the days of Noah after the flood, so Abel's offering would have seemed worthless to Cain, as it did not contribute to the sustenance of his family. Gen 9:3. However, Abel's work produced a pure and acceptable offering.

All this success would have seemed proof to Cain that he was blessed of God and was exercising the works of rulership, or dominion, given to him by God according to his name. However, as we shall see, this imagined capacity for rulership, or dominion, was only part of the false projection of the name that he devised for himself. His true name and dominion were available to him only in the one-Spirit fellowship of Yahweh.

So, we see that Cain might have had a lot of confidence, or even pride, that the work of his hands would be accepted when he made offering at this time called 'the end of days'. We could say that 'the end of days' refers to the end of a working week and the timing of the agape fellowship when the Adam family gathered to the gates of Eden. The book of Numbers translates this same language, 'end of days', to mean 'at the appointed time', perhaps indicating that this was a milestone in the life of Cain. Num 9:2. We could also say that this was the end of the days of Cain's childhood, and it was time for him to 'come of age' and to make offering according to his own connection to the headship fellowship of Yahweh.

At this time, Cain would have accompanied his family to the gates of Eden to make offering. We know, then, that when Cain's offering was rejected, it was in full view of his family. How embarrassing! The first family were not really very much 'together' after their disobedience in Eden. Dad and mum were still 'at odds' in their marriage, and were therefore at odds in their family, because of the curse.

Adam and Abel seemed to be continuing to learn and to participate in the fellowship of offering, while Eve was tardy in repentance and behaved carnally in the family. As a result, Cain had learned a culture of reaction and rejection, believing himself to be a victim when he was corrected. We see this in his response to Yahweh, when Cain was, firstly, called to repentance as an adjustment to his offering, and was offered power, through obedience, to overcome sin. Gen 4:7. This response was then

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

heightened when Cain yielded himself to sin and envy and killed his brother. He received the fruit of his way and complained that he was a victim and would continue to be victimised in his life apart from fellowship. Gen 4:9-16. How often this is the victim cry of those who leave the fellowship of the body of Christ!

Coming of age

Cain's offering was rejected at the time when the Lord required his personal, accountable communication of offering fellowship. This was his chance to personally meet and wrestle with the word of the Father, and to be blessed and redefined according to the name with which God had named him.

When Yahweh came to Cain during his tantrum, after his offering was rejected, He did not come as Yahweh *Elohim*. He came as *Yahweh*. In other words, He came as one fellowship, with one Spirit, one life, and one word. He was calling and compelling Cain to return in obedience to the one fellowship and life which he had spurned in accepting and projecting an image or definition for himself that was not what Yahweh had given to him.

The word of Yahweh's fellowship was proclaimed to Cain as a word of redefinition, asking Cain to *come of age* and to be reconciled with Yahweh and with his family, according to the name that Yahweh had given to him, and not according to his mother's crafting or the success of the work of his own hands. In the moment that the word of Yahweh came to Cain, Yahweh freed him to choose the predestination that God had chosen for him. Cain's choice should have been to humble himself and to become obedient to the fellowship of offering that the Lord Himself had established.

Cain was offered a pathway of faith which would separate him *from* the same lie that Satan spoke to Eve (that there was no fellowship in Yahweh) and would separate him *to* true fellowship with Yahweh and with his family. When Satan spoke to Eve, he fathered the lie that God the Father had acted independently of the fellowship of Yahweh when He forbade their access to the tree of knowledge. Gen 3:1. Satan proffered the lie that the fellowship of Yahweh is a lie. And it is important to note that She willingly gave herself to him and his lie. He was, in fact, saying that Eve could live apart from the fellowship of Yahweh, being 'like God'. In our modern vernacular it would sound like: 'You can project your own image

of who you want to be and what you wish to do in order to give yourself life.'

In contrast to Satan's word to Eve, Yahweh visited Cain as a fellowship of one life, and did not give any substance to Satan's lie that Yahweh *Elohim* was not a fellowship of one Spirit and one life. While we know that Yahweh *Elohim* reconciled Adam and Eve to His fellowship, it seems significant that Yahweh revealed Himself to Cain as a perfect fellowship (Yahweh).

Yahweh's word excluded the chance for Satan's lie to intervene in the opportunity for a conversation of faith to occur according to the word that was proclaimed to Cain. This meant that the effect of the unclean spirit of the family was rolled back so that Cain had opportunity to respond to the word which was offering to him the faith that could ultimately redefine and reconcile Cain to his own name and predestination as a son of God. However, Cain was insulted that his attempt to reveal himself through his own offering only produced a lie, and the substance of who he had been named to be was disparaged by his own behaviour. When God said, 'Bring My offering willingly', He meant that the name and dominion that He has laid down to each person also defines His offering, which they are to bring to Him. Exo 5:2.

This was Cain's opportunity to come of age, and to wrestle with his uncleanness. Idolatry is the projection that he created for himself. In order to come of age, Cain needed to be redefined, from his idolatry, to become the son of God whom he was destined to be. Rom 12:1-2.

The dignity of choice

It is a great encouragement for our young people to grow up with a cohort of believing sons of God. There are many friendships found with those who obey the commands of Christ. Joh 15:14. And their faithfulness and commitment to participate in the conversation of faith in the agape meal proves their deep friendship with one another, even when conversations are difficult, and when they are wounded in the house of their friends. Zec 13:6. There are times of thanksgiving and rejoicing together as each disciple continues in their response to the Lord and chooses His predestination for themselves, personally.

Indeed, we all give thanks to the Lord as each one *comes of age* and we observe the simplicity of their testimony to the obedience of faith, as well as their personal connection to the word and the fellowship of the

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

presbytery, giving them access to the tree of life to nurture the divine nature.

There are also times when we are surprised and grieved when someone whom we thought was a brother or sister in Christ seems to suddenly choose to leave the fellowship of the body of Christ. Our initial response can be quite selfish. 'How could they leave us; I thought we were friends?' We also feel a sense of grief and loss because we understand that they have become enemies of *God*; they are now dead to Him.

Then we notice that we can become angry and reactive and begin to think about taking a stance to oppose their position. Alternatively, we may seek to normalise or bridge the gap between their position and ours, as sons of God, in order to maintain a *pseudo*-friendship with them in case we can save them. But we cannot save them. They have spurned the word of the Father, and only turning to the word of the Father can save them. Any attempt for us to bridge the gap on this issue is not reasonably possible since they have made themselves an enemy of God by befriending the world, with its cultural priority. Jas 4:4. As we said earlier, the only way for them to return is to come to their senses and humble themselves first to God the Father. It is He Who brings them the Christ the door Who gives entrance to the sheepfold.

We need to realise that our responses to try to resolve the matter are basically self-centred, because we have become the measure or judge of their offence toward us personally. The apostle Paul would not participate in this deliberation. His explanation was, 'It is not my business to judge those who are not part of the group of believers. God will judge them, but you must judge those who are part of your group. The Scriptures say, "Make the evil person leave your group".' 1Co 5:12 ERV. 2Th 3:2.

God the Father has given to everyone who has ever been conceived, the choice to become His son. Indeed, the gospel of sonship has resounded throughout the world since the heavens were created, and before the firmament, or sky, that we see, was created. Psa 19. Those who leave the fellowship of the lampstand church to which we are called as sons of God have been given the right to depart, by our heavenly Father, because He gave to all of us the dignity of 'choice.' The right to make this choice to be His son or not is essential to the freedom that belongs to our identity.

As it was for Cain, God, in His mercy, sends a word of redefinition to every son when they come of age. Of course, this occurs at every

milestone age of a person, throughout their walk in this life. This is because there is a maturity, commensurate with each age or stage of life, to which every person must measure themselves as a son in the will of God. The designation of baby, child, teenager, young adult, adult, husband, wife, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, great grand etc., all need commensurate maturity and growth, according to the name that God has given to each of them.

We might be grieved when a person decides to leave the fellowship of the body of Christ, but we do offer to the person who decides to leave, *the dignity of their choice*, along with all its consequences. It is interesting to note that we are still offering fellowship to those departing while honouring their right to depart.

It is because of *consequences* that the one who departs, and the ones who remain, find a sense of grief. The one who departs will demand that the life that they are used to devouring (family and body of Christ relationships) should continue. The ones who remain become increasingly aware that this devouring cannot continue, for their sake and for the sake of the body of Christ, since the suffering of the one who has departed is no longer the suffering of Christ. Col 1:24. Psa 68. Luk 2:52.

In most cases, as it was with Cain, there will be some angst in the one who departs. However, remembering the words of Paul above, we cannot endeavour to understand, and do not justify, their reasons for departing by embracing or trying to understand any of their accusations against Christ or His body, since this is the lie that they have chosen to believe and to justify their leaving. If we agree that they were misunderstood or that cultural lines are too harsh, and we engage in their arguments to try to resolve them, we are engaging wisdom that is not from above, but is earthly. Such reasoning does not belong to the wisdom from above. Jas 3:15.

You can see that if you engage in their debate, *you* would be caught into making judgement in favour of their complaint against the word of God and His church. If we engage with them in this manner, we have turned ourselves from receiving from the tree of life. In truth, we would be inviting them to bring their uncleanness back into our family and to the agape meal. Jud 1:11-12.

The frightening thing for us is that if we engage in this manner, it is because we are not resolved with our own sonship toward the Father. We are vulnerable because our lifestyle and projection has also been shaken.

YOU ARE THE ELECT!

We are in danger of agreeing with their angst against the fellowship of the presbytery. At this point, we are at risk of departing with them, having come to agree with the reasons that they have expressed for the exercise of their right to leave. We may not choose to leave the comfort of the community of the church to which we have become accustomed, but this does not guarantee that we will be part of the bride city. In the name of love, we may have chosen and begun to live a lie in our family, because we believe that no-one understands that our circumstances are unique, and so we expect God or church leaders to make an exception for us.

However, the apostle Paul reminds us that 'the only temptations that you have are the same temptations that all people have. But you can trust God. He will not let you be tempted more than you can bear. But when you are tempted, God will also give you a way to escape that temptation. Then you will be able to endure it.' Consequently, if we believe a lie, and live according to that lie, in our family, we will forfeit our part in the bride city, along with our part in our family, for outside the city 'are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practises a lie'. Rev 22:15.

The seven profiles of carnality

A spiritual person is enabled by the sevenfold Spirit of God, given to them by the Holy Spirit, to *overcome* all seven aspects of carnality – pride, naivety, foolishness, mockery, laziness, scoffing and wickedness – as they participate each day in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings. Pro 24:16. Solomon described a spiritual person who is overcoming carnality as a **wise person**. He wrote, ‘A *wise man* will hear and increase learning, and a *man of understanding* will attain wise counsel ... Rebuke a *wise man*, and he will love you. Give instruction to a *wise man*, and he will still be wiser; teach a *just man*, and he will increase learning.’ Pro 1:5. Pro 9:8-9. As spiritual sons of God, we are overcoming all seven profiles of carnality as we heed and obey what the Spirit says to the churches. Rev 2-3.

<p>P The proud, or arrogant, are haughty in spirit – they exalt themselves in the same manner as Satan, and are only concerned about themselves. Pro 30:13. They are self-focused and <i>self-obsessed</i>, often consumed with their own appearance. Pro 6:17.</p> <p>The proud are <i>greedy for gain</i> – whether it be financial, possessions, reputation, etc – using ‘bribes’ to advance their own purpose; joining themselves to like-minded, successful people. Their passion for success often draws others to themselves because they project an image which others idolise.</p> <p>The proud person is also the <i>depressive person</i> – self-pitying or self-loathing. Instead of taking accountability for their life, others are always to blame for their predicament. Solomon described this self-pity as ‘a broken spirit’. Pro 18:14.</p>	<p>Examples: The narcissist, the beauty queen, the influencer, the executive, the aspirer, the judge-and-executioner.</p> <p>Destruction: Solomon explained that the Lord will destroy the house of the proud, for they are an abomination to Him. Pro 15:25. Though they join forces with others, and their success appears to flourish, their unquenchable desire for gain becomes their own destruction. Solomon stated, ‘Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud [and be caught in their destruction].’ Pro 16:18-19.</p> <p>Recovery: We overcome the propensity to pride by obtaining the Spirit of Yahweh, which is Their oneness – granting to us the capacity to humble ourselves under the hand of God. Yahweh <i>Elohim</i> is the full expression of humility. For this reason, the apostle Paul stated, ‘I say to everyone ... not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.’ Rom 12:3.</p>
<p>N The naive, or simple, is one who lacks insight and understanding. They are immature and <i>refuse to ‘grow up’</i>. Pro 1:22.</p> <p>The naive are deliberately ‘gullible’; they intrinsically <i>want</i> to believe ‘the best’ in everyone. Without discernment, they automatically believe everything they hear! Pro 14:15. They rush into situations, and do not consider their course of action. Pro 22:3.</p> <p>The naive is <i>not grounded in reality</i>. They are captivated by their imagination and by their optimistic perception of various possibilities. In a group setting, they are <i>swift</i> to run with others’ ideas; enthusiastically desiring to ‘go with the flow’. Pro 6:18.</p>	<p>Examples: The dreamer, the befriender, the must-be-nice, the happy-go-lucky, the hippie, the entrepreneur.</p> <p>Destruction: The naive are destroyed by their waywardness, and because of <i>the length of time</i> in which they remain naive. Pro 1:32. They are unstable – tossed here and there by every ‘good idea’.</p> <p>Recovery: We overcome our propensity towards naivety by obtaining the Spirit of wisdom in the fellowship of the <i>agape</i> meal. Pro 9:4-5. The wisdom from above teaches us <i>prudence</i> – that is, the spiritual skills that are required for us to ‘navigate’ through our day to day life. Pro 14:8,14. Furthermore, we accept the reality of the <i>grief</i> that we will unavoidably encounter as we engage the cross of Christ in every relationship.</p>
<p>F The fool is an <i>undisciplined</i> character who hates instruction because they have no heart for it. Pro 1:7. Pro 17:16. As a result, the fool lacks understanding because they <i>would not ask</i> for it. Pro 8:5-6.</p> <p>The fool does not learn from their own mistakes and, instead, <i>repeats their folly</i>. Pro 26:11. The fool is incorrigible – and will in no way apply themselves to understanding their own behaviour. Pro 14:8.</p> <p>For a fool, their <i>own way seems right</i> in their own eyes. Pro 12:15. The presumption that their way is right before the Lord is described as ‘the sacrifice of fools’. Ecc 5:1. The fool is so enamoured with <i>their own way</i> that they love every opportunity to tell you about it! Pro 12:23.</p>	<p>Examples: The daredevil, the ‘she’ll-be-right’, the unteachable, the ‘idiot’, the rebel, the show-off, the self-confident.</p> <p>Destruction: The complacency, or self-approval, of the fool, and their rejection of instruction, will destroy them. Pro 1:32. They are <i>deceived</i> by their own folly, which inevitably causes them harm. Pro 14:8. However, the fool considers it an abomination to leave their own evil way; and thus, they remain committed to it. Pro 13:19. Pro 26:11.</p> <p>Recovery: We overcome our propensity to foolishness by obtaining the Spirit of understanding. This grants us the capacity to be <i>teachable</i>. We <i>intreat</i> fellowship, instead of presuming to know the answer. We are quick to hear, instead of being quick to speak from our own understanding.</p>

M A **mock**er puts others down for the sake of their own personal validity and power. Mockery is jesting at others and treating them with contempt or disapproval. One example of mockery is the use of derisive *humour* as a means of putting others down.

Flattery, however, is another expression of mocking; equally motivated by hatred. Pro 26:24-26. Those who flatter others do so to *gain an advantage* over them. Jud 1:16.

The mocker also uses *gossip* to disclose secret knowledge about others for the purpose of 'trading' and control. Gossip is *to talk or listen unaccountably*. Gossip is carnal, and becomes increasingly wanton and demonic. Pro 11:13. Pro 26:22.

Examples: The joker, the school yard bully, the politician, the teaser, the 'teacher's pet', the flirt, the critic, the overly-positive-affirmer.

Destruction: The mocker will be destroyed by their own schemes to gain advantage over others. Pro 26:27. Their wickedness and deceit will be exposed before all. Pro 26:26. And those who mock their father and mother will be consumed by the familiar spirit. Pro 30:17.

Recovery: We overcome our propensity for mocking and flattering by obtaining the Spirit of counsel. This grants us the capacity to offer ourselves to *truly meet and appreciate others*, without selfish intent.

L The **lazy**, or sluggard, person *lacks diligence*. Pro 12:27. Even though they might be very busy and industrious, they do not apply themselves with diligence to *the works of their sonship*.

The lazy person does not nourish their own sonship through prayer and devotions but, rather, seeks to 'feed off' the conversation of others. Pro 19:24. The lazy person is hesitant to offer themselves relationally; preferring, rather, to *avoid* the toil and perseverance that relational fruitfulness entails.

The lazy person is quick to accuse the integrity of the person from whom they receive work - such as their boss. Pro 26:13-16. They are like the man who hid his one talent, *instead of multiplying it*; claiming that his master was 'a hard man'. Mat 25:24-26.

Examples: The procrastinator, the perfectionist, the opinion-maker, the beggar, the couch potato, the gamer, the window shopper.

Destruction: The *covetousness* of the lazy person is their destruction. Pro 21:25-26. Furthermore, their lack of application causes them poverty and neediness. Pro 6:9-11.

Recovery: We overcome our propensity for laziness by obtaining the Spirit of might. This grants us the capacity to courageously set our mind on the works belonging to our sonship. We are enabled to *finish* the works that are set before us! 1Ch 28:20. Eph 2:10.

S The **scoffer**, or scorner, loves *self-based knowledge* for the purpose of *debate and argument*. Self-based knowledge is a leaven which causes a person to become puffed up. 1Co 8:1.

The scoffer is a proud and inflated person who does not like to be corrected. Pro 21:24. They lack submission, and refrain from seeking out wisdom. Pro 15:12. They express disregard or contempt towards others, particularly the messengers of God's word.

There is no benefit gained in correcting a scoffer, for they will simply 'feed off' the argument. Pro 9:7. They hate the one trying to correct them. Pro 9:8. Their only validity is in proving themselves to be 'right'.

Examples: The debater, the expert, the professor, the pedantic, the know-it-all, the disputer, the contradictor.

Destruction: In the end, the scoffer inherits scorn for himself. Pro 3:34. Having shown a prolonged disdain for correction, they are removed from the group, as a means of remedying contention and strife. Pro 22:10. Furthermore, those who are spiritual will shun the scoffer's gangrenous conversation. 2Ti 2:16-17.

Recovery: We overcome our propensity for scoffing by obtaining the Spirit of knowledge. This is the true knowledge of who God is. With this knowledge, we are illuminated to know our own name and the names of others.

W The **wicked**, or violent, person *rejoices in devising and doing evil*. They continually scheme in their heart as to how they can further their wicked plans. Psa 36:4. Pro 4:14-17. They lack sleep due to their continual scheming or because of anxious over-thinking. Pro 4:16.

The wicked person seeks to gain an advantage over others through *control, manipulation and relational game-playing*. They speak perverse things in order to *draw others* after themselves. Pro 23:33. Act 20:30. They gain validity through the support they are able to procure from others. Pro 1:11,14.

The wicked give themselves over to their own wickedness; it becomes their whole way of life. Pro 4:14. They are *quick to point the finger in blame*. Pro 6:13.

Examples: The sleezy businessman, the victim, the manipulator, the gang leader, the schemer, the lobbyist, the troublemaker, the scoundrel.

Destruction: The way of the wicked is like darkness that causes them to stumble. Pro 4:19. Their violence and increasing transgressions cause their destruction. Pro 29:16. Their capacity for spiritual illumination is progressively removed until they are *suddenly uprooted*, and are cut off from the land of their inheritance. Pro 24:20. Pro 2:22. Pro 6:14-15.

Recovery: We overcome our propensity toward wickedness by obtaining the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. This grants us the capacity to heed the word of the cross, and to cease from our wicked ways. Our transgressions are removed from us as we learn the way of blamelessness.