

AN OVERVIEW OF SALVATION

Peter Hay, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 10 October 2021

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

Hello, everyone. In this next series of Bible studies, we will consider in further detail the waypoints on the pathway of salvation, which we outlined at the National Bible Seminar.

This session in particular will be an overview of the whole process. The process is from *the message being proclaimed*, all the way through to *fruitfulness on 'good ground'*.

We will identify the key waypoints in this process so that, over the next weeks, we will construct a frame of reference where we can look at the waypoints in more detail.

We will give some concentrated statements highlighting the key waypoints, and where they fit. We will show how they are sequenced to lead to walking by the Spirit, blamelessly and without spot, 'before Christ's face', which is what it means to be 'on good ground'.

Then we will take time to elaborate on the points in the coming weeks.

1. The message is the beginning of the way of salvation

The beginning point for the way of salvation, or the steps of salvation, is *the message*. This is what the apostle John said when he opened his Gospel. He said, 'In the *beginning* was the Word.'

Now, the Word is the *message*, and the Word is *Christ*. So Christ Himself is the Everlasting Covenant of the Word of God.

Christ is also the *Messenger* of that covenant.

And the word, which He proclaims, and which He embodies, is 'the word from the beginning', which is, 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness'.

This message reveals the *fellowship* of Yahweh and Their covenant initiative toward us.

The Scriptures call this 'the mystery of God' and also 'the secret of the Lord'.

Their covenant initiative towards us was to create a multitude of sons who would be born of Their life, would be brought to glory, and would live in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. An important point is that the word and the

message is not that humans, or mankind, are in a bad state and need someone to 'get them out of a bad state to be in a better state'.

Many gospel propositions have been based on this notion. It is not about 'us' at all.

The word of the gospel firstly reveals Yahweh; that is, 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all'.

So the very first step, or waypoint, is to understand that message.

2. The Lord sends messengers with His word to prepare our heart

The second waypoint is that *the Lord Himself sends messengers* before His face to prepare the hearts of their hearers so that they can receive Jesus, who is the Messenger of the Covenant.

So there is the *word*; and Jesus is the *Messenger* of that word.

He sends 'messengers in front of His face' to prepare the 'ground' of the heart, so that hearers can receive the Seed, which is Christ Himself. These messengers go before the face of Christ to prepare the hearts of their hearers to *receive* Christ.

This is a *restorative* ministry, calling a hearer to repentance.

The messengers *bear witness* to God's covenant purpose, which is the message. They bear witness to God's covenant purpose, because they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Through their ministry, Christ is 'publicly portrayed as crucified' among their hearers. This is an amazing point because, as Jesus said, when we see Christ lifted up, we 'will know that I AM'.

The revealing of Christ on the cross, through the ministry of the cross, reveals the message that 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness'.

So there is a *message*. Christ is the *Messenger* of this message, revealing the fellowship of Yahweh and Their covenant purpose. He sends *messengers* before His face to prepare the hearts of their hearers *to receive Him*. And their work, or their

ministry, is to call a hearer to repentance so that their *heart is ready* to receive Jesus.

3. The fear of the Lord

The third key waypoint is *the fear of the Lord*.

We remember that the messengers who are sent before Christ's face come in *the spirit and power of Elijah*.

Through the word of the cross, the heart of the hearer is pierced, and it is exposed to the eyes of the Lord. The hearer is made aware of God's wrath on account of their rebellion and sin.

Right at this point, as the word of the cross is proclaimed by messengers in the spirit and power of Elijah, they also exhort their hearers to 'fear the Lord'.

When our heart is exposed by the word to the eyes of the Lord, it is confronting, because the jealous love of God reveals that our own sin and rebellion is not acceptable in the fellowship of light to which we are being called.

The messenger who is proclaiming the word of the cross which brings this breach is also imploring those who are hearing the word, 'Don't draw back from Christ's gaze.'

This exhortation to 'not draw back' is the same as 'fear the Lord'.

The reason why it is important to fear the Lord is because, as we don't draw back from the eyes of the Lord, 'He makes known to those who fear the Lord *the secret of the Lord*'.

So the message that is proclaimed is able to be received and apprehended by those who do not draw back.

4. God grants to us freedom of choice

The important point to note is that, as a person ministers in the spirit and power of Elijah, this is *the grace and supplication that comes from Christ Himself*.

That grace and supplication grants to every person *the freedom of choice*, right at the point when their heart is breached. That freedom of choice is a great dignity.

It also holds great accountability; but no-one is *compelled* to choose obedience to Christ.

When our heart is breached and the condition of our heart is being exposed, we can choose either

to 'draw back in unbelief' or to 'draw near' and to embrace Christ.

So then, the reason why it is important that we recognise that the learning of the fear of the Lord happens as that word of the cross is being proclaimed and breaches the heart, is so that we will *not* draw back in unbelief when we encounter the eyes of the Lord.

This *freedom of choice*, then, is part of the spirit of grace and supplication that causes us to 'look on Him whom we have pierced'.

5. The kindness of God

The fifth waypoint is *the kindness of God*.

Those who do not draw back from the Lord when He comes, because they fear Him, are shown, by the Lord, the kindness of God.

This is such a beautiful point, because it is actually *the same revelation of His eyes*.

Initially, His eyes reveal the condition of our heart, which is darkness, and has no place in the light. However, when we accept that, and do not draw back from His eyes, we actually see that that same fire is revealing the love of God to which we are being drawn - and that is 'the kindness of God'.

So, through repentance - turning from our darkness to the light - and faith, we obtain the forgiveness that Jesus has achieved for us; or is available to us on account of Christ's redemptive work through the shedding of His blood.

We are recipients of that forgiveness, and can then begin to *walk in obedience to the word of the Lord*.

That obedience demonstrates that we have received 'faith in the word'. And, by that faith, we believe for the sonship that the word itself proclaims.

When we believe for that sonship that is revealed in the word, we are 'reckoned', or 'accounted', as being *righteous before God*.

That righteousness is given to us as a *gift*. We certainly didn't deserve it, and we haven't done any works that cause a transaction to occur. All we did was to *believe* by the faith that we have received, and that righteousness is given to us as a gift.

And, like Abraham, who was counted as 'the friend of God' because of righteousness which was given to him as a gift, when we believe by faith and are accounted, or reckoned, as righteous, the Lord Himself considers us to be *His friend*.

This is still under 'the kindness of God'. This is an amazing point, because God Himself considers us to be His friend even when we are not yet 'born of God'. This is an amazing provision.

6. Presenting ourselves for offering

The sixth waypoint is that the believer *presents themselves for offering*. This is the sixth one that I have listed out of the two sections that we wrote for the National Bible Seminar.

This is a new understanding for us, having been called the friend of God. He considers us to be His friend! The messenger who proclaims the word to us implores us, or exhorts us, to *present ourselves* as a living sacrifice on the ground of fellowship which they have brought with them; which is the fellowship of the Father and His Son.

When we present ourselves in this way, we are joining the fellowship of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

This was demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost, for example, when the people came to Peter after he had proclaimed the word. They said to him, '*Men and brethren, what must we do?*'

So we see that it wasn't only Peter to whom they came. They recognised that there was a *fellowship* to which they were being joined.

7. Cleansing and deliverance from unclean spirits

Now, the implication of joining that fellowship is that the believer receives cleansing from their sin and uncleanness, and is delivered from unclean spirits – from both the oppression, and the possession of unclean spirits – that is their 'lot' under the bondage to sin.

In this fellowship, the believer begins to be *washed through the ministry of the word*. This is 'the fountain for sin and uncleanness' that flowed from Christ's side after He was pierced with the soldier's spear.

Remember, Jesus was a *sacrifice* on the cross, wasn't He? A *sacrifice* is placed on an *altar*.

As we draw near to that altar, which is a context of *fellowship*, the word begins to wash us from our

uncleanness. And the Lord Himself drives out all of the idolatry and the unclean spirits from our houses. Our 'houses' are simply our bodies, but can also describe our households.

The ministry of Elijah on Mount Carmel illustrates this principle beautifully, and in the coming weeks we will elaborate on that a little more.

8. Christ the Messenger comes

The eighth waypoint is that *the Messenger of the Covenant, who is Jesus, comes*.

Until this point, the hearer has interfaced with a messenger who has gone before Christ's face. That is an amazing ministry when you think about it.

At this point, their heart has already been opened and the ground of their heart has been breached. Christ Himself now is coming to be 'sown' into their heart.

It is important to note that those who come to us with His word, in the spirit and power of Elijah, are not 'the light'. They do not bring the light. Rather, they 'bear witness' to the light.

Jesus said, 'I am the Light of the world.' So the Light of the world, who is Jesus, comes to us. And the Spirit of Christ, who is the Seed, enters the heart of the one whose heart has been *made ready* to receive Him.

This is the relationship with the messenger who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah. Their work is to prepare our heart, causing it to be broken open, so that we can receive Jesus, who is the Messenger of the Covenant.

He is the Light of the world. He is the Seed sown into their heart. The first thing that a person receives when the Spirit of Christ, who is the Person of Christ, the Seed spoken about in Jesus' parable, is sown in their heart is *adoption*.

9. The Spirit of Christ is the expression of our sonship

When Jesus comes into the heart, He is the expression and image of who they are to become as a son of God. They are an identity – a spiritual identity. The Seed has entered into their heart, and *He is the full revelation, or expression*, of who they are to become as a son of God.

When He comes into their heart, the Son comes crying, 'Abba! Father!' to God. Now, when He cries, 'Abba! Father!', this is not only to reveal that God the Father is the Son's Father.

Rather, that cry is the expression of a person's sonship and life if they are *born of the Father*, and have obtained *the name and life that is in the Seed* that is unique to their identity.

At this point, then, Christ has come into their heart, and He proclaims to them their name. And that proclamation of their name sounds like Him crying, 'Abba! Father!' to God the Father.

An amazing understanding is that, even under the Old Covenant, a person could receive the Spirit of Christ. This is part of the *prevenient grace* that flows from the cross throughout history. However, under the Old Covenant, they could not be 'born' of that life. We will explain that distinction in a moment.

The point is that the first impact of the Spirit of Christ, which is *the Seed entering the heart* of a person, is that He begins to proclaim to them their adoption.

He comes into their heart, crying, 'Abba! Father!', and this is *the expression of their sonship* once Christ dwells in their heart as they are born again.

Because the Spirit of Christ has come into the heart and is revealing a person's name and who they are to be as a son of the Father in His house, adoption makes a person an *actual* son in the house.

They are entitled to the inheritance that belongs to the Father. This inheritance is the divine nature which a person receives when they are born of God. The Spirit of the Son comes into their heart, *entitling* them to the inheritance that belongs to sonship, but they do not yet *have* the divine nature. It has not yet become their 'possession'.

That is what the adoption is! It is the entitlement to it, but a person doesn't yet have it.

10. Regeneration

The next waypoint on this pathway is *regeneration*. Regeneration is where the Spirit of Christ, who has come into our heart, begins to 'breathe' on us as He continues to speak His word to us.

The breath of the Lord brings *regeneration*, or makes the identity, or spirit, of a person, which has been affected by the ravages of sin and has become degenerate, *alive again*.

They *are* an adopted son of God.

Now their *identity* is being *regenerated*. What was dead in trespasses and sins is now beginning to be made alive again.

There are two important thing aspects of this regeneration.

One is that the *spirit* of a person which is being regenerated is 'the lamp of the body'. When that lamp, which is the eye, is regenerated, or healed, it is now able to 'receive the rays of light'.

This is the *substance* of our sonship. Unless that identity is healed, we will not be able to receive the substance, which is the Light, who is Christ, who is to dwell in our heart.

Paul said that we are 'strengthened in the inner man', or regenerated in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in our heart through faith.

Now 'dwelling in our heart' is different from Him 'coming into our heart'.

He comes into our heart, proclaiming our *adoption*.

Then we receive *regeneration* as He breathes on our spirit. He does this to strengthen us, so that He might *dwell* in our heart.

And when He dwells in our heart, we are *a new creation*. We have not outlined new creation yet. So far, we have explained adoption and regeneration.

The ten elements of the work of God's prevenient grace – regeneration, but not yet born again

These ten points are all under the work of *the prevenient grace of God*.

This is another major understanding for us. The prevenient grace of God is not only in the initial interaction with a messenger, taking away anything that inhibits our ability to choose, although that is true.

However, the prevenient grace of God takes us from the proclamation of the message, all the way through to the regeneration of a human identity.

Born to see

The other aspect that is amazing to understand is that the end of this prevenient phase is where the person's identity is being regenerated so that they can *see*.

That is what Jesus meant when He said, 'You have to be born to see the kingdom.' A birth has happened; but that person has not yet *entered* the kingdom. They have simply been 'born to *see*' the kingdom of heaven.

God's prevenient grace is His lovingkindness

So these ten steps are under the prevenient grace of God, which the Lord also described as His 'lovingkindness'.

This is a scriptural term for the prevenient grace of God, which the Lord Himself described as 'the lovingkindness of the Lord to draw to Himself those who hear His word'. Jer 31:3. That is the *effect* of prevenient grace.

The phase of the crisis of 'wayside ground' – germination of the seed

Importantly, this whole phase is called 'wayside ground'. The wayside ground of a person's heart does not refer to overly religious people or anything like that. Wayside ground is an entire phase, and it has a crisis point.

Now, if we respond and yet continue in the flesh at this point, we lose what has been ministered to us as a gift. However, the point about wayside ground is not its 'goodness' or 'badness'. Rather, it is the fact that it should lead to *germination*.

That is the key point for us to understand. In this phase described by Jesus as 'wayside ground', at this point, a hearer has not been born again as a son of God.

This is an amazing point!

Proceeding to new birth and eternal sonship life

The provision of prevenient grace has resulted in amazing *deliverance* from sin, uncleanness, addictions, oppression from unclean spirits, possession.

It has granted to a person the *adoption*; they are considered by God to be a son in His house.

They are receiving *regeneration*.

But if a person does not *proceed* from there to 'new birth', they will not obtain eternal life.

It is important that we do not confuse the amazing provision of 'prevenient grace' with the 'new birth', and call what we receive under prevenient grace being 'born again'.

This is why it is important that we see the whole framework.

This is the 'crisis' of wayside ground.

Deliverance from our own understanding

Unless a person is *delivered from their own understanding*, the Devil comes and snatches away what the person has received, which is the Spirit of Christ sown in their heart, proclaiming to them their adoption and granting them regeneration.

The Devil comes and snatches what they have received, and they are left, at best, with 'a form of godliness' that has no power to it.

They live in the fading glory of what was revealed in prevenient grace.

And the form of godliness is what they understand everything that has been proclaimed to them under the prevenient grace of God to be for them.

But the power that they deny is *the power of resurrection life* that comes when a person is born, and then immersed into the offering and sufferings of Christ.

On the one hand, the wayside ground person, when they will not relinquish their understanding, may simply go back to being a normal, 'dead-in-trespases-and-sins person'. On the other hand, they may become a highly religious person who has *a form of godliness* which means that they are not actually walking blamelessly before the Lord at all.

He wants us to *proceed to obtain the promise of eternal sonship life* that He has perfected for each one through His offering on the cross.

Proceeding from a heart that is wayside ground

We have outlined these ten waypoints on wayside ground, which is the prevenient grace of God, but we must not stop there.

We need to proceed from there, and the issue will be 'understanding'. That is what Jesus said about the wayside ground.

What is the 'understanding' that we need to let go of so that we can obtain His understanding, and that seed can germinate?

II. The germination of the seed

The eleventh point on this pathway, moving beyond prevenient grace, is *the germination of the seed*.

When the Spirit of Christ, Jesus Himself, comes into a believer's heart, He comes bringing the Holy Spirit with Him. And He says, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

Letting go of our own understanding to receive the Holy Spirit

This is where the point of 'understanding' is. At this point, we can become stuck under the phase of the prevenient grace of God, and our salvation becomes an increasingly dim experience.

On the other hand, we may proceed forward, in faith, to be *born*, and then to join *travail*.

Both responses are based on this issue of whether or not *we receive the Holy Spirit*. And our capacity to receive the Holy Spirit has to do with the understanding that we are to let go of.

The point is that we can receive the Holy Spirit only as we *relinquish* our own, natural understanding of what we have received under the prevenient grace of God. This is based on our natural sight and our natural capacity for reasoning.

If we will not let go of that, we will only understand ourself and our life from that basis.

In this regard, Paul said, 'For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of a man which is in him?' 1Co 2:11.

This refers to the spirit of a man who has been regenerated. This is not the fallen, dead spirit of a man.

Paul explained that there is an understanding that we can have about ourselves, and about our condition, and what we think we will need, which is purely by our own spirit.

'For what man knows the things of man except the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.' 1Co 2:11-12.

So we have to let go of the understanding that is based in our own spirit in order to receive the Spirit of God which grants us a new understanding. 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God.' 1Co 2:12.

This is Christ coming into us, praying to the Father that we will receive the Holy Spirit, if we will let go of understanding ourselves and our circumstances by our own spirit.

'We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.'

That is our sonship! We need to let go of the understanding of our own condition, our own need, and what will be sufficient for us.

At the National Bible Seminar, we made the point that Philip was unable to *receive* the Messenger of the Covenant, Jesus Christ Himself, and was unable to *believe*, because he would not let go of his own spiritual understanding.

He said to Jesus, 'Show us the Father and it will be sufficient for us.' His understanding of what he needed was 'by the spirit of man'. That was the juncture point of the new birth.

If we do not relinquish that understanding, we will not proceed to germination, because the germination requires *the work of the Holy Spirit*.

Birthed by the Holy Spirit

When Jesus breathes on us, we are regenerated. Then He says, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

The Holy Spirit re-births the believer's identity with the name and the life that is in the Seed, and is unique to their identity. This is why He is called 'the Spirit of *sanctification*'.

Within the Spirit of Christ is every person's name and life. When that comes into a person, and the Holy Spirit is received, He takes what belongs from the Father and has been given to the Son and is unique to that identity, 'birthing' them of that name.

They are now a unique son of God by the Spirit, because it is the Spirit who gives life. The Holy Spirit births in the believer's spirit the name and divine nature life of God that are specific to their

identity, and that are in the Seed who entered their heart by adoption.

So we can see that adoption comes first. Jesus comes into our heart with our name and life. But it is not until the Holy Spirit comes in and *births* it in our heart that that name and life become our possession.

In this regard, Jesus said to the disciples, 'It is to your advantage that I go away, because if I go away [what will happen?] I will send you the Holy Spirit.'

Until that point, we were no different from all of the Old Covenant believers. They had the Spirit of Christ; they had received the adoption.

But what is 'new' now is that this *promise of the Spirit* has come. The promise that we were 'entitled' to under the adoption is now becoming our *possession*. We can lay hold of it. This is so amazing!

This process, then, causes us to be born again as a *new creation*.

12. We cry out, 'Abba! Father!'

The twelfth waypoint is that the believer begins to cry out, 'Abba! Father!'

When the Spirit of Christ entered our heart initially, it was Christ Himself crying out, 'Abba! Father!' And His cry, 'Abba! Father!', reveals to us what our cry will be once we are birthed.

Now that we are birthed, that cry, 'Abba! Father!', has become the unique expression of our sonship and name.

Christ has become our life and now *dwells* in our heart. He has taken up His abode. He is not just in our heart as an 'anointing'; He now *dwells* in our heart. He *abides* in our heart.

Consequently, the sonship that was revealed to us in adoption, when Christ came into our heart declaring, 'Abba! Father!', now *belongs* to us. For this reason, we now cry out, 'Abba! Father!', as the joyful expression of our sonship. That is a beautiful point, isn't it!

This is another amazing point. Remember, adoption entitles a person to the inheritance; and that 'treasure' is the divine nature. But we cannot get it until we receive the Holy Spirit.

Now, Paul called the Holy Spirit the 'down payment', or 'firstfruits', of our eternal inheritance.

This highlights the fact that, because we received the Holy Spirit, that divine nature which is promised to a person in the adoption is given to us as a down payment, or a beginning point, of our eternal sonship inheritance.

13. Our body is the temple and expression of the Holy Spirit

The thirteenth waypoint that I have listed here is that, once we born of God – born of the Spirit – our body becomes a 'temple' for the Holy Spirit.

However, our body is also the *expression* of the Holy Spirit.

In this regard, the Lord said to Abraham when He was revealing to him the promise of sonship, 'Look now into the heavens and *see the stars*.' They are shining lights. Those stars reveal that the sons of God are the manifestation, or the expression, of the Holy Spirit Himself.

So our body has become a *temple* for the Holy Spirit; and then we *reveal* the Holy Spirit through our bodies.

14. Baptism - our entry into Christ as a member of His body

This is my fourteenth point. A person who has been born of God will request *baptism into the name of Jesus Christ*.

Why is that? It is because Jesus now *abides* in our heart.

We have received regeneration, and are strengthened in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in our heart, through faith.

By the Holy Spirit, that seed has germinated and has put down roots; it is now *abiding* in our heart. And, because of that, we will desire to 'abide in Christ'. We do that through *baptism*.

Baptism is our entry into Christ as a member of His body.

Baptism has a number of layers and points to it which are not necessarily sequential, but are an entire 'package'. This is because it joins us to 'a pathway of life'!

15. Our sonship is hidden with Christ in God

This is the fifteenth waypoint. One of the first implications of baptism is that our sonship now is *hidden with Christ in God*.

When we have been baptised into Christ, our preoccupation is *no longer the expression of our own sonship*. We are no longer concerned about who we are and how we should be revealed, and how we should express our sonship.

Neither are we judging ourself, saying, 'Oh, I am falling short of my sonship here.' That is a person who is carnally-minded.

When we are illuminated to understand that we have been 'hidden with Christ in God', we have been illuminated to see that *our sonship has already been perfected and fulfilled* through Christ's offering on the cross.

It is not a matter of whether we will get it or not; it is already *finished* and done.

Our main focus now is that we have been *placed in the body of Christ*, by the Father. Our preoccupation now is to *reveal someone else*; that is, to reveal Christ - and we do that by revealing the members of His body.

As we do that, our sonship is being obtained. We are no longer preoccupied with ourselves or how we are proceeding. We are completely focused, or motivated, by the Spirit to lay down our life to reveal another.

This is the reality, not only for a person who has been baptised into the body of Christ, but also for a person who is baptised with the Holy Spirit. This is our next point.

16. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

This is point number sixteen: *baptism in the Holy Spirit*.

It is important to note that it is through *receiving* the Spirit that we are 'born of God'. And we have noted that a person may receive the adoption, but not the Holy Spirit; and hence not be born of God.

When a person does receive the Spirit, through which they are born of God, that is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

That is 'receiving the Spirit', where He is the Helper of the Father and the Son, making substantial in us the name and life from the

Father, which are in the Son, and which are now in us.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is equally as important to entering the kingdom of heaven, but it has a different focus. A person who is baptised in the Spirit is able to reveal Christ through their unique fellowship in His offering and sufferings as a member of His body.

If we are not baptised in the Holy Spirit, we will be preoccupied with only our own sonship.

This is because *the capacity for love*, which is the *ability to lay down our lives for another* in a fellowship of offering, is only by the love of God which is poured into our heart *by the Holy Spirit*.

He gives to us *the capacity of Eternal Spirit* so that we can be joined to Christ and joined to one another. He gives us the capacity to journey with Him, and to participate in the offering which He has pioneered for us.

That is fundamental to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I have written, 'A person who is baptised in the Spirit is able to reveal Christ through their unique fellowship in His offering and sufferings.'

Once we are baptised with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit becomes the 'context' of our life. We live *in* the Spirit, and we live *by* the Spirit.

Importantly, we are able to participate in 'the spiritual prayer meeting' which is of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and is our *connection* to Their conversation of fellowship. It is not just a 'devotional experience' every morning. That spiritual prayer meeting which is by the Holy Spirit joins us to Their 'ongoing conversation', which is our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings throughout the day.

This is the Spirit 'guiding us into all truth'. This prayer meeting, then, is essential to our daily pilgrimage.

Now, we are talking about how we walk each day. This is our daily pilgrimage and expression as a son of God *in the travail of the Son*, through which we are growing and maturing to fruitfulness in Christ.

This is another amazing point! The Holy Spirit makes our whole body, soul and spirit - our whole being - a temple of God, so that our whole

being becomes a temple for Their *agape* expression.

Think about this for a moment. It is not just that the Holy Spirit has invited the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to 'reside' in us.

Rather, it is that that *fellowship*, which is revealing the love of God, which is the *agape* fellowship of Yahweh Himself, is *in our heart!*

That is what it means for the love of God to be 'poured into our heart'.

It is not a feeling. It is the reality and the capacity of that life and fellowship belonging to us.

What, then, is the implication of that? Once that *agape* fellowship resides in us, we will want nothing more than to *participate* in that, ourself. That is the basis for our ongoing eating and drinking as a fellowship of believers, as part of the body of Christ, in an *agape* meal.

It is because the Holy Spirit has made our body to be *a temple for the Spirit of God*. This is the one Spirit of Yahweh.

Our whole being becomes a temple for the *agape* expression and fellowship of Yahweh. This expression is in us and is the reason why we are able to participate in the *agape* meal with our brethren.

This fellowship is *demonstrated* by 'fervent love for the brethren'. So we see that this is all connected to not revealing ourselves; our desire now, by the Holy Spirit, is to *reveal one another*. That is what *agape* fellowship is.

17. Joining the travail of Christ's offering and sufferings

The seventeenth waypoint is connected to this point of *the fellowship of offering and sufferings with Christ*.

The Scriptures call this, 'travail'. We are now joined by the Spirit to a travail through which *fruitfulness is being revealed*.

Entering the kingdom of God is a pilgrimage that involves travail. That is what Jesus said about 'stony ground'. Stony ground highlights that what was sown in the heart in wayside ground has *germinated*; the mark of which is initial joy.

Through this process, the initial joy of salvation which accompanies the germination of the seed

remains in us. The joy remains in us, and is 'made full'.

The initial joy is the mark of *birth*, but that joy has to be made full. So there is a *process* from that initial conception, through to 'a mature son'.

At this point, it is most important to recognise the distinction between the *conception* of a son of God; and the *travail* necessary to bring them forth to *maturity* - or the revealing of a son of God.

In the natural, we see both of these aspects in the example of a pregnant woman. The conception of the child in her womb is *a living identity*. But there are nine months of *travail* through which that child is going to be brought forth and *revealed as a son!*

It is the same with plants. A seed is planted in the ground, and a shoot comes up. The shoot is the evidence of *new life*, or a *new creation*. But there is a *process* through which that new plant *bears fruit*; which is as the revealing of the fruit of sonship.

We need to understand the distinction between 'germination' and 'conception', and 'the revealing of the son of God', or the revealing of the 'fruit'. So there are two aspects of this travail that are necessary for fruitfulness.

Jesus described these as being 'born of water'; and 'born of the Spirit', to enter. These happen at the same time, but they are two distinct *expressions of travail*.

18. Born of water – the crisis of stony ground

Being 'born of water' corresponds to 'stony ground'. Now, the travail that is associated with stony ground, which is the crisis of being born of water to enter the kingdom of God, requires a son of God to *accept* their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

We are now narrowing down to an aspect of travail that is associated with baptism. In this fellowship, the other law within a son of God is being removed from their heart.

This other law is what keeps our heart 'shallow'. It is the 'stones', if you like, that do not allow that seed to take root. However, when we embrace what baptism is offering us, on this crisis of stony ground, those elements of the other law are being removed from us.

At the same time, we are being raised with Christ to live His life by the faith that we *receive in the proceeding word of God*.

So it is not only that this process is at work. We continue to 'live by every word' which the messenger is travailing to deliver to us. So everyone is travailing.

That word then enables us to live 'from faith to faith'. It becomes the capacity for us to walk in obedience by the life that we are receiving as we are being delivered from the desire to have our own life. We are able to fulfil the works that belong to our sonship, in sanctified submission to Christ.

If we are not being delivered from our other law, we will not submit to the headship of Christ. This is because we continually make judgements on the basis of what is 'best' for us. That is the other law - so we have to be delivered from it.

We are enabled to fulfil the works that belong to our sonship in sanctified submission to Christ, and are able to put off our self-righteous and self-preserving attitudes that are 'lame-nesses'.

Our other law keeps us lame; or unable to walk properly on our pilgrimage. And the Scriptures say that if we are not delivered from that, 'the lame are turned out of the way'. That sounds like a seed that has grown up but then has withered away.

So we have to 'make straight paths for our feet, lest that which is lame is turned out of the way'.

Having been delivered from these sources of lameness, a person is able to be 'rooted and grounded in love'.

This process delivers us from 'shallowness', because the stones of our other law are being removed from us; the evidence of which is that we are able to put down roots in *fellowship*. This is a context where, instead of looking to preserve our life, we are understanding that being rooted and grounded in love is demonstrated by laying it down for others.

19. Born of the Spirit – the crisis of thorny ground

The nineteenth waypoint is the second aspect of *travail* which is 'born of the Spirit', or 'thorny ground'.

The travail that is associated with thorny ground is the crisis of being born of the Spirit to 'enter the kingdom of God'.

A believer enters the kingdom by *embracing the headship of Christ*. This involves our ongoing fellowship with the presbytery, which is our fellowship with the Father and the Son.

The implication of this fellowship is that we *accept* the 'thorns' in the context of our works as being the reproach that we bear as we are being built on Christ as *a living stone in His temple*, which, of course, is the house of the Father!

Our testimony is, 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

For a person who has embraced the reality of stony and thorny ground in the positive, that is what it means to 'walk blamelessly' before God and 'without spot'.

We need to understand that blamelessness is not perfection. Blamelessness is us *joined to a process* by which darkness is being removed.

And, in the fellowship of those sufferings, the blood which Jesus shed as He suffered is then being *sprinkled on our hearts* so that we are being cleansed, or made to be without spot, because we are being delivered from 'an evil conscience'. That is what it means to 'walk blamelessly and without spot'. That is 'good ground'. That is where we bear good fruit.

'Walking blamelessly before the Lord' describes a person who has accepted, and embraced, their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, and is 'bearing the fruit of the Spirit'. They are being delivered from living by the principle of the flesh, to instead live by the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Godliness, with contentment, is their testimony.

If you want to know what good ground 'looks like', it is the expression of godliness with contentment, *in every circumstance of life*. Paul said that was a 'secret' that he had learned.

We see, then, that *the secret of the Lord* that was proclaimed to us, at the beginning, has now become *the context of our life*.

Those who walk in this manner not only bring forth the fruit of sonship, but are also able to *join others to the fellowship* of which they are part.

Walking blamelessly and without spot before God is the life of a 'firstfruits' Christian. This is what it means to be on 'good ground'.

Conclusion

So we have outlined some key waypoints. And this is a summary of the process from the proclamation of the word, through to us exemplifying that culture of the word as those whose testimony is 'godliness with contentment'.

Paul said that that is 'great gain'. This great gain is the *fruitfulness* that comes from the Seed.

In the coming weeks, we will go slower and look at the implications for us. This is important because, on every one of these steps, there are ongoing responses that we are to make as those who live in the reality of this marvellous provision.