

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

Peter Hay, prepared for the Apostles' Fellowship word focus, 20 June 2021

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

In our last session, we understood that participation in the *agape* meal in a worthy manner means to be an overcomer. We are overcoming the Devil by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and because we do not love our lives to the death.

The food and drink of the *agape* meal is the body and blood of Jesus. These are not sacraments, but are the *fruit* of the tree of life.

Eating the *agape* meal in a worthy manner means overcoming. We have to eat something, so we are eating the body and blood of Jesus, which is not a sacrament, but is the fruit of the tree of life. We were granted access to the fellowship of this meal, which is at the tree of life, when the fountain of living water began to flow from the pierced side of Christ's body after His Spirit had been received into the hands of the Father.

The relationship between the fountain of living water and partaking of the fruit of the tree of life

The relationship between this fountain, which is the source of the river of life, and partaking of the fruit of the tree of life – eating and drinking the *agape* meal – is most spectacularly depicted in the concluding chapter of the book of Revelation.

'And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of the Father [or throne of God] and of the Lamb (the Lamb, slain). In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' Rev 22:1-2.

This statement, 'in the middle of its street', actually should be translated 'in the midst of the street of it'. The river is likened to a street, or a pathway. Another way of saying this is 'in the middle of its broad place,' or 'the broad place of the river of life'.

The point is that the water of the river of life is, actually, the bread and wine of the communion, because that river of life is the tree of life.

Recipients of the water of life

Our availing ourselves of this fountain – which is for sin and uncleanness, but also is the fountain of living water – is our participation in the tree of life, which is eating and drinking the *agape* meal. We are to do this in a worthy manner.

We read, 'There shall be no more curse'. That is the end of all the old creation. 'But the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face [meeting Him face to face] and His name shall be on their foreheads.' Rev 22:3-4.

Of course, there are many points that we can develop from this passage, but the question we need to ask is, 'How do we avail ourselves of this fountain of living water, which means to participate in the *agape* meal by eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood?'

It is through repentance and faith because, by this means, we are actually coming to Jesus. We have to actually come to the cross, and to enter through the veil of His flesh, from which the fountain is coming. It is through repentance and faith.

He is revealed to us through His word, and we are caused to look on Him, and then to boldly enter.

The key implication for us today is that we are recipients of the blessing, which is the water of life, as we receive and respond to the word of the cross that is ministered from a presbytery in the right hand of Christ.

As we walk in the light of this word, we have fellowship, or communion, with one another, as well as our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

Journeying with Christ, we avail ourselves of the river of life, which is both a fountain for sin and uncleanness, and the fountain of living water. It is cleansing us. It is delivering us. It is bringing healing, but it is also becoming our *life*.

We live in this way as those who are receiving and living by this living water, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. It is a journey. That is why the river of life is described as a path.

As we live this way, this new and living way is the context of blessing for us individually, and for our households.

Faith for separation from all that is old

The point, today, is to separate from all that is old.

Our access to this *agape* meal is through the cross. The cross is a point, or the context, of separation. It separates the new, which is emerging from the waters of God's judgement, from the old creation, which is passing away.

While we are to be recipients of this blessing through our participation in the *agape* meal, our connection to that meal, which is our fellowship in the cross, does, by implication, require separation. Having faith for this separation means that we have to become comfortable with the uncomfortableness of the separating effect of the cross.

The apostle Paul both testified to, and exhorted us to, this faith response.

Glorying in the cross of Christ; an expression

'But God forbid that I should boast [or glory] except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I [have been crucified] to the world.' Gal 6:14.

Paul boasted of glorying in the cross of Christ, and we are called to join this glorying. The cross causes separation as something is crucified to us, and we are crucified to something.

Paul's statement highlights the need for us to accept, and to become comfortable with, the relational fallout that can result from our fellowship in the cross of Christ. In fact, it should be our boast, or our glory.

That does not mean that we boast, or delight, in relational fallout. Rather, that glory is an *expression*. When we refer to 'glory', we are speaking about something being *expressed*.

When we glory in the cross of Christ, we are exemplifying that way of living or everything that that, culturally, represents. That's what it means to 'glory in the cross of Christ'.

We accept that that involves a separating effect in us, because we are having everything that is old removed from us, and we are putting on Christ.

The cross has a relational impact

There is a *relational* impact in the contexts in which we live. This relational distress associated with the cross may be experienced in our families, in the church, and also in the broader community.

No-one who is sane relishes the inter-personal distress that arises because of our commitment to the cross. That is not what Paul was boasting about. He was not boasting about the mess of it.

He was boasting in, or glorying in, the fact that that was *where his life was lived*.

Although we do not relish inter-personal distress, we should not be surprised when our faithfulness to the word - to the culture of the cross - gives rise to discord in these settings.

In this regard, Jesus said, 'Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' Mat 10:34-36.

This does not refer to people in the household generating division. Jesus said that He is bringing a sword, and that sword is the word of the cross, which results in separation. The division is an implication of the 'sword', which is the *word* of the cross, and that word proceeds from the mouth of Christ. Rev 1.

The world is being crucified to us; and we are being crucified to the world.

We see that the cross itself is the instrument that causes a painful separation between those who belong to Christ, and those who are part of Babylon.

Last week, we talked about Paul's exhortation to 'come out from among that Babylonish mixture, and be separate'. 2Co 6:14-18.

Paul's testimony revealed two causes of separation. This is two effects of the sword, which is the word of the cross impacting on our lives, and in the settings in which we live.

That is *the world being crucified to us, and us being crucified to the world*.

Another way of saying it is that the world is saying, 'You are crucified to me.' In both instances, something is being cut off, or separated.

The world is being crucified to us

We will consider both of these elements of separation, and we will start with 'the world crucified to us'.

This separation is the implication of a believer's adherence to Christ, and their obedience to His commands.

The world is crucified to them as they forsake every doctrine and speech other than the word of the cross. They are hearing the word. They are responding in repentance.

This means that they are *turning* from something. Their faith is demonstrated in their obedience to that word.

Immediately, as you begin to walk in the way of the word of the cross, you can't walk in two ways! You walk in one way, and something is being let go because of repentance.

There is no malice involved here. It is simply the implication of turning to where the word is calling us. This is the expression of *faith*.

Something is being let go of, or separated. We are being delivered from a cultural conversation and conduct. As that cut is happening in our life, the world, which has a conversation and a conduct, is being crucified to us.

That is the first dimension of separation. We are forsaking every doctrine and speech other than the word of the cross.

This is what the apostle Paul testified to himself. He said, 'But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.' Php 3:7. Where something is being counted as lost, it is crucified to us. It is being cut off and forsaken in the sea of God's forgetfulness.

'Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.' Php 3:8.

The point is that, as the word of the cross comes, and this separation happens, pain occurs. Paul said, in effect, 'I am suffering the loss of all things, but I count them as rubbish. And I count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.' This is someone who is gaining the river of life. They are letting go of the old, and are obtaining an eternal blessing.

'That I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.' Php3:8-10.

That is the *exanastasis* life of God – resurrection life in my mortal body. That brings separation.

The world, and everything that I have held dear to, in terms of my own sense of righteousness and rightness, is being crucified to me as I hear the word and walk by faith in it.

There is *fellowship* on that pathway, which is a street, where the fountain of living water is active in my life. I am obtaining that resurrection life in my mortality. The world crucified to me! That's a great promise.

The world will consider us crucified to them.

However, there is another side to the effect of the cross. That is, as we walk in that way, the world will consider us crucified to them.

On the other side, there are those who live by the principles of the world, which can be a mixture, in the church. That's what Babylon is. That is a facet of Babylon.

Those who live by the principles of the world will separate themselves from us when we put Christ ahead of their carnal expectations and demands on us.

We are hearing the word of the cross – that should be all of us - and we are turning from our own way, which is the way of the world. That is Babylon – we are coming out and being separate from Babylon and her ways.

However, as we do that, it immediately has a *relational* implication, because we don't live in isolation. We live in families. We live in churches. We live in communities.

Our commitment to Christ, and the way that He is leading us, will have an implication. It is that the choices that we are making are causing us to forsake the expectations and demands that others place on us.

These ones, who have demands and expectations of how we interact with them, will begin to reproach those who remain committed to the fellowship in the light of the word.

Relational mechanisms and manipulations to promote loyalty

That reproach begins with techniques of *control*. That sounds a little technical, but these relational mechanisms and manipulations are used to try to keep us loyal to an old way of living.

We are supposed to be walking in what is new, every day.

However, when that word brings a division, it immediately provokes techniques, or mechanisms, in those who are not receiving that word, in order to try to keep them loyal to what was old. These techniques of control are a *reproach* upon us, through which those who are rejecting the word are trying to keep us loyal to their views, which are just old views that we may have held as well; to former views, and former positions, ways of understanding and interacting with the world.

These techniques of manipulation, for example, may include flattery. People may try to regain you through flattery, saying, 'What a great person you are; you're a fantastic friend.'

It is all false fellowship. It is association, by deceit. It is flattery. It is a technique to keep others loyal to a particular viewpoint - basically *their* viewpoint - that they want others to be part of too.

Remember, this is 'the mixed wine' conversation.

Sometimes these techniques and manipulation might be reminders of history. Perhaps we go back a long way. You are letting all that history and friendship go, to follow the way of the cross. All of a sudden, there is pressure to remain loyal to an old way.

It may even be the history of your failings that keep you bound. Remember, we are to walk in what is *new*, today. We do not need to come under the condemnation of our history.

Sometimes, guilt is poured on others. People may say, 'Look, my poor condition is your fault. How dare you move on when I'm still in a mess.'

They may also apportion *blame*, claiming that they are victims of others.

These are reproaches upon a person who is walking in the way of the cross, in the culture of the cross.

The element of oppression

When these techniques of control fail to get the response that the person desires, those who are of the spirit of the world can become relationally cold, relationally reserved, and even hostile toward a believer.

Suddenly it switches, and it acquires energy and anger that demonstrates that the person is now *oppressed*. It is not just a mechanism to try to keep us with the old. Now they are saying, 'You are dead to me.' And the vitriol is part of the 'killing' action.

Choosing the way of the cross

On the one hand, the world is crucified to us because we are choosing the way of the cross.

On the other hand, as we do that, those who are forsaking the way of life begin to cut us off from themselves. There are two sides, or two elements, of this separation.

Summarising that second point, a disciple of Christ is crucified to the world when those who are of the spirit of the world withdraw from, and then abuse, them because of their obedience to the proceeding word of God.

Recipients of exanastasis

We are being *found in Christ*. Our glory, or boast, is to be in the fellowship of the cross. Our boast, or glory, is that we accept, or are comfortable with, this mess that we will endure, because we are recipients of *exanastasis*.

The comfort that we are to have, the mindset, is not because we tell ourselves that this is the important way to live. It is because, as we are joined to the cross of Christ, even in the midst of the mess, we are recipients of that *exanastasis*. Paul said, 'I'm forsaking all those things, so that I might receive the resurrection life of Christ, in my mortal body. That's how I'm living now.' That is the source of our comfort.

That is a great thing. We don't have to 'generate' comfort, ourselves. All we need to do is to continue in the foundations of repentance and faith. Those who live by faith are comfortable

with the uncomfortableness of the cross. That is the focal point for today.

This is because their comfort is the *exanastasis* life of God that is in the blood of Christ, which sprinkles their heart and garments. This is *the blessing of the fountain of life*.

This comfort is why they are able to boast, or glory, in their commitment to fellowship in the cross of Christ. This glory is the expression of a testimony.

They do not boast, in some sort of proud way, that they are in the cross, and everyone else is damned. The boasting, or the glorying, is that, simply by obedience, they are exemplifying that process. They are being delivered from that which is old, and are *obtaining new life every day*. That is what it means to 'glory in the cross of Christ'.

Examining ourselves in relation to the propensity to glory in a way other than glorying in the cross

However, over the past couple of weeks, we have been learning about the need to take heed to ourselves, and to discern the Lord's body, so that we eat and drink in a worthy manner.

As we walk through life, there are some things that we do need to examine ourselves about in relation to. One of them is the propensity to glory in a way other than glorying in the cross.

We are to 'take heed to ourselves' in order to participate in the *agape* meal in a worthy manner.

In particular, we must take heed to ourselves with respect to the propensity to glory, or boast, in our capacity to accommodate the cultures in our families and in the church, which are contrary to the doctrine of Christ.

That is simply the pursuit of worldly peace.

Jesus said, 'I didn't come to bring peace, I came to bring a sword.'

If we are glorying in the cross of Christ, we are accepting that the sword has this separating effect.

The leaven of accommodating other cultures

However, if we do not take heed to ourselves, we will begin to encompass this, for the sake of a sense of peace and with a perverted view of the

love of God that is embracing those things which we are to be crucified to, and which will otherwise be crucifying us to it.

This is not a boast that we are to have. Paul said that glorying in this manner – in the capacity to accommodate cultures in our families, and in the church, which are contrary to the doctrine of Christ – is not good.

In fact, he identified it as 'leaven', which undermines a person's participation in the *agape* meal, and brings them under judgement.

Paul admonished the Corinthians around this point on embracing those things which the cross is calling a separation from.

He said, 'It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned?' 1Co 5:1-2.

Eating and drinking judgement to ourselves

Now, what is mourning the beginning of? It is when someone who has looked on Him whom they have pierced *begins to receive the waters of the fountain of life*.

Paul said to them, 'You are not receiving that blessing, because you are glorying in the encompassing of this immorality in your midst.'

He said, 'You are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.' 1Co 5:2.

Do you see that that is the evidence of separation by the word of the cross? 'Your glorying is not good.' 1Co 5:6.

We are supposed to glory in the cross of Jesus Christ, and Paul said that this is a different glorying that has a religious 'hue' to it, but it is not that glorying.

He said, 'It is not good', which means it is *not of God*.

'Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the Feast, not with old

leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' 1Co 5:6-8.

The point is that if we glory in this way – embracing these cultures – we are leavened, and we are not keeping the Feast of Passover. The Feast of Passover is the feast that describes our participation in the *agape* meal. As we endeavour to partake of that, we actually are eating and drinking judgement to ourselves, not discerning the Lord's body!

Ultimately, when we boast in our capacity to embrace ungodliness, we actually begin to love those who despise Christ. Where this word brings division, and these ones do not receive your testimony, but are actually reacting against it and despising Christ, despising His word, and beginning to be vitriolic towards those who are proclaiming it, where we embrace that, we are saying that we love them more than we love Christ.

That is, obviously, not a worthy way to walk.

Unfortunately, this means that we do not eat and drink the *agape* meal in a worthy manner.

In fact, that's exactly what Jesus said. This is the next couple of verses after He said, 'Don't think that I came to bring peace on the earth, but a sword.' And He said, 'This sword brings division.' He said, 'He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.' Mat 10:37-38.

Eating and drinking in a worthy manner is necessary to be partaking of the tree of life, which is the reality of being a recipient of or availing ourselves of the river of life.

He was saying, 'If you preference or encompass these ones who are "over and against" [as in actively warring against Christ and His word], then you love them more than you love Christ.' He said, 'You are not worthy of Me! And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.'

Our love for Christ is demonstrated through our obedience to that word

This 'preferencing' is what we want those people to be to us. He was saying that we have to let that go. It is not that we are to despise and hate fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers.

Rather, when the word brings a cultural breach, our love for Christ will be demonstrated through our obedience to that word, and not to our loyalty to that which is old.

Do you see that that is where the division is? It is where we won't let go of that for the sake of some form of contrived peace. In this regard, Jesus said, 'You are not worthy of Me; you are not actually taking up your cross and following after Me, which means you are not recipients. You are not on the pathway where that fountain for sin and uncleanness is effective in your life.'

A person who glories in the cross does not *seek* relational disharmony with others. If you do, if you are up for the fight, that is a bit psychotic. That is not what we are saying.

Rather, the obedience to the word of the cross, by implication, brings separation.

A person who glories in the cross does not seek relational disharmony with others. In fact, if possible, and as much as depends on them, they endeavour to live at peace with all men. Rom 12:18. However, their undertakings are never at the expense of their sanctification as a son of God in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

We do not go out to identify the behavioural and conversational limitations of others, and then try to cut that off.

Rather, we walk in the light of the word, having fellowship together. That word is establishing a culture in which we lift up our voice for understanding. We are applying ourselves to it.

Maintaining the culture of the word

When, in our household, that becomes jarring, we do not change our culture to accommodate or to alleviate the discomfort that that brings to others.

There is no malice involved. It is simply that we are 'holding the line'. Our 'yes' is 'yes' in relation to the word, and our 'no' is 'no'. We do not change the cultural conversation and practices of our house to make those who are rejecting the cross more comfortable.

As we glory in the cross, Christ is being publicly portrayed as crucified to those ones. They, actually, in the mess of it, have the opportunity to turn and join us.

There is no endeavour to cut people off. It is simply that walking in the truth has a separating effect. This will be the opportunity for those who are willing to look on Christ whom they are piercing, to return.

Pursuing peace in sanctification

It is actually the true peace that is found in Christ. This is an amazing passage. 'Pursue peace with all people.' Heb 21:14. No-one is trying to 'lop' something off another.

It is a commitment to relationship and fellowship.

'Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no-one will see the Lord.'

Remember that we are availing ourselves of the river of life, the evidence of which is that they shall see His face. That is beautiful.

As we pursue peace with all men, what is the most fundamental condition? It is holiness! It is sanctification! Sanctification is letting go of what does not belong to Christ, and standing in our name as a son of God, which is defined by the word.

This means giving attention to the word of the cross as it comes. Remember that He is coming with eyes like a flame of fire. He is actually exposing our hearts.

Examining our heart

Forget about anyone else in your social context. What is the word doing to *your* heart? That is the beginning point.

'Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God [the *exanastasis* life of God].' That is what we are to be receiving.

But, if we fall short of that, what happens? Something else springs up. 'Lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled. Lest there be any fornicator [that sounds like what Paul was addressing with the Corinthians] or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.' Heb 12:15-16.

That is extraordinary! He sold his birthright! That means he sold his sonship. He let go of his sonship for the pursuit of his own satisfaction of his flesh.

'For one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he did want to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found

no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.' Heb 12: 17

Repentance and faith must be a foundation to be eating and drinking in a worthy manner.

A person stands in the sanctification of their sonship when their 'yes' is 'yes', and their 'no' is 'no'. Their 'yes' and their 'no' are expressions of faith which they receive by hearing the word of the cross.

Our commitment to the word of the cross

Those who live according to this way are not ashamed of the gospel. We are not apologetic about the word. We are absolutely committed to it, and we are not ashamed of it, even though it draws fire from others, at times.

Neither are we afraid of the repercussions of testifying to this word as a culture, in all contexts of our life. The testimony of this word as a culture is what it means to glory in it. Importantly, when we do that, when our 'yes' is 'yes' and our 'no' is 'no', the Devil has no access to our lives or to our houses. Praise the Lord!

