

Sons of God established  
in the body and bride of Christ

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# SONS OF GOD ESTABLISHED IN THE BODY AND BRIDE OF CHRIST

National Youth Seminar – May 2024

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# Article I

## The gospel of peace

*Luke Pomery*

In this season, the Lord is coming to enquire who is worthy, according to their response to the gospel of peace. Mat 10:11. The gospel of peace is proclaimed by Christ's disciple-messengers who are sent to establish 'sons of peace'. Luk 10:6. As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who *preach the gospel of peace!*' Rom 10:15. The call to become a son of peace comes to every *individual*, without their being dependent on the response of others within their household.

The gospel of peace declares the end of all flesh, and delivers a person to the enduring word of God by which they are born again to become a new creation. 1Pe 1:23-25. As the prophet Isaiah declared, 'All flesh is grass ... but the word of our God stands forever.' Isa 40:6-8. The end of all flesh was fully accomplished in the offering of Christ. Gen 6:13. Only those who are established as part of the new creation in Christ will inherit eternal life in fellowship with Yahweh. 2Co 5:17. The implications of this message are vast. However, the critical issue which we need to negotiate is our *presumption* that the activities that we initiate from our flesh are 'of the Spirit'. Psa 19:13.

The messenger extends the gospel of peace to us by testifying that the process of the word is active within their own life. As they minister the word through *testimony*, they are sharing the one bread of which we *all* partake. 1Co 10:16-17. They are 'of like passions' with the ones with whom they are sharing. Jas 5:17. Peace is not some inherent quality within the messenger but, rather, is obtained only through submission to the lordship of Christ. As Peter declared, 'The word which God sent to the children of Israel, *preaching peace through Jesus Christ - He is Lord of all.*' Act 10:36.

The gospel of peace that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah proclaims the command of Christ, our great High Priest. Luk 1:17. The command of the priesthood of Christ is *the word of our name* to which we are appointed, or predestined. 1Pe 2:8. This is the enduring word of God. This command delivers a choice to each of us. We choose to remain in the darkness of our own understanding or we choose to respond with illumination, leading to obedience. To those who are obedient, Christ becomes a precious Cornerstone; however, to those who are disobedient, He becomes a Stone of stumbling. 1Pe 2:6-8.

### Receiving the gospel of peace

In order to become a 'worthy' Christian, we need to receive the gospel of peace with humility. Jas 1:21. A person who is becoming worthy confesses, '*I am not worthy of the gospel and of all the Lord's mercies.*' Gen 32:10. However, this is not our default response. By default, we *presume* that we *are* worthy of the gospel because of our upbringing and proximity to the messenger. When we are enabled by the anointing of grace ministered in the word, however, we can repent and turn from this presumed 'right' that we are an heir of the gospel. Luk 15:19. Instead of *presuming* to be equal to the word and to the messenger, we are enabled to worship God, *being joined to the same fellowship.* Rev 19:10.

Importantly, there are certain modes of relating that do not belong on the ground of fellowship that is being extended to us by disciple-messengers. These modes include: seeking empowerment from, or collegiality with, the messenger; being unwilling to let go of control over the agenda of the engagement; seeking to connect with the messenger on a 'mateship' basis; choosing to remain in the flesh and being unwilling to address matters of sanctification; and conducting a conversation of assessment, opinion and complaint. While these attitudes or propensities *are* within us all, we remain unworthy of the gospel *if we are unwilling* to turn from



these modes of engagement when the messenger entreats us to fellowship.

The *first* lesson we need to learn is to share in open-hearted fellowship with the messengers, who have likewise opened their hearts to us! 2Co 6:11. 2Co 7:2. Corporately, we recognise that abiding in open-hearted fellowship has not been our culture. Luk 10:7. Rather, we have protected ourselves from the input of others by remaining closed about our struggles. The presentation of a good image that is motivated by the flesh is of no substance and, like chaff, is passing away. However, the very testimony of the messenger as they proclaim the gospel of Christ, of which they are not ashamed, enables us to speak openly about the fleshly dynamics within our lives, marriages and families. Rom 1:16.

Furthermore, as recipients of the gospel, we extend our hands in hospitality toward the messengers and our brethren as an expression of unfeigned *agape*. Luk 10:7. 1Pe 1:22.

We continue to receive the ministry of peace as we accept *the process* which the word precipitates. Mat 13:22. The word comes to bring cultural reformation in our individual lives, in our marriages, in our families and in our relationships from house to house. We become a *son of peace* as we 'sell' all of the earthly treasures that we have accumulated according to the flesh and, instead, walk *as a disciple of Christ*. Luk 10:6. Jesus explained that selling all (choosing Him as Lord over every other priority) and becoming His disciple is 'the condition of peace' that He requires from us! Luk 14:31-33. The peace which we obtain is a capacity for relationship with God the Father and with one another in the fellowship of the body of Christ. Eph 2:16. Also, we have peace as we walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:6. The fruit of receiving the gospel of peace is seen in a change of conversation, which is now based at the tree of life, enabling the recovery of fellowship within our houses.

## Established in the body of Christ

Those who are 'born to see' by the enduring word of God will come to Christ to be built upon Him. Joh 3:3. 1Pe 2:4. The Holy Spirit, whom we have received as an anointing from Christ, teaches us to 'hide ourselves', through offering, in the body of Christ. 1Jn 2:20,27. Col 3:3. This contrasts with our desire to 'find ourselves' through self-verifying activities, including the 'good' of our religious endeavours.

We are joined to the corporate body of Christ through baptism. The Father sows us into the fellowship of the body of Christ as individual

members according to His good pleasure. 1Co 12:18,27. Paul stated, 'So we, being many [individuals], are one [corporate] body in Christ, and individually members of one another [joined together].' Rom 12:5.

The focus of the body of Christ is our *individual sonship*. Jesus likened an individual's participation within the body of Christ to a branch of a vine. He said, 'I am the Vine, you are the branches.' Joh 15:5. As the Vinedresser, the Father prunes each branch to the reality of their name and works. Joh 15:2. The lesson for us, as branches, is *to abide in the Vine*, so that we bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father. Joh 15:8. As we abide in Christ, we bring forth the fruit that He has already accomplished for us in His offering. However, those branches who *cease to bear such fruit* in the fellowship of Christ's offering will eventually be cast out and burned in the fire. Joh 15:6.

The Holy Spirit enables our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings. The process of Christ's seven woundings is operative only as we continue to abide *in the fellowship of the corporate body of Christ*. It is through our participation in Christ's seven wounds that we can lay aside all carnality, and can be built upon Christ. 1Pe 2:1. Notably, as members of His one body, we are being processed both individually and corporately.

The body of Christ, as the context of our process, is described as 'a threshing floor'. Mat 3:11-12. If we do not accept this reality, we may become engaged in many activities that have a *religious* appearance, yet do not result in life. Specifically, then, young people who persist in avoiding their unique participation in Christ's circumcision will begin to view the relationships that they form within the church as being a favourable *social* community *for their own benefit*. In reality, they are seeking merely a personal sense of security and a close circle of friends, from among whom they hope to acquire a future marriage partner.

As individuals who are choosing to abide in the fellowship of the body of Christ, *we will continue to experience His processive work* in us each day. Christ uses the word of God as a processive agent to polarise every person either in or out of the kingdom. Heb 10:32. It is for this reason that we are to continually take heed to what the Spirit is saying to the churches in every season. Heb 2:1.

It is helpful to realise that illumination according to the word of present truth is essential. However, in and of itself, it is not sufficient for salvation. *Illumination should lead us to a response of repentance and faith*, by which we are joined to our personal participation in the body of

Christ where the will of God is being fulfilled. Our *engagement in the process* of sanctification is evidence that we are receiving the grace of God. 1Pe 2:3.

The Spirit is our Helper as we choose, by His enabling, His lordship in our life. 2Co 3:17. As we turn to His lordship, the veil of our self-righteousness is being removed, and we are enabled to meet Christ face to face as He speaks to us through the word of the presbytery, within the context of the body of Christ. 2Co 3:16. As we meet Christ, the true condition of our heart and the severity of our disobedience are unmasked. Furthermore, we meet our name and expression as a son of God by looking into Christ's face. It is here that our identity is truly verified and healed.

We do not obtain the definition of our sonship from our parents, leaders, friends or spouse. *Rather, each individual learns who they are from the face of Christ, which is 'the corporate mirror' of the presbytery.* 2Co 3:18. Progressively, we obtain the glory of our sonship through obedience to the word that proceeds from the face of Christ. Php 3:16.

## Coming forth as the bride of Christ

It is important to understand that the body of Christ is the context in which *the bride of Christ is being formed*. The blood, water and Spirit, which are operative within the fellowship of the body of Christ, are the elements through which we are processed, washed and established as an overcoming, firstfruits people. These elements are processing us, individually and corporately, within the context of the body of Christ. We are *first* made members of His corporate *body*, and are *subsequently* established as part of the corporate *bride* of Christ. Eph 5:30-32. From the body of Christ, His bride is coming forth as a helper who is comparable to Him.

We need to be built together as 'living stones' within the corporate *temple of His body* so that we may obtain our entry, 'through the gates', *into the bride city*. Rev 22:14. The bride of Christ is seen as being a multitude of overcoming families and households. Simply being born again and joined to the body of Christ does not automatically grant us entry to, and citizenship in, the bride city. We need to *obtain* this right through a culture of *blamelessness*.

We are a blameless and overcoming people as we walk in the light of the word, where the blood of Christ purifies our souls from sin. 1Pe 1:22.

We are progressively delivered from our former, fallen ways of living as they are purged from our lives. We are then blameless in the sight of God because we are living sanctified lives.

The apostle Peter connected the activity of living stones being built into the temple to spiritual households who are being *restored to the headship of Christ*. 1Pe 3:1,7. What each person learns from the headship of Christ in the body is then expressed by offering within the context of a household. The fellowship of first love within a family and household is an expression of the bride of Christ on the Earth.

The Holy Spirit enables each person to submit within the order of headship in their household. The order of headship is *a flow of life* as each person learns to make offering according to their sanctification. This flow of life within a house is part of 'the river of life' that flows from the throne in the midst of the New Jerusalem. Rev 22:1.

The Holy Spirit is the Helper of the *bride* of Christ, enabling her to be a helper comparable to her Husband, Christ. By the Spirit, the bride has the capacity to nurture the divine nature within children who have been born in covenant homes. It also includes the capacity to compel others to be reconciled to God and to become established as part of the new creation. Within a household, the help of the Holy Spirit is visible as He enables a husband to stand in submission to Christ as His Head; and as He enables a wife to stand in submission to her husband, as unto Christ.

Through obedience to the word of our name, each person receives capacity to lay down their life to reveal another within the fellowship and order of headship. The fellowship and order of headship proceeds from the Father, to Christ, to a husband, and then to a wife. 1Co 11:3. Relational enmity, or disharmony, is an indication that a couple are stumbling at the stumbling Stone through disobedience. 1Pe 2:8. They are disobedient to the word that is establishing them in the order and fellowship of headship.

### **The vessel of multiplication**

The formation of a bride as a helper who is comparable to Christ is necessary for the work of bringing to birth, and nurturing, a multitude of sons of God. The bride is the vessel of multiplication. Amazingly, the Lord has chosen *us* to be part of the last generation and, as part of the bride of Christ, we are to bring into the kingdom of God, from every

nation, tribe, people and tongue, a multitude which no-one can number. Rev 7:9.

When Christ sent out the seventy-two disciples to establish a network of worthy homes, He firstly said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.' Luk 10:2. The *labourers* are the network of worthy homes.

King David described the New Jerusalem, the bride city, in the time of the end as 'a city that is *compact together*'. Psa 122:3. The bride city is a multitude of households who are *knit together* in the fellowship of first love. They form a network, figuratively described as 'a dragnet', that can catch a multitude of fish, being representative of people, from the great 'sea' of humanity. Eze 47:10. Those who are born as sons of God and are delivered from their carnality are gathered into the kingdom of God. On the other hand, those who remain carnal, even though they were born again, are cast into the furnace of fire. Mat 13:47-50.

As He did with Peter and the other disciples, Jesus is making *us* 'fishers of men'. Mar 1:17. After Christ's resurrection, and the disciples were born from above by receiving the Holy Spirit, Christ met them at the Sea of Tiberias. Joh 21:1. He directed them to let down their nets for a catch. Even though they had caught nothing all night, they were obedient to Christ's command and caught a great multitude of fish without their nets breaking. Joh 21:11. This great multitude of fish was a type of the great harvest that would come into the kingdom on the Day of Pentecost and then later during the time of the end. Isa 66:7-8.

Even though we have been figuratively 'fishing' throughout the midnight hour of the church age, through various evangelistic initiatives, we acknowledge that we have indeed 'caught' *very few*. Evidently, many of our initiatives were misdirected, because we had not been adequately illuminated to the role of *the bride of Christ* in the birthing and nurturing of sons of God.

Even though we have caught very little to date, now, in obedience to Christ's command to us, we are able to believe for the 'catch' which He will bring forth in this current season and also in the days just ahead of us, in the time of the end. As we are being established as a network of houses who belong to the bride city, we are receiving *grace to compel others*. This is 'the gospel of peace' being shared as a testimony in our mouths.



## Article 2

# The glory of the Lord shall be revealed in us

*Michael Fox*

Isaiah recorded that the wonderous outcome of the ministry of the gospel of peace to all people is that 'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together'. Isa 40:5. The glory of the Lord, and His purpose to make man in His image and likeness, is fully revealed in Jesus Christ, the glorified and risen Son of Man. Joh 13:31-32. However, even more wonderous, and equally humbling, is the fact that God chose that His glory would be revealed and manifest through us! As we respond to the gospel of peace in a worthy manner, we participate in revealing the glory of the Lord because we are becoming the person whom He chose us to be, and we are filling out the place that He established for us within His fellowship forever. Joh 17:10. 1Pe 4:11. 2Th 1:10-12.

Our focus in this article is to appreciate that the effect of the gospel of peace is to deal with the issues that prevent us from growing and maturing to become the person whom God predestined us to be.

Isaiah referred to these issues, which impede our entry into the kingdom of God, as 'valleys and mountains'. Isa 40:4. 'Every valley shall be exalted' means that our identity flaws and frailties that prevent us from meeting and relating to others are being healed. 'Every mountain and hill brought low' speaks of the removal of our projections, selfish ambitions and self-expression that war against our name as a son of God. The outcome is that a person has the opportunity to walk on 'level ground', providing them with an abundant entry into the kingdom of God. 2Pe 1:10-11.

As those who are born of God, it is the love of God being poured into our hearts that compels us to walk forward on this pathway of salvation. 2Co 5:14. Our motivation is not to 'find ourselves'. Rather, the purpose of the gospel is that we would know God and glorify Him. Joh 17:3.

1Co 6:20. Having received the love of God, our testimony is that we no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ. 2Co 5:15. We know Him more and more each day through a personal relationship with Him, and we glorify God through our obedient participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Joh 15:8.

The apostle Paul testified that his desire to *know God* is what motivated him to walk on the pathway of salvation. Even though his identity was being recovered, and his projections were being dealt with through his fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, that was not the reason why he took the journey. He actually *counted as rubbish* all of his self-focused desire to become a 'better version' of himself or a more successful Christian, for the sake of gaining Christ. Php 3:8-11.

## Identity and name

Knowing God and glorifying Him by being the person whom He chose us to be highlights the importance of understanding the nature of the identity and name that God gives to us. A person receives their eternal *identity* from their human parents through the natural process of procreation. A person's identity includes their natural skills, abilities, and intellect. The Scriptures refer to the identity of a person as 'the spirit of man', which is formed by the Lord. Zec 12:1. 1Co 2:11. However, it is only when a person is born again of the divine nature that they receive their *name as a son of God*.

The gospel of peace proclaims the word of God that stands forever. Isa 40:6-8. This is the word of our name as a son of God, which was foreknown, discussed and chosen in the fellowship of Yahweh, *before*. Psa 33:11. Rom 8:29. Being born again through this living and enduring



word of God enables us to 'stand' in the full measure of who God named us to be, and to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim* forever. 1Pe 1:23-25.

When we are born again, we are illuminated to see the kingdom of God and our place within it. Joh 3:3. Jesus highlighted the reality that new birth is the beginning of a life-long journey of salvation by which a person *enters* the kingdom of God. Joh 3:5. The Lord's initiative to level all of the valleys and mountains that we are faced with on this journey means that we can make it all the way to the inheritance that He has predestined for us.

### Valleys and mountains

The 'valleys' in our life refer to the identity flaws and frailties that we have on account of sin, the influence of familiar spirits, and historical hurts. These result in particular expressions of carnality such as anxiety or depression, laziness, compulsive behaviours or anger. Even though we have been connected to our *name* as a son of God, our capacity to express our identity according to the truth of that name as we meet and relate to others, depends on the ongoing work of regeneration that deals with the condition of our *identity*. Tit 3:5. Every person requires this healing of their identity.

The 'mountains' refer to our projections and their associated 'wealth' that have been accrued through trading within the economy of Babylon. A projection is the image that we define for ourselves. It is how we desire to be seen by others; but it is a lie and of no substance, because the image is sourced from within us. In contrast, the word of our name, which proceeds to us from God, is the truth and substance of who we are called to be.

To trade with our projection means that we 'sell' this image to others to gain the 'profit' of feeling valued or of maintaining a desirable reputation. Obviously, this may be the desire to appear successful, intelligent or wise. Equally, however, a person may choose to appear naive or even unintelligent, in order to avoid taking accountability for their life. They trade on the fact that others will excuse their immature thoughts and behaviours, assuming, 'That is just what they are like'.

Being a 'good' Christian is often the image that we project. When Jesus addressed the rich young ruler, the man went away sorrowful because he was unwilling to sell all of the riches that he had gained by trading with

his 'good' religious projection. Jesus noted with His disciples that 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'. Mar 10:25. Evidently, these mountains, which are common to all men, are an impediment to our entry into the kingdom of God.

We rejoice in the provision of the gospel of peace to deal with these matters, because *every* person is born disadvantaged, to some degree or another. Paul explained that, on account of sin, death has spread to all men. Rom 5:12. 'Death' is not limited to the expiration of a person's biological life. It also includes *the issues of mortality* - physical weaknesses, sicknesses, diseases, genetic disorders, emotional imbalances, and so on. Furthermore, it includes physical, psychological, and emotional sickness, and the dystrophy of identity due to *oppression by familiar and unclean spirits*. These issues affect the condition of our identity.

Importantly, the effect of the gospel of peace to 'level the road' for every person means that no-one has an excuse to continue in their sin. Joh 15:22. No-one is a victim of the damaging effect of sin upon their heart, whether it is because of the sin of others, such as their own family, or on account of their own sin. Regardless of how 'deep' the damage to a person's identity runs or how 'high' they aim in order to make a name for themselves, the grace of God coming with His word enables every person to believe to come forth as new creation as they walk forward in Christ. 2Co 5:17.

### Walking on the highway of holiness

The prophet Isaiah referred to the journey of salvation as a road, or a highway, called 'the Highway of Holiness'. Isa 35:8. 'Holiness' can equally mean 'sanctification', which is God's will for us. We are sanctified when we are being the person whom God named us to be and are doing the works that He prepared for us from *before*. We are set free from our bondage to sin when we are born of God and can, therefore, choose to obey the word of God by the enabling of the Spirit. Through obedience, we obtain our sanctification. In other words, those who obey God grow up to be the person whom the Father, Son and Holy Spirit discussed and chose them to be.

Note that our focus is not on 'fixing ourselves up'. Rather, our focus is to keep *walking with Christ in obedience to His word*. Christ pioneered this highway of holiness through the seven wounding events of His offering

and suffering journey. Through fellowship in Christ's journey, we are overcoming our 'valleys' and 'mountains' each day, which allows us to continue to grow to the full measure of our sanctification. The outcome is that we will inherit eternal life. Rom 6:22.

The Lord is not asking that we define our own identity flaws and frailties. In fact, most of the time, we are not even aware of the exact nature of the issues within our heart that the Lord is healing. What we do know is that God is speaking a word to us that grants us *illumination*. The light of His word illuminates us so that we see the next step that He is directing us to take as He leads us to maturity. We can relax about our perceived 'progress', because entering the kingdom of God is a journey which involves the whole of our life.

Interestingly, our 'mountains' are often our fleshly endeavours to compensate for our 'valleys'. Consider a person who has low self-esteem. This fracture in their identity is a 'valley'. Their compensatory 'mountain' may be their insistence on always dominating conversation with others in order to *appear* strong and confident. This eccentric behaviour impedes their capacity to relate freely with others.

This highlights an important point. It is the Lord who ministers healing to our identity. But when it comes to our projections, and the associated sense of security and worth that we pursue, the Lord asks that we *ourselves* command the mountainous projections in our life to be removed. As our identity is being strengthened and regenerated, we are enabled, more and more, to stand in the reality of who we are, and to put off our projections.

For this very purpose, the Lord grants us faith in the word that He speaks to us. Removing mountains is our accountable choice, by faith, to turn from our familiar ways of approaching life and relating to others. Jesus instructed His disciples, saying, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.' Mar 11:22-23.

He was explaining that when we walk obediently on the pathway of salvation, our identity will be progressively healed from all manner of issues, including low self-esteem, continual doubting, or compulsive behaviours. Then, because our identity is being healed, and we are being established in our obedience as a son of God, we ought to exercise the authority of faith to turn in repentance from our projections and to cast

them into the sea of God's forgetfulness. Having received God's mercy to heal our identity flaws, we renounce the projections that we were hiding behind because we were ashamed of our identity flaws. 2Co 4:2.

Furthermore, we are able also to 'sell all' of the 'riches' that we gain by trading with our projections. We no longer rely on the feeling of being noticed or celebrated by others. We grow in confidence to be ourselves and to express interest, love and care toward others, because we are receiving faith to obey the word of our name. Christ grants us authority to stand and meet the call of God upon our life. We are able to take initiatives toward fellowship with others without fear of 'getting it wrong'. We are able to stay true to who we are in every situation. Our wholeness of identity means that we can resist temptations such as the peer pressure encountered at school or in the workplace: for example, the pressure to join conversations that are disrespectful to authorities or the pressure to engage in worldly 'dating' behaviours.

The apostle James encouraged us to rejoice in this impact of the gospel of peace. Jas 1:9-11. We are all the 'rich man' who glories in his humiliation because he is thankful that he is being rightly measured to the truth of his name as a son of God. Likewise, we are all the 'poor man' who rejoices in his exaltation because the identity frailties and flaws that undermine his capacity to meet and relate with others, and to express his identity according to his name, are being healed. We are no longer a victim of our circumstances and are able to make straight paths for our feet.

### Choosing our name and calling

The faith that we receive when we hear the gospel proclaimed enables us to believe in our name as a son of God, to choose it, and to 'stand up' to be the person whom God has predestined us to be. Each son of God receives the same measure of faith which is their authority to express their sanctification. Rom 12:3. Jesus referred to this authority as being 'your [one] mina', given to each son. Luk 19:16

We labour with this measure of faith by obeying the word of Christ through the strength of the Holy Spirit who leads us each day. We carry the authority to stand through all manner of difficulties without 'going missing'. We can cope with the realities of relating, even in circumstances where we feel misunderstood or overlooked. The authority that we have from Christ, by faith, is true strength to take accountability for our life, for what we are doing, and for the impact that we are having on others.

As we apply ourselves diligently to the word of our name, we are able to let go of any other fallen pursuit of empowerment. The alternative mechanisms that we employ to gain a sense of importance, power or significance are of the flesh and have no place in the kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ also gives a measure of *grace* to each son of God according to the abilities that belong to their unique identity. Jesus likened this grace to 'talents'. Mat 25:15. Grace keeps us connected to the fellowship of Christ's one offering, through which God's life is multiplied. Heb 4:16. 2Co 4:15. Christ's one offering is the context in which we fulfil the good works of sonship, which God prepared beforehand. We each have an accountability to serve one another, to care for one another, and to provide both material and spiritual provision to one another.

Glorifying God by exercising the faith and grace that we receive from Christ is possible only if we are joined to Christ as a member of His body. The Father plants us in Christ according to our name as a son of God. Amazingly, the local congregations in which we live are the expression the fellowship of the body of Christ, which is the very fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*. Having been joined to the fellowship of the body of Christ, we express the love of God by laying down our life for our friends. Joh 15:13.

To take God's gift of faith and grace to ourselves while rejecting the word and direction from overseership within the presbytery is to reject Christ Himself and our connection to His body. Soberingly, it is possible to live our Christian life in this way, even while attending the program of *agape* fellowship in our local congregation. If a person continues in this manner, the Lord will eventually say to them, 'I do not know you; where you are from.' Luk 13:25-27. Entering the kingdom of God requires that we grow to be the person whom He has named us to be, and that we are known in the community in which He has placed us.

## Conclusion

Be encouraged to keep walking on the pathway of salvation, regardless of how intimidating your valleys and mountains may be to you. God is the One who is healing and regenerating our identity. He gives us the courage and strength to choose obedience to the word of our name instead of pursuing our own projections and selfish ambitions. Knowing that your name and life are safely hidden with Christ in God, you can give all of your focus and energy to *knowing Him*. As you walk in fellowship with Christ each day, the God of peace is making you complete in every good

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work to do His will. He is working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight. This is not, firstly, for your sake, but is for His sake! Eze 36:22. And all glory belongs to God both now and forever. Heb 13:21.

## Article 3

# Self-righteous projection

*Lachlan Perrin*

### All flesh is grass

In this article, we are considering the difference between the righteousness of God and what the Bible calls 'our own righteousness'. Rom 10:3. Over recent months, we have been learning about the Elijah ministry in the church. Isaiah summarised the prophetic message of the Elijah ministry, writing, 'All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.' Isa 40:6-8.

The word of God, which stands forever, is *righteous*. Alternatively, our fleshly efforts to 'be' and 'look' Christian, which is one example of what Isaiah identified as being grass that withers and glory that fades, are *unrighteous*. Everything of the flesh is temporal and will pass away. At this time, the Lord is reminding us that if we are unrighteous - of the flesh and carnal - we will not inherit the kingdom of God. 1Co 15:50. Mercifully, the breath of the Lord is blowing upon us so that we can see,

by illumination, where we have created and propagated a self-righteous image of ourselves.

### There is none righteous, not one

Stated simply, the righteousness of God is the achievement of His will. Before you existed, Yahweh *Elohim* willed to bring you forth in Their image and likeness, as a participant in Their life and fellowship. That is Their covenant purpose for your existence. However, on account of the Fall, and the other law that Satan has fathered in the hearts of mankind, you do not *default* to walking after the righteousness of God. In fact, God has looked from heaven and concluded that there is none righteous among mankind - not even one! Rom 3:10.

We all have, for varying reasons and with varying designs, built a self-righteous image of ourselves using 'wood, hay and stubble'. 1Co 3:12. This self-righteous image begins in our mind - how we see ourselves - and then influences the way in which we present and express ourselves to others; how we want to be thought of and seen. A unique combination of factors shapes a person's particular self-righteous projection. For example, their personality type, their physical appearance, the chemistry of relationships within their home and family as they grow up, the fostering (or lack thereof) of godly culture and godly identity from their parents, the influence of worldliness, the school environment and the pressures of social acceptance and friendship groups, time and chance, positive childhood experiences, negative childhood experiences, past hurts, past successes and so on.

Our fear of death, motivating us toward survival, drives us to 'compute' all of these influences and experiences into a self-defined image of ourselves. We then 'market' this self-righteous projection for the sake of convincing ourselves that we are a worthwhile *somebody*, not a *nobody*. While this process sounds premeditated and wicked, it is the instinctive activity of every person who is not walking in obedience to the word of their sonship.

Thankfully, the apostle Paul taught that the offering of Jesus Christ is the provision for every person to become righteous. He said, 'He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so *that we might become the righteousness of God* in Him.' 2Co 5:21. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He was the perfect Man in the image and likeness of God. Importantly, the glorified Son of Man, who is adorned with the glory of *His* heavenly body, has also fulfilled *our* righteousness. That is, He is also



adorned with the glory of *our* completed sonship! Hence, the breakpoint between crafting and pushing a false righteousness of our own, and apprehending and fulfilling the righteousness of God, is *meeting the Lord face to face*.

### Seeing is believing

Prior to his conversion, the apostle Paul described himself as 'blameless with regard to the righteousness which is in the Law'. Php 3:6. The Pharisee, Nicodemus, who came to see Jesus by night, likely possessed the same religious orientation; that is, a strong tradition of seeking righteousness by complying with the Law. Compliance is an expression of self-righteousness. It is a 'clone' of obedience, demonstrated by a person who has learned the 'do's and don'ts' of church community life, but who has not personally met the Lord; the One to whom they must give an account concerning their obedience.

Many of you reading this article have grown up in Christian homes. At the point of your conception, you were recipients of the divine nature. Your Christian parents have taught you the culture and customs that are associated with church attendance. You have been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You offer in various service teams at church and participate in *agape* fellowship. However, it is sobering to recognise that compliance (obedience's clone) is perfect for propping up a self-righteous Christian image. The truth is that no-one, regardless of their Christian heritage, is able to repent from their self-righteousness until they meet the Lord. The question that this article is asking is, 'When did you sovereignly meet Christ face to face?'

Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Joh 3:3. The meaning of born 'again' in this instance, is born 'from above' or born 'from the first'. A person who has truly been born again has been illuminated to see the high calling of their sonship. They understand that their name and works were defined by God before creation, and then laid down to the Son of Yahweh 'from the beginning'. A person receives the assurance of this knowledge when they behold the glory of their *finished* righteousness in the face of Christ.

The apostle Paul said it this way: 'For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God *in the face of Christ*.' 2Co 4:6.

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is the knowledge of our finished sonship. Paul himself testified, 'When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. *For now we see* in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but that I shall know just as I also am known.' 1Co 13:11-12. In seeing the hope of the glory of our sonship, mirrored to us from the face of Christ, we truly believe and receive a desire to obey Jesus as our Lord and Master.

### The example of Job

The account of Job is a remarkable illustration of a person's deliverance from serving a god that they have never met to meeting and knowing God personally. Job was a wealthy man of great influence and importance. Job 1:3. We could liken him to one of the very best 'flowers of the field'. God even said of Job, 'There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil.' Job 1:8. Like Paul and like Nicodemus, Job was blameless in relation to his perception of the gospel and its requirements. In other words, Job's practice as a believer was a demonstration of self-righteous compliance. His compliance was motivated by his fear of death.

In the book of Job, we read the words of Elihu, who claimed to speak with understanding from God. Job 32:8. Job 33:4. Elihu spoke to Job about God's capacity to turn a man aside from his conduct, to keep a man from self-righteous pride and, in so doing, to keep his life from Sheol. Job 33:17-18. It is noteworthy that, despite Job being well-respected in the community and regarded as being a wise, religious man, the gaps in his self-righteous approach to the gospel were manifest in his home life. His wife's response to the Lord 'blowing upon his flesh' revealed that she was not walking blamelessly with him; and the worldly, pleasure-seeking culture of his children demonstrated the fruit of Job's gospel.

We recall the words of King David, who reflected, 'I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread.' Psa 37:25. While Job's ten children enjoyed the physical decadence afforded them by Job's wealth, they were starving in relation to spiritual food. In that sense, Job's self-righteousness had left his children begging for the bread of heaven.

Elihu said that when a person hears the gospel of God, 'Then he will pray to God, and He will accept him, that he may *see His face* with joy, and He may *restore His righteousness* to man.' Job 33:26. Elihu continued, 'He will

sing to men and say, “I have sinned and perverted what is right [I have been self-righteous, not obedient to the righteousness of God], and it is not proper for me. He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, and my life shall *see the light* [the glory of sonship]. Behold, God does all these oftentimes with men, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he *may be enlightened with the light of life* [illuminated with the knowledge of God’s righteous will for his life]”.’ Job 33:27-30.

In the final chapter of Job, we read the ultimate confession of his repentance from a life of religious self-righteousness. Job testified, ‘I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; *but now my eye sees You*; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.’ Job 42:5-6. This is an amazing testimony. Having seen the Lord, Job perceived the glory of the heights of his sonship in the face of Christ. However, he also saw the depths of his wretched self-righteousness. Job abhorred what he saw!

When we see Christ, we see who God predestined us to be. We also see our current state; who we are pretending to be. Our hearts are pierced, and we become bankrupt in spirit. We realise that the self-righteous image of ourselves that we passionately invested in and promoted is nothing more than a lie. It is not only a lie that we have pushed upon others; it is also a mirage with which we have fooled ourselves.

## The example of Saul

The account of Saul’s conversion and the example of his ministry life that followed demonstrate the response and testimony of someone who has met the Lord face to face. In that sense, Paul shared the same testimony as Job. As a child, he had heard of the Lord because he was instructed in the customary religious rites of the Jews. However, he needed to behold Jesus face to face.

We read in the book of Acts, ‘As he was travelling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him’. Act 9:3. Saul was *seeing* the glory of Christ, the perfect Man in the image and likeness of God. He said, ‘Who are You, *Lord?*’ Act 9:5. In this statement, Saul acknowledged Christ as His Lord. He also confessed that, despite his strong religious pedigree, he did not know the Lord at all!

Remarkably, the Scripture notes that ‘the men who travelled with him stood *speechless*, hearing the voice *but seeing no-one*’. Act 9:7. This is a sobering point. We may be in the company of those who attend church

and hear the voice of Jesus, but may not see Him ourselves. We recall the exhortation of King David: 'This is the generation of those who seek Him, *who seek Your face* – Jacob. Selah.' Psa 24:6. Similarly, Asaph wrote, 'O Lord God of hosts, restore us; cause *Your face to shine upon* us, and we will be saved'. Psa 80:19. Saul was saved because the Lord, in His mercy, shone His face upon him. This illumination granted Saul the opportunity to choose Christ's lordship and to be saved; or, alternatively, to spurn God's calling upon his life and thus be damned.

The evidence that a person does not have a personal relationship with the Lord will be their inability to speak by faith about their deliverance *from* self-righteousness *to* living by the righteousness of God. In other words, they will not be able to testify of knowing their name from the Lord, because they have only the false name that they have created and pursued for themselves. They will have no testimony of bankruptcy of spirit. They will not have received, nor be able to declare, faith to fulfil the new name and predestined works that God has given them to do. We see that a person's testimony of repentance and faith will include *both* their identification of what they are *turning from* and the faith of what they are *turning to*.

The men who travelled with Saul, who did not see Jesus, were 'speechless'. We are reminded of the unworthy guests in the parable of the wedding feast, who had not made themselves ready for the time when the Father will take His seat. The Father Himself will say to guests such as those, ' "Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes [a priestly garment of righteousness]?" And *the man was speechless.*' Mat 22:12. Importantly, we are personally accountable for sharing a sincere testimony when we participate in *agape* fellowship. Compliance and a jargonistic commentary of the word of present truth *will* leave us speechless when God Himself asks us for our testimony.

For the sake of our salvation, the Lord blows upon the things that we value most according to the achievements of our flesh. Often, the reason why we value these things is because we think they validate our self-righteousness. We might consider ourselves to be the best academic, best sportsman, best comedian, best chef, best musician, best fashionista or even to have the best beard. However, all of these exploits, accompanied by the affirmation that we like to draw from others because of them, only produce confidence in the flesh. They warp our perspective on life and distort our expectations of God and of the gospel. In this

regard, Paul said, 'If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more!' Php 3:4.

Having seen the glory of his sonship in the face of Christ, Paul abhorred his self-righteousness. He said, 'Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, *not having a righteousness of my own* derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.' Php 3:7-9. Today, a 'righteousness of our own derived from the Law' describes all of the requirements that we have imagined, and then placed ourselves under, which we believe are necessary to support our self-righteous projection.

### I will behold Your face in righteousness

Having met the Lord face to face and renounced his self-righteousness, the apostle Paul testified of being content in every circumstance. Php 4:11. There is great contentment for us when we are delivered from self-righteousness! In contrast, 'keeping up the appearance' of a projection, and being devoid of the grace of God, is an exhausting and anxiety-filled way to live. King David testified, 'As for me, *I shall behold Your face in righteousness*; I will be *satisfied* with Your likeness when I awake.' Psa 17:15. We find great satisfaction when we walk in obedience to the righteous name and works that God has predestined for us. This describes our predestination in the image and likeness of God. In this passage, David exhorted us to behold the glory of our sonship in the face of Christ so that we can 'wake up' from the malaise of our self-righteousness. Similarly, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Awake, sleeper [receive the gospel of God], and arise from the dead [the dead works of our self-righteousness], and *Christ will shine on you*'. Eph 5:14. We must 'wake up' from our self-righteousness and be restored to the righteousness of God.

As we conclude this article, we will consider three outcomes for the person who meets the Lord face to face. First, they will recognise that their view of themselves, which they have pursued and traded to others, is the epitome of walking according to their flesh. Like Job, they will abhor themselves when they behold the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Second, they will recognise that their self-righteousness has fostered an hierarchical and comparative view of others. Because our self-righteousness never produces the confidence and contentment of Christ, it becomes a measuring tool that we run over others to determine how well or how poorly we are doing. For example, if we perceive that others are excelling beyond us, we may idolise, mimic or envy them. If we perceive that others are doing worse than us, then, in a twisted way, we are falsely verified. But the truth is that, in the eyes of the Lord, we are all average! There is no-one whom the Lord esteems any more or any less than you. Nevertheless, when we turn to Him in repentance, we receive the assurance that we are 'the apple of His eye'. Psa 17:8. Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God declared, 'But I will look to this one, at one who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at My word.' Isa 66:2.

Finally, the Lord's purpose for His righteous ones is to minister the bread of life to one another. We recall Paul's words, 'Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread'. 1Co 10:17. A self-righteous person can never be 'bread' to another. This is because every initiative that they take toward fellowship is a self-verifying exercise. Their participation can never be a ministry of the bread of heaven because they have chosen to feed themselves with their own food. In this season, as the Lord blows upon the fleshly constructs of our self-righteousness, we are learning to share from the basis of our repentance and faith. We do not need to speak as those who are trying to prove that they are 'successful'. Rather, like Paul, we can readily accept that we need deliverance from the stupor of our self-righteousness. As we are delivered, we are enabled to become a chosen vessel of the Lord and a blessed servant of our brethren.

## Article 4

# Obtaining a plot in the bride city

*Luke Pomery*

The apostle John explained that the authority, or 'right', for participation in the *body* of Christ, and entry into the *bride city*, is only for those who have received the promise of the Spirit and who are obedient to the commands of Christ. John wrote, 'Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life [in the corporate body of Christ], and may enter through the gates into the city [the bride of Christ]'. Rev 22:14. We are not to presume that our familiarity and association with the church community, automatically supposes that we are individual members of the body of Christ and citizens of the bride city. Every individual needs to personally obtain, and progressively consolidate, this privilege by walking by the Spirit in a culture of blamelessness.

The culture of blamelessness means that we are walking in the light of the word of present truth. 1Jn 1:7. The word of Christ washes us and defines for us the pathway of life. Eph 5:26. Psa 16:11. As we walk in the

light of that word, we are led by the Holy Spirit in the pathway that Christ pioneered for us through His offering journey. Joh 21:18. 'Blamelessness' means that we are carrying in our bodies the dying and living of Jesus, as we embrace our fellowship in His descending and ascending journey. 2Co 4:10. The effects of our former, fallen ways of living, are being progressively purged from our lives and we are progressively obtaining our sanctification, which becomes our eternal life. Php 3:16. Rom 6:22.

Our entry and citizenship within the New Jerusalem are dependent upon us receiving the seal of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to walk blamelessly and is the guarantee of our eternal inheritance in the bride city. As the apostle Paul wrote, 'In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were *sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*, who is the *guarantee of our inheritance* until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory'. Eph 1:13-14. When we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, we receive the 'title', or 'deed', to a residence in the holy city! *The Holy Spirit* is the 'down payment'; the One who guarantees our ongoing citizenship.

By faith, Abraham waited and believed for his citizenship of this city that was built by God, which was his inheritance. Heb 11:10. However, beyond merely their *own* citizenship, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, believed for their marriage to be established as part of *the corporate motherhood* of this bride city. They could believe for this because God had promised to give them a remnant of His Spirit, enabling them to walk blamelessly before the Lord. Gen 17:1. Mal 2:15. Their marriage was the *first* house to be established within the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. Their son, Isaac, was then the first child born of this bride city, for he was born according to the Spirit. Gal 4:28-29. For this reason, Abraham and Sarah are accounted as 'the father and mother' of the bride city! Isa 51:2-3.

For a married couple, the seal of the Holy Spirit is 'the remnant of the Spirit'. Mal 2:15. On their wedding day, through prayer, a couple ask for this unique portion of Eternal Spirit. As they receive, from the Holy Spirit, the remnant of the Spirit that is unique to their own marriage covenant, they obtain a 'plot' within the New Jerusalem. Their newly formed house is part of the bride city! Being illuminated to *this* reality is the necessary conviction by which a couple can commence a godly courtship. That is, each one is believing for, and desiring, a marriage that will become established as a vital part of the corporate bride of Christ.



Through prayer, a married couple continue to ask for the capacity of Eternal Spirit *throughout* their married life. The apostle Peter described this ongoing necessity for the capacity of the Spirit as being 'heirs together of the grace of life'. 1Pe 3:7. By this enabling, a married couple can multiply the godly seed whom the Father desires. Mal 2:15. As a couple, they belong to the corporate bride of Christ, who is 'a mother' in *travail for her children*. Rev 12:2.

Asking for, and obtaining, a remnant of the Spirit enables the couple to walk blamelessly, and establishes them as overcoming people. By continuing to walk blamelessly, they are progressively delivered from the carnal dynamics that would otherwise hinder their relationship, marriage and household from being established in, and remaining in, the bride city. Rev 21:27. Rev 22:5. They are among an overcoming, blameless people who *retain* their right of entry and citizenship within the bride city.

### Fallen dynamics within marriage

We need to be progressively delivered from our fleshly, relational dynamics and expectations to consolidate our entry and plot within the bride city. Helpfully, the word coming to us in this season, from the face of Christ, is exposing these fallen dynamics within every courtship and marriage! This illumination has come through the testimony of messengers who are 'the bread of life' to us. Through their testimony, the Holy Spirit is impressing upon *all of us*, 'I am not happy with the covenant of your marriage'. Likewise, it is this very testimony of the messenger that enables *us* to *speak openly* about these fallen dynamics within our own lives, relationships and marriages. We are being shown, by example, a faith and manner of conversation, which we can follow. Heb 13:7.

In the first instance, an unmarried young adult might not regard a messenger's testimony pertaining to *marriage* issues as being particularly relevant for themselves, personally. And perhaps they mistakenly suppose that they are not likely to experience such problems when they do marry! However, unless a young person is illuminated to these fleshly proclivities, they, too, will *most certainly* perpetuate the fallen marriage dynamics from which the messenger, and those who respond to this word, are repenting.

The idealism and presumption of a younger generation, who conclude that they will not encounter these same issues, nor make the same

mistakes as their forebears, negates their perceived need for any *fellowship* with them on these matters. Nevertheless, such fallen dynamics, from which they are trying to escape, are only exacerbated as they proceed in an independent manner. However, young people can heed the wisdom *to make a better choice!* That is, they can choose the pathway of fellowship and repentance, while the word is still proceeding to them. Jer 6:16.

As we have noted, the gospel of peace proclaims the judgement of God upon all *flesh*, and declares our need to be established as 'a new creation' according to the *enduring word* of God. We are being exhorted to take heed how we build our lives, relationships, marriages and families upon Christ. 1Co 3:10. However, if we fail to give earnest attention to the call of the Spirit in this season, we will inevitably build according to our immature and foolish ways. Even though we may place significant energy into these endeavours, they will all come to nothing when the Lord tests the quality of our work 'by fire'. 1Co 3:13.

In this regard, we note that there are two modes of 'building' - either according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. This reality is true for every stage of the courtship process - friendship, romance, courtship, bonding and marriage. For this reason, we need to repent from our default, *fleshly* ways of building our relationships, and present ourselves to learn how to build according to the *Spirit*. To understand this further, let us consider the example of two opposing approaches to 'romance'.

## Two models of romance

The transient nature of romance, according to the *flesh*, is the pursuit of 'the loving look of approval' from *the face of our spouse*, to affirm our identity, to praise our works, and to give us the attention and affection that we desire. Yet, the emotions of sin are aroused when this fleshly desire is not realised. Relational enmity and conflict within the marriage is produced because of our fleshly desire for approval and our judgements, which are coming from tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Our misuse of 'the Law' - even the word of God, causes us to draw back relationally as we hold on to our judgements. It is this misuse of the Law which caused Christ to be chastened with rods in the court of Caiaphas. Eph 2:14-15.

However, having been born of the Spirit, we now have the choice to turn to the lordship of the Holy Spirit and repent from our fleshly attitudes. Through repentance, the veil of our self-righteous judgements is being

removed, and we can *look into the face of Christ*. Looking into *His* face becomes our new point of reference! Practically, we 'look into Christ's face' by receiving the word of the presbytery, and by being personally joined to the fellowship that is extended to us by the presbytery.

1Jn 1:1-3.

True romance, according to the Spirit, is only found at the tree of life, where husband and wife are, *individually*, looking into the face of Christ. As each one looks into His face, they receive a true reflection of themselves and of one another. Each one obtains the knowledge and security of their own sonship, and can appreciate the sonship of their spouse. Let us continue to consider this reality in more detail.

### Meeting Christ at the tree of life

A married couple come together to partake of *the tree of life* in the context of Christ's *body*, as sons of God and members of the body of Christ. It is important to realise that, as they meet and relate together, they are *not, firstly*, meeting as 'husband and wife', which is the 'bride of Christ' reality within their relationship. Instead, they are *firstly meeting as brother and sister*, which is the 'body of Christ' foundation of their relationship. As brother and sister, they meet one another within the context of the *temple of His body*, where Christ is feeding to each of them the fruit of the tree of life.

In order to meet Christ, each one must, individually, choose the Holy Spirit as their Lord. As they accept the lordship of the Holy Spirit, He then helps them to walk in submission to Him each day. The Holy Spirit enables them to meet Christ, face to face, and to submit to the lordship of Christ. 2Co 3:17-18. It is from the face of Christ that they, individually, receive illumination concerning their *name and works* as a son of God. This is true for both the man and the woman. *The knowledge of their sonship is coming from the face of Christ, not from the face of their spouse.*

This same dynamic is true for a courting couple. They come, individually, to be built upon Christ, the foundation Stone of the temple. Individually, they are receiving the knowledge of their sonship from the face of Christ, as they heed the word of present truth ministered from the fellowship of the presbytery. By the enabling of the Holy Spirit, they individually submit to the lordship of Christ. As each one accepts the *lordship of Christ*, and is personally submitted to *the fellowship of headship* which proceeds from Christ, a young man and a young woman are free to meet

each other and to offer themselves toward their relationship with one another.

### Dishonouring the headship of Christ

A man can default in relation to the headship of Christ within the body, by looking into the face of his *wife* for verification of his identity. He may do this because of his own sense of identity frailty. Instead of meeting Christ and receiving the reflection of his sonship from Christ's face, which is coming through the word and fellowship being extended to him by the presbytery, a man is seeking to know himself through the approval of his wife. In this regard, a man *dishonours Christ*. True identity verification can only be found through participation in Christ's body, which is the tree of life, where our names are written.

In relation to his wife, a man should honour her liberty to meet Christ, personally, at the tree of life. It is from the face of Christ, that the wife receives the knowledge of her name and priestly works as a son of God. However, if she hides away from her personal accountability to look into Christ's face in this manner, she may, instead, look into the face of her *husband* for identity security, due to her own sense of 'lack'. Instead of encouraging his wife to meet Christ for herself, a man *further dishonours Christ* when he presumes to provide her with his own reflection and definition, and proceeds to 'script' her participation in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

By default, this same dynamic may be already at work within an emerging *agape* friendship. The man and the woman may have a propensity to look into one another's face for identity verification, due to their own identity frailties and projections, which are described by the prophet Isaiah as 'valleys' and 'mountains'. Isa 40:4. The *reason* why they are looking for attention from the other is self-centred. Yet, they are deceived by the emotions of their growing interest in one another, falsely believing that their motivation toward the other is 'love'.

As they continue to look into each other's face in this fallen manner, their ideals and expectations of 'the other' begin to surface. The woman may identify various issues, or faults, where she believes 'he could do better'. This is because she has a pre-conceived 'image' of who he should be for her. Also, the man's delight in the possibility of the woman becoming a suitable helper for him, soon turns to frustration when she fails to live up to his expectations, for he has a set idea of who she should be for him.

In this case, 'the curse' flourishes in their relationship, which is invariably expressed as her 'desire' for him, and his 'ruling over' her. Gen 3:16.

While this dynamic of fallen romance will be the 'default' starting point for their developing relationship, the man and woman can obtain *identity security from meeting Christ, individually*. From this place of 'knowing themselves', they can choose, and learn to give themselves toward the relationship from the motivation of *faith working by offering-love*.

### Submission within the order of headship

For a married couple, they then proceed from the foundation of their fellowship as members of Christ's *body*, to become an expression of the *bride* of Christ within their *marriage, family and household life*. The man and woman meet and fellowship together, as husband and wife, within the fellowship and order of headship.

What the man and woman learn, individually, from the headship of Christ in the body, is then expressed through offering, within the marriage and household. The Holy Spirit enables the man to submit to Christ as his Head; and the Holy Spirit enables the woman to respect and submit to her husband as 'lord', as unto Christ. 1Pe 3:6. Significantly, it will be impossible for a wife to submit to her *husband* as 'lord', unless she has firstly submitted to *Christ* as Lord. By the enabling of the Spirit, and as heirs of the grace of life, they can fulfil the will of God and multiply the life of God to others, within, and from their home.

A man dishonours the headship of Christ, when he looks into the face of his wife for *direction* for his life, and for the members of his household. A man should be meeting Christ, his Head, to receive *the will of God* for himself, for his wife, and for his family. The 'food' which a man feeds to his wife and family, is the will of God for their lives. Joh 4:34. Also, his wife is nourished by the fellowship of the word, to which he is being obedient. Eph 5:25-26. However, if he, instead, looks into *her* face, he is receiving from his wife an *alternative* food source, as she seeks to promote and establish what she considers to be 'good' for the family.

Now let us consider the manifestation of this same dynamic within a courtship. The authority to *lead* the relationship throughout each season of offering, within the courtship process, is *uniquely given to the young man* from Christ. While a young woman would be free to initiate towards *friendship* with her brother(s), she acknowledges that the faith-initiative to commence a *courtship* is given from Christ to the young man. She is

then free to respond, by faith, to his initiative to test this relationship with a view toward marriage.

However, a young man can default to looking into the face of his sister-friend, with whom he is developing a growing affection, seeking *her* reflections regarding the progress of the relationship. Unhelpfully, she is often willing to provide such feedback and suggestions about how the relationship could proceed. Instead of *waiting* for a faith-initiative from the man, she defaults to intervening to alleviate the pressure of his uncertainty.

### Concluding comments

This brings us to an important question. *What kind of person are you seeking* as a special friend, with whom you can develop and test your relationship toward marriage?

Here are two key considerations. First, are they meeting Christ, for themselves, at the tree of life? And second, do they have faith to become part of the bride city? These two considerations might be quite different from your prior expectations of someone whom you would have defined as a 'good spouse'. And this pre-supposes that these same two considerations are also true of yourself.

## Article 5

# Your individual connection to Christ by the Holy Spirit

*David Hall*

Every person who desires to be a part of the body of Christ will come to Him through baptism, and will join His offering. Rom 6:3. 1Co 12:13. Every individual who is joined to the offering of Christ is made a member of His body and is 'a particular' or individual member. 'Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.'

It is an amazing truth that when you were born of God, you received a heavenly house (a body) that resides with God and includes the glory of your name. 'For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' 2Co 5:1. And so, we see also that every person has an 'earthly house', which is a personal or individual house, whether they are born of God or not. We know from the words of Jesus that the Holy Spirit has come to us and will abide within us forever. Joh 14:16-17. Christ further promised to come to us with His Father, and not leave us as orphans. On that day, we will know that Christ is in the Father, and we are in Christ,

and that Christ is in us. Joh 14:18,20. Further to this, Jesus said, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him'. Joh 14:23. So we see that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are committed to fellowship with us in our individual house, because we have a heavenly house, if we are connected to the body of Christ, the Temple. For this to be true in us, we must be born of God.

This is an important understanding because our building toward a courtship or marriage, and a household, will not be effective unless we are individually connected to Christ as our Lord and Head. We know from the words of Jesus that we are building our personal house on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. And we are 'fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God'. We are being fitted together and growing into 'a holy temple in the Lord', and 'a dwelling place of God in the Spirit'. Eph 2:19-22.

As we are preparing to build a household through the lordship of the Spirit, we must individually encounter Christ as Lord of our life in the body of Christ and learn to meet Him face to face. This 'relational growth point' is essential for each one of us and is a foundational understanding for the communication of the life of Christ to us, individually, and to those in our household, both now, and in the future. We meet Christ face to face when we stand on the Rock, in the body of Christ, and learn who we are from the face of Christ, which is through the presbytery. This is true for us as we receive the proceeding word, which is the present truth that belongs to the gospel of peace.

From this proceeding word, as we cry out for understanding in the *agape* meal, and entreat others for fellowship, and for an understanding in which we can then walk, we are learning to be an individual son of God. The personal distinctives of 'male' and 'female', 'son' and 'daughter' of God are key to our confident interface in the community of the body of Christ. We notice that these foundations for being 'a person' do not change for us. These are our 'building blocks' of personal development, to which we add further maturities like 'husband' or 'wife', 'father' or 'mother'. These understandings are given to us in the word that is ministered by Christ to His body. We understand that the body of Christ is a place of process, wherein the word of present truth is being proclaimed to us by Christ, from the presbytery. As we walk in the light of this word, the blood of Jesus Christ delivers us and cleanses us from



our sin and familiar ways. The effect of our former way of living is also purged from our life. 1Jn 1:7. Because we are living a sanctified life, we are walking blamelessly before the Lord, and are inheriting eternal life.

This brings us to another important point. Your 'personal house' is to be connected to the headship of Christ at the tree of life in the body of Christ, but also, it is to be connected to Him daily through our personal encounter with His headship in our house, at the river of life. This is paramount to our ongoing participation in the body of Christ, and for our expression as a part of the bride city. This means that we can mature as an individual and, through submission to the headship of Christ, participate in the multiplication of the life of the Father toward every member of the body of Christ.

Our previous understandings of 'headship' have leaned toward a chauvinistic 'peck-order' of authority in a family. The word of present truth has highlighted that we need to turn from this cultural misstep. Headship is not a 'peck-order' of authority or the domination of one person over another. Instead, it is what we learn from the headship of Christ, concerning our sanctification, that should be expressed by offering in our home. Of course, this includes not only our understanding of who we are, but also an understanding of the reformation that we need, personally, for our households to flourish in the life of God. By offering, each person who is being personally reformed by the word that is being proclaimed to the body, is established in the order of headship.

Headship is a 'river of life'. It flows from the headship of Christ by the Holy Spirit, and enables each person to be the man, woman, son, or daughter, as they were named by their heavenly Father. It is important that we personally encounter, and then understand, the Holy Spirit's enabling of our sanctified participation in this 'flow of life', so that in our home, and from our own heart, will flow 'rivers of living water'. This multiplies the life of God as we offer in our home, and beyond. This 'flow of life' in our personal house and household, and from our own heart, is part of the 'river of life' that flows from the throne in the midst of the New Jerusalem. This house has been established as part of the bride city, through the culture of blamelessness. Joh 7:38. Rev 22:1.



## Article 6

# Personal process in the present truth

*David Hall*

The gospel calls every individual to come to Christ and be built upon Him. He is our 'sure foundation'. Isa 28:16. This foundation is the word of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. Eph 2:20. *You* need to take heed, and think carefully about how you build your house upon this foundation. 1Co 3:10-15. *You* need to receive the word, which can build you up, bring you to maturity, and establish you in a sanctified, or blameless, culture. Act 20:32.

The Lord sends the ministry of Elijah to us, to turn our hearts to the fathers and the fathers' hearts to their children. However, if this ministry is not received the Lord will strike the ground with a curse. Mal 4:6. When we receive this ministry, the gospel of peace delivers us from our self-sourced understanding concerning who we think we are, who God is, and how we perceive the word of God. It confronts our disobedience and delivers us to the culture and faith that is our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Furthermore, this gospel delivers us

from the influence of familiar spirits, which prevent us from becoming established as part of the bride of Christ.

We will look further into the impact of this gospel upon the ground of our heart. The 'ground' is *you*. The Scriptures declare to us, to sow to righteousness, and not to sow among thorns. Hos 10:12. Jer 4:3. In other words, we need to take care of the ground of our heart, to prepare it to receive the word. When we receive and obey that word, we are building upon the Rock - the sure foundation that is Christ. This word is proclaimed to us through the ministry of Elijah that belongs to the overseers who are stewards in the house of God. These overseers are referred to as 'the order of seventy-two'. Their work is to feed everyone in the house of God with the word of present truth. Luk 12:42-44. Those who receive and obey their word (which is the gospel of peace) are building upon the sure foundation and are being established as 'firstfruits' people and worthy households. A firstfruits is the harbinger of the harvest to come. These worthy households have received the gospel of peace and are now able to minister through testimony to others, the same grace that they have received and, thereby, are able to participate in a further harvest of worthy homes. This is true evangelism. We can study the content of this message of peace, which is called 'sound doctrine' in the letters to Timothy, Titus, James, and Jude.

### The parable of the grounds

As we have already mentioned, the 'ground' is *you*! Jesus taught that there are four types of ground. These 'grounds' describe the nature of a person and their response to the gospel of peace when it is proclaimed to them. Mat 13:18-23. These are wayside ground, shallow or stony ground, thorny ground, and good ground. Depending upon our response to the word, we can be all of these types of ground at times in our life. This is a key understanding as we seek to 'bring forth fruit to maturity' and look forward in faith to be established as worthy homes.

#### *Wayside ground*

You will know that, in the course of maturing through and past adolescence, the spirit of the world seeks to indoctrinate *you* by saying that you can be anyone and anything you want to be. People are encouraged to be self-sourced, self-defining, and to be their own judge of truth and morality. This is *the first ground* that Jesus mentioned, which is 'wayside'. This is a person who does not understand the word of their

name when they hear the gospel of the kingdom. They cannot understand it or obey it, because they cannot let go of their understanding of themselves, of God, and of the gospel.

Because they do not take the word into the ground of their heart, the 'wicked one' comes and snatches the seed that was sown. Their ground remains fallow, or without the seed. As a result, their Christian expression is lifeless and powerless. The life of Christ has not become their life. They may display a form of godliness, but they have denied its power. If they continue to reject the word of their name, they will become offended because their self-projection is not being recognised and accepted. Loving themselves and not loving God, they will grow corrupt and become enemies of Christ. Eventually, the word will polarise them out of the body of Christ, and the *agape* fellowship of the body of Christ will have no obligation toward them. 2Ti 3:5.

We are hearing a word that is teaching us to commit our whole life in *agape* fellowship, where we can look into the face of Christ, which is expressed to us through His presbytery. It is in this fellowship that we will hear our 'name' being called. Moreover, it is in this fellowship that we will find adjustment to the word of our name, and we will learn to know God and the gospel, and thereby, receive life and power. As *you* look forward in faith to building a worthy house upon Christ, you will need to know your brethren if you are to know yourself. At a basic level, this is also a key foundation for all Christian friendship.

Beyond ordinary friendship, in a courtship and marriage, wayside ground would look like any other self-righteous religious pursuit. The reality would be that the collusion of a couple's other law would be the basis of their religion or gospel. The inevitable result would be that this house would not be able to stand.

### *Shallow or stony ground*

*The second ground* that Jesus mentioned was shallow or stony ground. In this case, the person is described as someone who loves the word and immediately receives it with joy. They receive the gospel of peace and are born of God. However, they have 'no root in themselves' and are not able to grow to maturity. Luk 8:13. They cannot endure tribulation or persecution. We note that 'persecution' is probably already happening within their family and close relationships. Persecution arises as the word spoken by the Spirit brings a polarising effect to their relationships

and culture. Immediately, this person will begin to stumble because they have become disobedient to the word.

The apostle Peter said that Christ is 'precious' to those who believe, but to those who are disobedient He has become 'a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence'. 1Pe 2:7-8. Peter was contrasting 'believing' and 'disobedience': the person who believes the word obeys it, and he who disobeys the word does not believe. This son of God stumbles when they come to Christ because they have disobeyed the word of their name.

Rather than obeying Christ, they prioritise the pursuit of lifestyle projections and personal expression and ambitions. These are the priorities of the fleshly, or carnal, person. These pursuits are usually learnt and affirmed in their family home. Their 'stumbling' becomes evident through the emotions of sin that rise up when their personal endeavours are frustrated. The symptoms of their 'stumbling' include outbursts of wrath, relational disputes, depression, discontentment with life, weariness and sickness, and their personal indulgence that is employed to compensate for the failure of their ambitions. These expressions hinder their participation in *agape* fellowship. Being instructed in this way, they become unfruitful, and are unable to mature spiritually and naturally, because the source of their identity verification is their family.

Tribulation arises from the word because the Holy Spirit is 'breathing upon' a person and testing their works by fire. If they have built according to their fleshly desires, pictured as 'wood, hay and stubble', they will suffer the loss of everything that they have built and invested in as their life and relationships. This person must acknowledge their 'loss' and turn from the way in which they have built. They must then begin to build again on Christ with 'gold, silver, and precious stones', through obedience to the proceeding word. If they do not build in this way, they will fall away. 1Co 3:12-14.

In this case, their repentance will mean that they are receiving and believing the word of their name that is proclaimed in the present truth word, and they are participating in the *agape* fellowship. This allows the person to build once again on the foundation of Christ by receiving the will of God each day. They can, therefore, grow to maturity and be strengthened to stand in their sanctified identity. They can 'sow to righteousness' and have the Lord 'rain righteousness' upon them, causing their roots to go deep into the soil; and, in this way, build once again with 'gold'. Hos 10:12. By presenting themselves for offering and learning to

lay their life down in order to give life to another, they will grow in the fellowship of first love; that is, they are learning to priest the life of Christ to others and are building again with 'silver'. As they participate in the testimony of the *agape* meal and speak with others, God listens to them and remembers their name which is written in a book of remembrance. As they fear Him and meditate on His name, they will be made His 'jewels' and will be received as a son in the house. They are building once again with 'precious stones'. Mal 3:16-17. This person will become a 'vessel of honour' and 'useful for the Master, prepared for every good work'. 2Ti 2:20-21.

A courtship conducted on shallow ground will default to compensations for true worship and meeting. A couple will not be meeting Christ at the tree of life as individuals. They will prioritise hedonistic pursuits over obedience to the headship of Christ. The capacity to walk blamelessly in one Spirit as brother and sister in the body of Christ will be hampered, and the faith for a remnant of the Spirit will not be appreciated. Ultimately, if there is a marriage union, they will not be able to meet at the tree of life. The river of life and the grace of life will not be available to their marriage and house. Eventually, the marriage will break down, or at least be 'parallel', with the couple living in an unhappy truce instead of in a true covenant.

### *Thorny ground*

*The third ground* that Jesus mentioned was thorny ground. This person is born again by the living and abiding word of God, but the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and they become unfruitful. They manifest thorny responses to the word as the influence of familiar spirits impact their capacity to be established, and then to be manifest, as part of the bride of Christ. Their responses are like the 'sting of a scorpion' and the 'bite of a serpent' that sting and delude the members of a household.

In a family context, these 'spirits' control the agenda of the household, usually through a person who dominates the house. They set the religious and cultural agenda of the family and, through fear, control the expression of the house. 'Familiar spirits' are manifest in the prickly responses of individuals within a house as the word of the messenger is spoken to them, especially when the word touches on subjects that are 'out of bounds'. They may become angry, reactive, and withdrawn from the messenger. Typically, a house that is beset by serpents and scorpions will be unable to fellowship with open communication, from house

to house. Instead, the members of such a house will manifest as 'prickly thorns', who are unable to be entreated by the messengers who are proceeding from the hand of Christ. 2Sa 23:6-7.

On the other hand, if the members of this house receive the word, they will understand the authority of their name. This is the authority for their obedience, through which Satan is trampled underfoot. In receiving this word, a person's feet are shod 'with the preparation of the gospel of peace'. Eph 6:15. As they fellowship from house to house, they can walk untouched by their 'familiar' culture, and can be a fruitful, offering son in the body of Christ, and in their household. They can engage with their family without fear and without coming under the destructive and oppressive influence of their 'familiar' ways.

A courtship or marriage that is beset by familiar spirits will be characterised by dominance and control, through fear. Angry emotions and reactions will typify the relationship, while a 'fortress style' of withdrawn expression will be characteristic of the couple's engagement in their fellowship from house to house.

### *Good ground*

*The fourth ground* that Jesus highlighted was 'good ground'. The people on good ground, hear the word, understand it, and bear fruit from the seed according to its kind, to thirty, sixty or one hundred times. The word proclaimed to these ones will be 'held fast' so that it is not taken away from them. They will mature so that their root will not die, and they will not be choked by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.

Whether married or single, we demonstrate that Christ is alive in us by the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Gal 5:22-23. This fruit belongs to those who are crucifying the flesh, with its passions and desires, through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ as members of His body. This reveals the faith of those who are being made worthy of the kingdom. A worthy house is a part of the *agape* fellowship of a local church and is participating in the house-to-house fellowship and care of the local community.



## Conclusion

As we have already discussed, the temple of the corporate body of Christ is the context in which we are processed, individually, by the word of present truth that is proclaimed to us by Christ, from the presbytery. As we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ delivers us, and cleanses us, from our sin and familiar ways. The effect of our former fallen way of living is being purged from our lives. 1Jn 1:7.

We can be born each day, and rise to serve, and by water and Spirit overcome through His word. We can wake each day and, by praying in the Spirit, we can discern and worship the body of Christ, and our particular part in it. We can also receive faith to be a part of the bride city, not just as an individual house; but also as we meet, to know, to worship others within His body, and see the multiplicity of the life of God as our house is built on the Rock, who is Christ. As we are individually delivered from bondage to sin, we are blameless in the sight of God because we are living sanctified lives. This is eternal life. Php 2:14-15. We can believe that when we live in this way as a local community of Christians, we can emerge into the world as the bride of Christ, as both single and married people. Our house can be expanded in the will of God and be made ready to bring forth sons of God through procreation and evangelism.



## Article 7

# You are the light of the world

*Joshua Hay*

### Introduction

The Scriptures teach us that the church is the bride of Christ who will ultimately be the fulfilment of God's purpose, for God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' Gen 2:18. As we considered in the publication, *The Mystery of Christ and the Church*, the first implication of comparability is the capacity of the bride, as the vessel of multiplication, to bring forth children.

The bride is proceeding from Christ as 'flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone'. This is the meaning of comparability. As a comparable helper, the bride is able to bring forth sons of God who, through baptism, are brought to glory as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. Importantly, the bringing forth of sons of God is not simply the outcome of the public declaration of the gospel. Rather, it should be the fruit of the ministry of families who belong to a lampstand church.

With this in view, we have come to understand that the fellowship of first love within every family and from house to house is essential to the

ministry of the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem. Through evangelism from house to house, worthy households are a principal context in which hearers can be born again as sons and daughters of God. In this worthy-house context, a person can be delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son. Col 1:13.

### The steps of salvation

How is a person saved through the evangelistic ministry of a worthy house? It is helpful to orient ourselves to the process of salvation that will mark the experience of one who is responding to the evangelistic ministry of the bride of Christ. In the first instance, through the ministry of the gospel, a hearer receives faith. This faith belongs to God, and is given to a person as a gift when they hear the gospel proclaimed to them. Rom 10:17. The gift of faith grants the hearer illumination regarding the call of God upon their life. Regarding this call, the apostle Paul testified, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*' Php 3:12-14.

'The upward call of God' is our predestination to be conformed to the image of the Son as a son of God and as a son of man in the image and likeness of God. This is the high calling to which Abraham was illuminated when he received the faith of God. Describing this key moment in the pilgrimage of Abraham's life, Moses wrote, 'Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.' Gen 15:5-6.

Because a hearer obtains *faith* by receiving the word of the gospel, they have the right to become a child of God. This is the beginning of the adoption process. As an adopted son of God, the hearer is given the right to become a son of God by new birth. The apostle John described this notable waypoint of salvation at the beginning of his Gospel account. He wrote, 'But as many as received Him [Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. Joh 1:12-13.

By the faith that they have received through the gospel, a true seeker can now believe for the promise of the Spirit. Gal 3:14. They are then born again as a son of God as they receive the Holy Spirit. This happens as the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into their heart, for God is love. Rom 5:5. 1Jn 4:8. At this point, they can see the kingdom of God. Significantly, this experience alone does not grant a person the new heart and new spirit promised to them in the New Covenant of the Spirit.

The newly born believer must proceed to enter the kingdom of heaven as they grow to maturity through baptism in water and by the Spirit. Baptism describes the process by which a son of God is immersed in, and enabled for, their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. By embracing this fellowship each day, a son of God is progressively changed into the image of Christ as they attain the new heart and spirit promised to them in the New Covenant. This daily journey is the unique pathway of salvation that Christ has pioneered for each person. Heb 5:9.

As we consider the evangelistic ministry of worthy houses, it is important to distinguish between *new birth* and the process that brings a Christian to *maturity*. Failure to appreciate this distinction has been the cause of much 'falling away' within the broader Christian community. Moreover, many 'born again' Christian people continue to struggle with issues of sin and uncleanness because they have failed to proceed to join the fellowship of Christ's offering by baptism. While many of these individuals have participated in some form of traditional baptismal rite, they have not understood the reality of walking with Christ each day in the fellowship of His sufferings. Consequently, they stall in their Christian journey, finding no capacity for overcoming or for substantial change in their lives. To be clear, it is *participation* in Christ's offering, and this process alone, through which a person obtains victory over sin and comes to maturity as a Christian.

Jesus taught that the regeneration of our spirit is fundamental to obtaining the promise of our inheritance as a son of God and as a son of man in the image of God. Paul identified this experience as 'the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit'. Tit 3:5. This process causes our spirit, which Jesus described as 'the eye of the body', to be restored. Consequently, our whole being - body, soul and spirit - is able to be full of light. Mat 6:22. As we are receiving this process in our lives, we are able to walk in the light of fellowship with God, who is Light. 1Jn 1:5. This is an important point! New birth, in and of itself, is not sufficient for salvation.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul highlighted the importance of a person proceeding beyond the experience of new birth. He noted that our inheritance as a son of God depends upon our willingness to abide with Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. He wrote, 'For as many as are led but the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him [continue in the adoption], that we may also be glorified together with Him.' Rom 8:14-17.

As we have noted, the viability of our sonship, which must grow to maturity, is contingent upon our regeneration and renewing in the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering journey. It is this process that deals with the condition of our heart. With this in view, it is essential that every new believer heeds the warning contained in Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed. If the stones of our other law and the thorns that belong to our desire for other things are not removed from us through our fellowship in Christ's offering, the seed of our sonship will die. When this happens, our eternal sonship is lost.

In this regard, it is important to appreciate that evangelism is a ministry to the heart of a person. As we will consider later in this article, it is not a well-crafted appeal to a person's intellect that will lead them to salvation. Every person must receive the seed of God's word into their heart and be born again; then, by baptism into Christ, they must embrace the life-long process of regeneration and renewing so that the seed of their sonship thrives to fruitful maturity.

## **We are the light of the world**

After forgiving the woman caught in adultery, Jesus declared, 'I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.' Joh 8:12. For a person to be saved and to escape the condemnation that has been passed on all flesh, they must receive this light, which is the life of God. Joh 1:4. Jesus testified that His purpose for coming into the world was so that those who believe in Him would not continue in the darkness of their own understanding and way, upon which judgement has already been passed. Joh 3:19. Joh 8:12.

The light that Christ reveals is the word of the Father. The word of the Father defines the unique name and works of every person who has been

foreknown and predestined to sonship through Christ. Rom 8:29. By this word, which lives and abides forever, a person is able to be born again as a son of God. Conversely, when a person rejects this word, which is the light of life, they remain dead in their trespasses and sins, and are under the judgement of God. In this regard, Jesus declared, 'He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life.' Joh 12:48-50.

Jesus explained that, following His ascension, the light of life would continue to shine into the world through the members of lampstand churches. Having first identified Himself as being the Light of the world, Jesus then said to His disciples, '*You are the light of the world*. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.' Mat 5:14-16.

How are we the light of the world? Every person who is part of an evangelistic ministry to the world must themselves be born of the light and joined to the fellowship of a lampstand church. Writing to the Ephesian believers, Paul rejoiced, saying, 'For you were once darkness, *but now you are light in the Lord*. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.' Eph 5:8-10.

Through the testimony of those who have become 'light in the Lord', the darkness and deceit of a person's own way can be seen for what it is. In the light of this illumination, they are enabled to turn to the Lord in repentance and to forsake their own way, which has already come under the judgement of God. Joh 16:8-11. With this in view, Paul continued, 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but expose them ... but all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep. Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light".' Eph 5:11,13-14.

A person does not reveal the light of life to others through the dissemination of well-constructed theology. Such an endeavour is darkness, establishing their hearers in a carnal gospel that is powerless to effect lasting change and, instead, leads to a life of striving

and condemnation. Paul referred to this ministry as a 'ministry of condemnation'. 2Co 3:9. Sadly, this has been the experience of many Christian converts who have been consigned to a life of endeavouring to attain the righteousness of God through self-sourced good works. Paul described 'another law' as being the basis of this futile struggle, writing, 'I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' Rom 7:21-23.

In contrast to a 'minister of condemnation', a *son of light* is one who has been born of light and joined to the process through which they are being conformed to the image of the glorified Son of Man. 1Th 5:5. Their evangelistic message is not a superior theology by which they convince their hearers of their need for salvation. Instead, their testimony, which is revealing the light of life, is that they have come to *know God*, who is Light, in a deep and personal way. It is this personal relationship with God, expressed in their daily commitment to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, that qualifies them as ambassadors of Christ. 2Co 5:20. Walking in this way, with their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, they are the fragrance of Christ in every place. 2Co 2:14.

The Christian life and experience of a *son of light* is not based on their association with a particular church group or family. Nor do they receive affirmation through connection to those in the church whom they deem to be more spiritual than themselves. Instead, they are growing in their *knowledge of God* as they press in to know Him through prayer in 'the secret place'. Emphasising the distinction between religious dead works and genuine relationship with God, Jesus said, 'And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.' Mat 6:5-6.



## Article 8

# Prepared for evangelism as worthy houses

*Andrew Hay*

### Introduction

As the great Shepherd of God's people, Jesus was deeply troubled when He saw the spiritual condition of Israel. Matthew recorded that 'When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd'. Mat 9:36. He responded to their plight by asking the disciples to join His prayer for labourers to be sent to gather these lost sheep into His kingdom. '*Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest"*.' Mat 9:37-38.

After He had commissioned the twelve, Jesus also sent out seventy-two disciples before His face, to proclaim the gospel of peace in every place where He Himself would go. Luk 10:1. The seventy-two were worthy houses who had received the gospel and were now being sent to minister

the same grace, through testimony, to others. The seventy-two were the first fruits of the evangelistic and overseeing ministry that would come to belong to the church.

We see that one of the foremost priorities of Jesus' earthly ministry was to establish a network of worthy, disciplined houses for His shepherding work. This is the activity of the church as His bride. Through evangelism from house to house, believing households are the primary context for hearers to be born again as sons and daughters of God, and be delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son. Furthermore, we register that it is worthy houses who care for those who are babes in Christ, so that they come to maturity and bear the fruit of sanctification.

### **Trained and prepared**

It is significant for us to note that there was a training and preparation that preceded the disciples' commission and sending. 'He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.' Mar 3:14-15.

Of course, Jesus was not speaking about being trained in evangelistic models or strategies. Rather, Jesus' desire was that His disciples would come to know and share His great love for the people. Evangelistic activity, without this same heart motivation birthed by the love of God, will, inevitably, become a self-serving form of personal verification. For example, Christ nominated the zealous activities of the scribes and Pharisees toward proselytizing as 'belonging to Satan'. 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.' Mat 23:15. The apostle Paul identified this same mindset in false prophets and teachers within the New Testament church. Their zealous efforts to convert people to their gospels were born from a completely self-centred motive. He wrote that, 'They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them'. Gal 4:17.

### **Feet washed and shod with the gospel of peace**

We could think of the disciples' preparation as having their feet washed and shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. As Paul wrote, 'How shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring

glad tidings of good things!' Rom 10:15. The feet of those who are proclaiming good news are beautiful because they themselves are receiving the gospel of God in order to be personally washed by it. As one who has come to know God, they can be sent as an ambassador of Christ, to compel others as they proclaim, from testimony, the gospel of peace. It is essential to take time to ensure that we understand this point.

The Scriptures explain that a person is made clean through receiving Christ's word. However, Jesus noted further, that to be completely clean, one needed to have their feet washed in the fellowship of the word. Joh 13:10. '*Agape* foot washing' is the means by which a person becomes blameless and clean. We understand that this happens through fellowship together in the word that is proclaimed. Significantly, a hearer is not completely washed by simply hearing the preached word. Rather, we are made completely clean as we wash one another's feet, through open-faced fellowship together in the word that is preached. Jesus warned that those who are unwilling to have their feet washed by their brethren, in the fellowship of the body of Christ, have no part in Him; they have no part in His body, and He does not know them. The important point to register is that foot washing is not simply an endpoint in relation to an individual's sanctification; it is, equally, the preparation for the evangelistic work of the bride. With this in mind, let us consider Jesus' ministry toward the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Through Christ's 'washing' initiative, they became a worthy house with a unique evangelistic expression.

### **Jesus' ministry to the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus**

In his Gospel, Luke recorded that Jesus, and those who were accompanying Him, entered a village called Bethany, where Martha welcomed them into her house. Her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. The word was not simply preached to Mary; it was a relational encounter where Christ was able to apply the word to Mary's conduct. That is, He was applying the water of the word to her 'feet', addressing the way in which she walked and expressed the gospel. It is notable that the Scriptures recorded that she was equipped to proclaim the gospel of peace to others, particularly in the town of Bethany. Our feet are washed in the same way as we receive the word of Christ preached by presbytery messengers, and then join the fellowship of the *agape* meal in open-hearted testimony and confession. Paul commended the Macedonian believers for their exemplary conduct in this regard. 'And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in

much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.' 1Th 1:6-8.

Jesus also washed Martha's feet on this same occasion. Martha was overwhelmed with the stress of catering for such a large group of people. She was upset that her sister Mary was not helping her, and that Jesus seemed indifferent to her workload. 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me.' Luk 10:40. The Lord washed Martha with His word, saying to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.' Luk 10:41-42. In addressing Martha in this way, Jesus was washing her feet for her unique expression of the gospel of peace, which was through hospitality. Interestingly, Paul, in the book of Titus, connected hospitality with testimony and the ministry of the word. He wrote that overseers should firstly be 'hospitable' as ones who are 'holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught'. He continued by explaining that, in the context of such hospitality, believing houses were able to exhort, and even convict, those who are opposed. Tit 1:8-9.

When Lazarus became sick, Mary and Martha immediately sent word to the Lord, saying, 'Behold, he whom You love is sick.' Joh 11:3. Jesus said to those who were with Him, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Joh 11:4. This is a remarkable passage. Evidently, Lazarus had contracted a terminal illness. However, the sickness and death of Lazarus was not for his own sake, nor was it the outcome of time and chance, or the result of the Lord's judgement upon him. Rather, Lazarus was given the privilege of a unique participation in the fellowship of Yahweh. We know that Their fellowship of offering is characterised by revealing and glorifying the Other. In the same manner, Jesus said that the death of Lazarus would glorify God the Father, and also glorify Him as the Son of God.

By the time that Jesus approached the town of Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Both Martha and Mary believed that if Jesus had been in Bethany, Lazarus would not have died. However, we know that Jesus did not rush to Bethany to prevent Lazarus from dying. Rather, He waited until he was already dead, for the purpose of ministering faith for *exanastasis* to this household. When Martha ran to

meet Jesus, He said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Joh 11:23. In response to this statement, Martha confessed her faith in the resurrection at the last day. Martha already believed in the *anastasis*. However, Jesus ministered the faith for *exanastasis* to Martha when He said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.' Joh 11:25.

Following the resurrection of Lazarus, many of the Jews who had come to the house and seen the things that Jesus had done, believed in Him. Lazarus bore physical witness in his mortal body to the *exanastasis* life that Jesus had ministered to him. In the same way, Paul explained that believers were to show forth Christ's death until His return. 1Co 11:26. Paul also testified, personally, that his desire was to 'know Him and the power of His *anastasis*, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the *exanastasis* from the dead'. Php 3:10-11. The glory of the Son is resurrection life, or *anastasis*. We receive and express Christ's *anastasis* as we daily embrace our unique part in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This is *exanastasis*, or His resurrection life, being manifest in our mortality. As each member embraces their part in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the light of His *anastasis* can be shone into the world.

A key point to register in relation to Mary, Martha and Lazarus, is that their participation in foot washing was occurring at the same time as they were ministering the life of the gospel to others. Sons of God are not waiting to graduate to a particular standard of righteousness or become qualified to proclaim the gospel. As Mary, Martha and Lazarus received the footwashing ministry of Christ to become a worthy firstfruit house, they were able to immediately minister that same grace so that many believed.

### **Jesus' ministry to and through a Samaritan woman**

We see another example of this principle in the story of the woman of Samaria who met Jesus at the well of Jacob. Christ called her to believe Him and become one who worshipped the Father in spirit and truth. He then revealed that He, who was speaking to her, was the Messiah. Joh 4:24-26. Rather than remaining at the well with Jesus, the Scripture recorded that she left her water jars and hurried to her town to call the people to come to meet the Saviour. Joh 4:28-29. Clearly, her heart was now burdened for the people of her village to receive what she herself had only just received. In this, John recorded that 'Many of the

Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." Joh 4:39.

### **We never graduate from serving as a disciple**

Finally, we must note a cautionary point. We began this article by identifying that Jesus, motivated by love and compassion for Israel, 'appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons'. Mar 3:14-15. Jesus' first teaching to the disciples in relation to their impending ministry, was that they should serve as ones who were humble and poor in spirit. 'Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God".' Luk 6:20.

The disciples discharged their commission successfully. The Gospel of Mark recorded that 'They went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.' Mar 6:12-13. However, it soon became apparent that, in their estimation, the disciples had graduated, their presumption being marked by a growing rivalry and collegiality. They even became puffed up over and against Christ!

By way of example, Peter had the gall to take Jesus aside to rebuke Him for speaking about His impending sufferings, death, and resurrection, while the rest of the disciples rejected Christ's word that declared that they would be scattered after He was imprisoned and condemned to die.

In the presumption that had resulted from their commission and ministry success, the twelve had ceased to be discipled by Christ. Consequently, they were unable to reveal Him, or each other, and could not participate in the fellowship of Yahweh. Jesus addressed this leaven among the disciples, saying, 'He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.' Luk 22:26. They needed to learn again how to serve one another in love. Gal 5:13. So it was that, at the last supper, the disciples needed to submit to foot washing, and to wash the feet of others as servants. Jesus warned them that if they resisted this relational engagement with one another, they had no part in Him and would, inevitably, betray their brethren through their self-righteous ministry endeavours. Joh 13:8,14-16.

With the exception of Judas, the apostles were enabled, through foot washing, to cease from revealing themselves. As the apostles participated

in this essential practice, they revealed the fellowship of Yahweh, which they could then extend to those who received their message. The apostle John testified of this reality, writing, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life ... that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ'. 1Jn 1:1,3.





## Article 9

# Becoming a worthy home

*Richie Kaa*

In this article, we will consider how a home becomes 'worthy'. Key to this process is the sending of messengers in the spirit and power of Elijah to seek and find households that are receptive and obedient to the gospel of peace. These are sons of peace with whom a messenger will abide to see them established in the body and joined to the process of reformation, leading to fruitfulness. This is the manifestation of the bride of Christ on the Earth and is the purpose for which the messenger is sent.

At this time, messengers are being sent in the spirit and power of Elijah as ministers of reconciliation. The mandate of the Elijah ministry was first recorded by Isaiah who was himself commissioned to minister in the spirit and power of Elijah. The specific message of this ministry is that 'all flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.' Isa 40:6-8.

The proclamation of this message offers illumination to a person regarding the self-righteous ideals that they have pursued and endorsed.

These ideals have been exposed as fraudulent. Instead, they 'file for bankruptcy' and confess that they are, joyfully, 'out of business'. They no longer peddle false and fraudulent ideas, opinions and practices. Jesus referred to this as the blessing of being 'poor in spirit', knowing that these ones now belong to the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:3. James referred to the rich man who rejoiced in his humiliation, having been illuminated to the name that he had made for himself by trading under the principle of Babylon. The Elijah ministry is coming to terrify 'the horns of Babylon' that have prevented men from lifting their heads. Zec 1:21. Instead, the Elijah ministry is coming to minister the word of the Lord, which is the word of each person's name that will stand forevermore.

As a son of peace hears their name, they can believe for healing and deliverance, because the ministry of reconciliation is, first, reconciling a person to themselves so that they can be reconciled to the members of their household. Therefore, 'every valley will be exalted' and 'every hill made low', so that the word of the Lord, which is the word of their name, can stand forevermore. No-one gets to 'call the shots'. Christ is the Head of His body. He reflects the glory of each person's sonship through the corporate mirror of His presbytery.

Wonderfully, the illumination that comes by the word of the Elijah ministry connects a person to the capacity to repent from their own way and their own understanding, and to receive faith to obey the word that they are hearing. Rom 10:17. However, they must be clear in knowing that illumination is not enough. It is the necessary *beginning* point that allows a person to choose repentance and faith, remembering that the word polarises a person who fails to respond with repentance and faith to the illumination that they have received. Despite being illuminated, a hearer can still choose to walk in the darkness of their own understanding concerning its implications for their life.

This highlights a simple principle that Jesus expressed to the blind man whom He healed. He said, 'For judgement I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see and that those who see, may be made blind.' Joh 9:39. Jesus was making the point that, through the ministry of His word, a hearer is compelled to make a judgement. They will either respond with illumination leading to obedience; or they will choose the darkness of their own understanding and will judge themselves to be unworthy of the gospel. The point to note is that every person will choose, or judge themselves to, life or death.

## I am not worthy

The Gospel of Luke recorded the account of a centurion who sought a word from Jesus, requesting that his sick servant (presumably tormented by 'serpents and scorpions', or familiar and unclean spirits) be healed. Jesus, offering to come to the centurion's house, was 'stopped shy' of arriving by a delegation of friends who stated the centurion's confession, 'Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy to have You come under my roof.' Luk 7:6. As the account unfolded, it became clear that the centurion did not even consider himself worthy to come to Christ personally.

The apostle Peter's first meeting with Christ produced a similar response. Following a miraculous catch of fish in obedience to the command of Christ, Peter immediately perceived his own sinfulness and fell at Jesus' knees, requesting that He should depart from him. Luk 5:8. It seemed an odd response toward Christ, given the success that His word had produced for Peter's benefit.

The centurion, who was himself a man under authority, acknowledged the authority of Christ, and so sought only a word that this healing might happen. Christ marvelled at this, saying, 'Not even in Israel have I found such great faith.' Luk 7:9. Although Christ healed his servant by His word, His actual intent was to come to the centurion's home. Christ was the centurion's messenger, coming to Him from God, looking for a worthy house. Christ wanted to come to his house and to establish it as a worthy home.

The beginning of becoming a worthy house is the illumination that the members of the household are not, at first, worthy of the gospel. They are first illuminated to their complete lack and are compelled to repent. To be illuminated as being 'unworthy' replaces the presumption of being the measure of the word, and espousing 'all that You say we will do'. This self-righteous disposition has led many Christians to build with wood, hay and stubble, which the Spirit is now, mercifully, blowing upon to prove (for their sake) how they have built. As the Spirit blows upon their home, and brings to nothing all that is of the flesh, they are offered the opportunity to build again. This is their true beginning point where they can acknowledge their great need for a messenger to come to them to proclaim, by testimony, the gospel of peace, which delivers to them a choice. They will either continue to build according to the flesh and continue to make a name for themselves, or they will build on Christ, the

Chief Cornerstone, in obedience to the word of their name. This is the word of the Lord that stands forevermore.

The importance of falling at the feet of a messenger, and acknowledging their feet as being 'beautiful' (meaning that they speak a timely word), is an acknowledgement that they are in need of a messenger whose feet have been shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. This confession is an illumination that brings to them a fellowship which, if they choose to join it, will make them worthy.

### Meeting the word of your name

Importantly, the first action toward a son of peace (those illuminated to receive the gospel of peace) is that they will need to be encouraged to stand up and to meet the word of their name, which is coming to them in the proclamation of the word. This word is bringing healing and deliverance, and is teaching them to walk accountably before the Lord. This may bring certain expectations to the surface. For example, some may be all too willing to abandon their fleshly efforts and to assume that a messenger is coming to take dominion over them, with a view to conforming them to some predefined template. Alternatively, some hearers may assume that the encouragement to stand on their feet is an invitation to a collegial connection with the presbytery. Rather, a person is called to stand and measure themselves to their name by presenting themselves to make offering.

None of us can move forward in God's purpose for our lives until we are healed and recovered from the fractures and the frailties that we have acquired through the course of our lives, or until we discard 'the riches' that we have acquired by trading in Babylon in order to make a name for ourselves. This speaks of the regenerative capacity that is in the word, where every valley shall be exalted, and every hill made low. Isa 40:4.

An example of 'every hill being made low' is found in the account of Christ's interaction with Zacchaeus. As Zacchaeus came out to see Christ, Christ called to him by name, 'Zacchaeus make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' Luk 19:5. Christ was calling him to come down from his high place (or 'mountain') and, upon descending, he began to confess his repentance, demonstrating his eagerness to relinquish all of his fleshly riches that had been fraudulently acquired in preference for fellowship with Christ. Zacchaeus welcomed Christ into his home that very day, confirming that salvation had come to his home and that his home was also made worthy.

An example of 'every valley being exalted' is found in the account of the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus met her and exalted the 'valleys' in her life by raising with her, her many failed attempts to find validity and worth in a relationship. She perceived that Jesus was speaking to the depth of her spirit and, as she received Him, she came to understand that He was the Christ. Her response was to go into the city and testify about Jesus, causing many others to believe in Him. Joh 4:1-40.

## Our response to His messenger

A person is brought into contact with Christ through the unction (or anointing) of the life and peace that Christ has given to His disciple-messengers. These disciple-messengers are ones who are established in the gospel of God. The peace that a messenger brings is the fruit of the Lord's process in their life. Their peace can rest upon a home. It is given to them so that they can give it to those who receive them. When a messenger who comes from Christ is *received* (your heart is opened wide to them because their heart is opened wide to you), then their peace comes to you and your house. The word that the messenger brings in you the process of making you a worthy Christian and household.

Receiving the gospel of peace as it is being proclaimed by the messenger joins us to the conversation of faith whereby the word of present truth is processing us in open-faced fellowship. This will compel a believer to speak by faith concerning the substance of their repentance and the evidence of their faith obedience.

Once a believer is 'on their feet', they will be motivated by the faith that resides in the word of their name to present themselves for fellowship with those who have been set apart to receive and order their offering. Through offering, they can prove the will of God regarding their sanctification. Rom 12:1-3. This will immediately expose their ideas concerning how they might come to know who they are. The danger is that they will 'cleave with deceit' to the messenger, seeking empowerment or endorsement from them, rather than obediently making offering to those who deacon in the various areas of the church. Paul said it this way: 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice.' Rom 12:1.

As a believer is being built into the temple of His body, they are joined to the process of reformation in order that they might mature toward fruitfulness. A key framework concerning this process of reformation is conveyed in the parable of the sower. Here we note that the negotiation

of the different types of 'ground' belongs to this process within the temple of the body of Christ. The point is that those who are being processed in the body are learning to proceed past each type of ground. As they mature, they will bring forth the fruit that belongs to firstfruits houses, which are the manifestation of the bride of Christ on the Earth. Accordingly, the process of establishing who is worthy or unworthy belongs to the temple of Christ's body.

### **Parable of the sower - the grounds**

The premise of the parable of the sower is that 'ground', or the dirt, represents the human heart into which a seed is sown. Accordingly, the parable of the sower describes certain issues that must be addressed so that a believer might arrive at good ground, where the seed can bring forth fruit. The point is that every son will need to learn to negotiate the various grounds, which is part of the process of being built into His temple. Those who embrace this process will be delivered from their stumbling that leads to disobedience, and from familiar spirits that impose upon their discipleship. The journey of the grounds refers to the reforming process that will lead us to fruitfulness and maturity.

#### ***Wayside ground***

The first ground that Jesus nominated in this parable is *wayside ground*. This refers to those who hear the gospel of the kingdom, but they do not understand the word of their name and, so, it never germinates. They lack understanding because they refuse to relinquish their own understanding of themselves, of God, and of the gospel. One of the characteristics of a 'wayside-ground' person is that they hold on to former gospel traditions; they fail to receive the fear of the Lord; they reject the invitation to present themselves for fellowship on the ground of the presbytery; and they resist Christ Himself when He comes to expose the thoughts and intents of their heart. Accordingly, the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart, so that their Christian expression is no more than a form of religion that has no power or life.

#### ***Shallow ground***

The '*shallow-ground*' person receives the seed with joy; yet they have no root in themselves and endure for only a while. As they come to be built on Christ as part of the temple, when tribulation or persecution come because of the word, they immediately stumble, causing them to be

disobedient to His word. Why would this be? A son of God stumbles, being disobedient to the word of their name because they have prioritised their own ambitions, projections or personal expressions over obedience to the word of present truth that is proclaimed to them by the presbytery.

The evidence of this mode will be the emotions of sin, or strong emotional reactions, that a believer directs toward the messenger. Unless they acknowledge that they have been building with wood, hay and stubble, accept their loss, and begin to build with gold, silver and precious stones by obedience to the word, they will fall away.

### *Thorny ground*

The '*thorny-ground*' person is also born again by the living and abiding word of God. But the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things choke the word and the person becomes unfruitful. These thorny responses to the word indicate the destructive influence of familiar spirits on a person's capacity to be established and manifest as part of the bride of Christ.

A person's unwillingness to deal with familiar spirits within their household marks them as being a 'tare'; remembering that the ground, or soil, represents the human heart and they become the seed that they receive. As such, a 'tare' is a person who has chosen to receive another seed altogether. How then does another seed enter their heart? Jesus explained this in the parable of the wheat and tares. He said that while men were asleep, an enemy came in and sowed another type of seed. Mat 13:25. How so? A believing family allows this other seed into their home by the familiar priorities and practices that they have set. If they do not address this mixture and the competition between the two seeds, members of a believing household will choose the seed of the wicked one.

When we speak of the 'cares', or 'worries', of this world, this includes the temporal and secular worries common to all, including the relational dynamics within their marriage and family, their health, financial pressure, house related matters and even their own approval rating. 'The deceitfulness of riches' would include the acquisition of material or social capital such as academic, career or even social success, affording them a sense of importance, relevance, and acceptance among their chosen communities. 'The desire for other things', then, refers to everything else that they have yet to attain; that is, the plans and ideals that they have for the future. These endeavours to verify their identity are enacted by

parents, in which the children are then trained, preventing them from ever maturing or bringing forth fruit. This is because the source of their verification is their family, rather than verification from the word that is proclaiming their name in relation to the messenger. The Lord wants to illuminate every believing family to see how this orientation has allowed a different seed to be cultivated in their house. As households are illuminated to these matters and turn in repentance, they will release their young people from the 'fortress' dynamic so that hands can be laid on them by a presbytery in order that they might be disciplined unto fruitfulness.



# Article 10

## The word of present truth

*Tim Maurice*

### What is the word of present truth?

The word of present truth is *the word of I AM*, which is brought near to members of the body of Christ from the fellowship of a presbytery walking in first love. It is important to understand this, because we can sometimes make the mistake of thinking that present truth is 'what we happen to be teaching at the moment'.

With respect to the Godhead, the word of present truth is *the everlasting word of God* which constantly proceeds from Their fellowship to us as an unending supply of life. This word is spoken through and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

With respect to us, the word is a '*lamp in a dark place*', and it shines first into our hearts. In this way, the word is made 'more sure' in our hearts as it polarises the issues of Spirit and flesh within us. Polarisation gives us the opportunity to choose whether or not we will obey the word. In other words, the hearing of faith gives us the freedom to choose to love.

The word of present truth is *the message of the whole of Scripture*. This message is not a matter of private interpretation; instead, it comes from a fellowship of hearing, seeing and handling the word. The word is entrusted to the fellowship of a presbytery who are gifted by Christ to 'rightly handle' the word of truth in a fellowship. By this means, the body of Christ is built up.

At an individual level, the apostle Paul made it clear that our hearts need the shining of this word to come to us from the face of Jesus Christ. The face of Christ is clearly 'portrayed' in His body where brethren meet in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. The blood of Christ works in this context. That is to say, people are able to find freedom from the bondage of sin and cleansing of their conscience, so that they are enabled to walk in newness of life.

Present truth brings 'what is true' in God to us, so that we can have fellowship together; for the further purpose that what is true in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit might become true in us. We understand what is true in Them as we walk in the Spirit, being conformed to the image of Christ as new creation sons of men. What is true in Them is communicated in the Scriptures by statements such as, 'God is love', 'God is light' and 'God is Spirit'.

The gospel is proclaimed from the prophetic Scriptures. The truth of the prophetic Scriptures is 'made more sure' in the hearts of those who join the fellowship of its proclamation and culture. This culture is called 'walking in the light' - the product of the message that 'God is light'. In this fellowship of light, sin is overcome and love is multiplied.

### **Where is it coming from?**

This word proceeds from the fellowship of Yahweh. Specifically, the word proceeds from the beginning, which was established by Christ when He became the Word of the Father. That which is from the beginning is declared to us from this fellowship and calls us to have fellowship with one another. Fellowship is the capacity to live in one Spirit with our brethren. Fellowship is marked by the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

The word comes from a 'fellowship of light', which God is; and He invites us to walk in that same light. Christ establishes the fellowship of first love in a presbytery for the building up of His body. John's first epistle is a handbook on how present truth proceeds from the fellowship of

Yahweh to the presbytery and then on to individual members of the body of Christ.

The 'mouth' of Christ is proclaiming the living word as 'the sound of many waters'. He who has an ear must attend to what the Spirit is saying to the churches by receiving the living word from Christ.

The word of present truth comes through the initiative of the love of God to establish the fellowship of Their name in and among us, giving people the opportunity to choose to love and obey Him. Sons of God who are being glorified as sons of men are able to choose to obey the word of their name which is proclaimed to their hearts when they hear the gospel.

They are able to choose to obey this word because they have been granted the liberty of the Spirit, having been born of the Spirit and joined to the Lord in the fellowship of one Spirit.

### **How do we respond to the word of present truth?**

We respond by *believing*. Believing is more than agreement; believing is the obedient initiative of a 'speaking faith'. Faith is the settled and total reception of the word that proceeds from the mouth of God into our hearts. When we believe the word, we also obey it. This obedience is from the heart and is motivated by love, not by any intention to conform, to find verification, or to be 'good'.

Have you ever tried really hard to understand the word and to apply it to your life? Did it work? Your answer will have to be 'no', because such an approach cannot work. The word tells us as much. A fleshly response to the word will revive sin within us and we will begin to lose heart.

Let us consider the word that came at the National Youth Seminar last year, when we heard about 'the maze' of laws which tie us in spiritual knots unless we walk by the Spirit. One of the key points of that word was that each of us must come to surrender the whole of our life to the lordship and rule of the Holy Spirit. Unless we are obeying the Holy Spirit, we are living in rebellion against God. This especially includes those of us who rely upon our attempts to keep the moral law as our means of sanctification and justification.

However, it is very evident that many young adults did not register this vital point. Instead, quite a number went on to hear about *agape* friendship as being a new 'standard' of relating or a courtship 'method',

and then proceeded to adhere to this word in a legally compliant fashion. In all of this, the Holy Spirit's warning about compliance was missed.

*Obedience* to present truth is not compliance. In its best form, compliance is a necessary tool in training young children to heed the instruction and direction of their parents. However, godly parents recognise that, at the appropriate stage of a child's development - somewhere approaching majority (adulthood) - a child must learn to obey their parents and the Lord 'from the heart'. What they have learned to do automatically, or as a matter of course, must become their own accountable choice; a choice made because they have surrendered to the lordship of the Holy Spirit. This is a choice motivated by love.

In other words, for children, compliance works in the way that the apostle Paul described the Law. It functions as a 'tutor' which eventually leads us to a personal response to Christ. When the child grows up, he or she must put away 'childish things' and be personally accountable, choosing personally 'the more excellent way' of being motivated by love. This is an aspect of what it means to grow up.

Thus, we cannot hear the word as being merely a new standard which either condemns us or motivates us to try harder. When the word is proclaimed, we recognise that it is *coming to save our souls* as we receive it with meekness, not with arrogance or by analysis. Having received the word, our response will be to overflow with the same living water that we have received from the mouth of Christ.

This is the response of a believer. A believer is one who is poor in spirit; that is, they recognise that their own righteousness is 'dung', and that they have no way of revealing the righteousness of God unless they are granted mercy and grace. They are granted grace and mercy as they make the necessary 'judgement' to believe.

Each person must make a judgement when the word is proclaimed. This is a response of choosing to love the truth instead of their own life. A person who receives a love of the truth is able to 'practise the truth', which grants them access to the efficacy of the blood of Christ in the fellowship of offering. As such, they are not a liar; nor are they deceiving themselves. Therefore, they can confidently know that the truth is in them - not their own truth - but the word which came to them by 'the hearing of faith'.

## How do we walk in the light as a worthy Christian?

A worthy Christian lives by laying down their life to the death for their brethren; that is to say, their life is given in the service of their brothers and sisters. They walk in the light with these brothers and sisters by walking in open-faced *agape* fellowship with them. The fruit of this light is the multiplication of love.

A worthy Christian recognises that they are not, in fact, worthy of the mercy of God, except by being joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. They walk in the light as they respond in repentance in the same spirit of faith by which the word came to them. This is how they are delivered from their self-deception of believing that they have no sin. This is how they receive the word with meekness, knowing that the word comes each day as part of the package of their salvation.

They learn this meekness by confessing the trespasses that the messenger word has brought to the light. In this fellowship with the presbytery, they find healing, faith and a clear pathway in which to walk.

A worthy Christian can establish, or be an intrinsic part of, a worthy house. A 'worthy house' is one which has received the ministry of peace from the presbytery. Their daily bread, which they break from house to house, is the word which is sovereignly proceeding to them from the fellowship of the presbytery. A worthy household is able to wash the feet of others. That is, its members are able to overflow to other households in the application of the word to the specific issues of life.

The word of present truth always proclaims 'Christ and Him crucified' - the cross. As we keep the word of the cross, the love of God is perfected in us. We walk as Jesus walked in the fellowship of His seven wounding experiences. Joining these experiences grants us a share in the knowledge that He obtained as He was perfected through what He suffered.

He priests this knowledge to us as we resist the temptation to be beguiled from the simplicity that is found only in Him. We are able to resist this temptation as we 'build ourselves up in our most holy faith' through prayer and personal devotion to the Lord in obedience to the word of our name. This is how we walk in the truth with our brethren.

## **What is the nature of the discussion in a worthy house which is walking in present truth?**

The discussion in a worthy house is based in the faith which comes by the word, grounded in the *agape* love of God. In this way, the household will be at peace as the witness within it is demonstrated through faith working by *agape*. The word is not discussed from the perspective of theological expertise or from their knowledge of the Scriptures; rather, the discussion in the home springs from the wisdom which comes from the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord yields 'the secret of the Lord', which is the intimate relationship and friendship that exists in the fellowship of one Spirit. This friendship is possible between family members who have turned from familiar idolatry and are obeying the word of their name. Each member of the household is being rewarded in secret by the Father - where they can know Him and be known by Him - and they are thus able to open wide their hearts to one another.

The reward of each person is the secure knowledge of their sonship; that the hope of their calling is kept safely in their heavenly body, which contains the glory of the name that the Father has given them.

A household walking in the fellowship of present truth will be recognised by a prevailing culture of worship and honour. The apostles' doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer will be the focus of such a household. They will be distinguished by their commitment to *service*, and by their expression of *reverent fear*.

## **How do we wash one another's feet in the fellowship of the word?**

We join the action of Christ's washing of every person in the fellowship of His death, burial and resurrection. That is to say, we join the faith and expression of the immanent word. We share with one another first, as bread, through testimony. Then we minister to our brethren, who share a nature such as ours (we are not superior), through the specific application of the word to one another's lives, marriages and families.

This consists in open-faced (no hidden agenda), straightforward (truthful) conversation, concerned with revealing the word and not with anyone's private interpretation of it. No-one can presume to wash another person's feet unless they themselves are willing to be washed. In having our feet

washed, we are being prepared in order to share the gospel, which is the whole counsel of God and the entire content of the Scriptures. No-one is personally adequate for this task without the fellowship of foot washing.

The example of Paul washing Peter's feet, as described in the book of Galatians, is instructive. Paul was not, in the first instance, correcting Peter's doctrine. Paul was rescuing his friend, who was standing condemned, or 'to blame'. Peter was not walking blamelessly, and Paul was committed to Peter in the bond of friendship. He was laying down his life for his friend, sharing a most personal testimony with him.

'For I through the Law died to the Law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died in vain.' Gal 2:19-21.

Paul's testimony to Peter became part of the Scriptures that Peter later shared with others. The testimony of the presbytery, expressed in a spirit of meekness, demonstrated the culture of what it means to be spiritual. Paul wrote that 'you who are spiritual' are able to recover a brother who has fallen into trespass. This testimony is part of the message of present truth to every wise virgin across the church age.