

MARKED AS THOSE WHO SIGH AND CRY

Peter Hay, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 18 September 2022

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

Good morning, everyone. I will continue from where I was speaking a couple of weeks ago. I will begin with something of a restatement of the content from about three weeks ago.

We began our study by reading from the book of Isaiah. Isa 4:1-6. This is a prophecy concerning Christ and His initiative toward the church. The prophecy starts with the imagery of seven women taking hold of one man. We understood that the seven women represent the fullness of what should be a chaste church, betrothed to Christ.

We can be a little bit more specific than that, and recognise that the seven women represent *the seven churches* to whom Christ wrote His letters as recorded in the book of Revelation. That is a helpful orientation.

Christ is coming to His church in a spirit of judgement and a spirit of burning – the word of the cross

And, through the word of the cross, which is proclaimed by Christ's messengers, Christ Himself is coming to His churches.

In fact, that's how the book of Revelation opens. He comes in a spirit of judgement and a spirit of burning to wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and to purge the blood of Jerusalem.

This word which is coming in a spirit of judgement and burning is *the word of the cross*. And it has a polarising effect upon those who are in Christ's church.

We will revise the nature of this polarising effect.

Those who are left in Zion and are remaining in the New Jerusalem

Those who receive Christ's word turn from living according to the sight of their own eyes and the understanding of their own heart.

We remember that Isaiah summarised that as, 'We will eat our own food'. So they are turning from that default mechanism or appetite - 'to eat our own food' - and from the presumption to be the origin of their own life and expression.

We understand that the Scriptures describe that drive as 'the desire to wear our own apparel'; or, to define the parameters of our own priesthood.

So we are *turning from those things* - eating our own food and wearing our own apparel - which means that we have to acknowledge that we do those things, and need to turn from them.

We are turning from that through repentance, and we are obtaining faith in the word that is coming to us.

As we do so, we are obtaining our *sanctification*. Isaiah described those who are sanctified as 'the holy who are left in Zion and are remaining in Jerusalem'.

That sounds a little like 'making your calling, and election sure', doesn't it? Those who are making their calling and election sure are being *sanctified*, and they are the ones who are being left in Zion and are remaining in the New Jerusalem.

That is one side of the polarising effect of the word.

Those who are departing from lampstand churches

The other side is that those who are *not* overcoming iniquity and sin, in response to the Lord's initiative toward His churches, are departing from lampstand churches.

As they depart, it is an amazing point that the *word itself is appointing them* to their place outside the New Jerusalem.

They think that they are living in a particular way and are making a choice, but the word itself is appointing them to that choice.

How does this happen? What is it like to be progressively polarised out of a lampstand church, or out of the heavenly Jerusalem?

Now, remember that the *agape* meal is eating and drinking at the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God; it is in the midst of the city.

A person who is being polarised out of the city is one whose participation in the *agape* meal is becoming progressively tenuous. They have the attitude that they can 'take it or leave it'; or, their

initiative towards it is waning. It may be becoming increasingly, or progressively, tenuous; or the way in which they are relating is actually becoming *contrary* to *agape* fellowship; contrary to fellowship at the Lord's table.

Illumination regarding our participation in the *agape* meal

And we have to be clear that we are only 'scratching the surface' of what it means to participate in the *agape* meal.

We should be progressing forward to *illumination*. If we don't, we will, by implication, become tenuous in our participation. We are to be going *from faith to faith*.

So that' is the polarising effect of the word of the cross which is coming - or of Christ coming through this word in a spirit of judgement and a spirit of burning.

The Lord is coming in a spirit of judgement and burning to burn us in or out

Having established that principle out of Isaiah Chapter 4, we then turned our attention to a vision that the Lord gave to the prophet Ezekiel. Remember that Ezekiel saw the Lord as 'the appearance of fire, and from His waist down fire'. We can liken that fire to *fellowship*.

'And from the waist up the appearance of brightness.' The only other time that the term, 'brightness', is used in the Scriptures is to describe the appearance of those who are likened to *stars in the right hand of Christ*. It is a messenger administration.

Ezekiel saw the Lord like this - the appearance of fire. This means that the Lord, who is coming in a spirit of judgement and burning, appears to us like a fire from the waist down, and like brightness from the waist up.

He is coming among His people with the spirit of judgement and burning, *through a messenger administration*, proclaiming this word which has a polarising effect in the church.

And, I will say that, for ninety-five percent of us, it is polarising us 'in', which is great. We should be rejoicing that we are being established 'in'.

But we do have to accept that this word is causing those who are rejecting the word, to *depart*.

A vision of the house of Israel at the end of the age

The Lord lifted up Ezekiel by the hair, which is a very graphic image. He was lifted up between heaven and earth. And the Lord showed Ezekiel the abominations in the house of Israel.

It is important to note that, when Ezekiel was lifted up between heaven and earth to see *the house of Israel*, he was not only seeing Jerusalem as it was at that time. Remember, Ezekiel was in Babylon at this point.

He was also looking down right down to the end of the age for *the house of Israel*, including us who should be part of the true house of Israel, right through to the end.

Four abominations in the house of Israel

When the Lord lifted Ezekiel up, He showed him four abominations *in* the house of Israel.

The first was *an image of jealousy* set in the temple. The second was *idol worship in the dark*. The third was *women weeping for Tammuz*. And the fourth one was *men worshipping the sun*.

Now, it is significant that Ezekiel saw these idolatrous abominations being perpetrated *in the courts of the house of the Lord!*

Consider the temple, and the outer court around it. And these abominations were happening in the gates of the court. The implication is that the people presumed that their religious practices were consistent with the customs of the Lord's house.

They were behaving in a particular way, yet thinking that they were engaged in the practices that belong to the Lord's house, completely *in their own understanding*.

And the Lord was saying to Ezekiel, 'That is abominable practice.'

We must receive the word that is coming in a spirit of judgement and burning

It is only through *the light of Christ's word*, as He comes in a spirit of judgement and burning, that we have the opportunity *to see as He does*.

And, unless we receive that word, which is coming in a spirit of judgement and burning, we will, by default, be engaged in abominable practices.

We are not, by default, righteous.

So we can see that, when the word is coming, as Christ comes with eyes like a flame of fire, that is the beginning of *mercy* for us.

Otherwise, we would be completely in the dark, and ignorant, going about our religious practices as though they are true; thus, damning ourselves.

So when the word comes to confront us, we should be rejoicing in that, because that is the Lord coming to save us; coming to draw us, not just as part of the courts, but to get us into the *sanctuary*, where we belong.

The image of jealousy

We skipped over 'the image of jealousy', because it would probably take a whole session to explain it. We are writing on at the moment, and it is a particularly important one.

We correlate the image of jealousy that was set up in the temple, with the falling of the *aggelos* from first love, in Ephesus. That will be 'a trigger' for you, because it is the same principle that occurred in the garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve fell from fellowship at the tree of life, through living according to desire, which is called 'envy'; an image of jealousy.

Idol worship in the dark

The second abomination was praying in the dark to idols. These idols were images of creeping things and abominable beasts which were set on the walls in the dark.

And the prayers of these people, who were supposed to be firstfruits believers, were the expression of their imaginations informed by these images.

Women weeping for Tammuz

The second group that we considered were the women who were weeping for Tammuz. This group represents carnal Christian women who are not joined to a process through which they are being delivered from the fundamental effect of the Fall.

Importantly, for every Christian woman who resists the process that the Lord is offering to them, to deliver them from the fundamental desire of the Fall, their worship and weeping will be 'the worship of Tammuz'.

Our default is not to worship Christ.

What, then, is this fundamental effect of the Fall within a woman?

It is the desire to be 'like God'; to be the source of fruitfulness.

It is also to *cultivate life*, be it her life or the life of her family, in her image and likeness.

Consequently, a carnal Christian woman will view Jesus as being the One whose death and resurrection – remember, Tammuz was 'a dying and living god' – will enable the fulfilment of her romantic aspirations for her life and family.

That is how they view Jesus to be, for them. That is why they are praying. That is why they are weeping. Their weeping, or sorrow, may variously be expressed as discontent, anxiety, persistent weeping, and emotional demands that are made of others.

Rachel's demand of Jacob for children, motivated by her envy of Leah, her comparison with Leah, exemplifies this carnal sorrow and this form of worship.

Jesus addressed this when He was walking up to Mount Calvary, and all the women were weeping for Him. He said to them, 'Stop weeping for Me. Weep for yourselves and for your children, lest you be damned with this temple that is going to be destroyed because of idolatry; because of abominations.'

Jesus addressed this principle even when it looked as though these people were genuinely caring for Him.

The worship of the sun

We will move on to the next abomination today – the worship of the sun. Let's go to the passage in Ezekiel Chapter 8.

We note that as Ezekiel received each vision from the Lord, He said that each of these abominations was becoming progressively worse.

And this one was the greatest of the abominations that the Lord showed Ezekiel.

'Then He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these." So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord

and their faces towards the east, and they were worshipping the sun toward the east.' Eze 8:15-16.

If you think about the structure of the temple, they were between the altar and the door of the sanctuary, with their backs to the door. This means that they had their backs to the ark of the covenant, where Yahweh was residing.

And they were facing the sun, worshipping the sun. They were right at the door of the sanctuary.

Not only was their worship the opposite of what they should have been joined to but, also, they were *stopping others from entering the sanctuary*. These ones who were worshipping the sun were not only abominable themselves; they were stopping people from entering the sanctuary through their idolatrous practice.

Now, it is quite possible that these men were actually worshipping the sun. However, it is more likely that the way in which they presumed to worship God the Father was no different from the worship of solar deities.

So they could have been worshipping the sun, but I doubt it. They would have done that at a sun god temple.

They were at the temple of God, meaning that their way of worshipping God was no different from the worship of solar deities that occurs in other civilizations.

Now, sun worship is a form of idolatry that was featured in most ancient civilizations. And a common characteristic of this pagan worship was the *sovereignty* of the sun god over other deities, creating a *hierarchy of deities*.

So, in the worship of the sun in the ancient civilizations, almost invariably, the sun was the principal deity. That was the key figure; the supreme god. Then there was an hierarchy of deities underneath the sun god.

The expression of carnal Christian men - hierarchical; dominance or power

We will look at this hierarchy at a number of levels - individually, in families, and then in the church.

At the most fundamental level, the worship of the sun represents *the expression* of carnal Christian men. We have discussed carnal Christian women worshipping Tammuz. The worship of the sun

represents the expression of carnal Christian men who are themselves not being delivered from the fundamental desire that is within them because of the Fall.

So the woman's desire because of the Fall is to be like God and to cultivate life in her own image and likeness.

Why did the man take of the fruit? It was because of his *desire for dominance and rulership* through his own wisdom and power; be it in his family, in the church or in the context of the world.

It is the expression that belongs to a man who has become like a fallen cherub, presuming to be *in the place of God*.

While a woman wants to be 'like God', the man has eaten to 'replace God'; to be one who is exercising dominion or rulership in the context of his life.

Now, a carnal man seeks *identity verification*. That simply means that he seeks to know himself through the subordination of others or, at least, through the affirmation of others. He finds some sense of himself by the way in which others treat him; by the way in which others refer to him, affirm him or are under him.

Do you see how that connects with an *hierarchy* of authority or domination? A carnal man seeks identity verification through the subordination or affirmation of others; or through *empowerment* by association with those who possess the authority, capacity, or charisma that they covet for themselves.

This is all driven by 'envy'. It is driven by a void within us, where we want something that we cannot have, that can never be satisfied. This is apparent in fallen mankind; in fallen, carnal Christian men.

Such a person finds identity verification through the subordination of others.

They also find it where people are not subordinate to them; where they are not able to rule over others. In this case, they associate themselves with those who have the characteristics that they covet; they associate with others for *empowerment*.

Comparison and assessment of oneself and others inform their self-verifying endeavours.

The mark of being ‘a sun worshipper’ - anger, or wrath; isolation

So, what is the mark of this? What is the evidence that a man is ‘a sun worshipper’, being driven by that desire?

A notable and distinguishing fruit of this way of life in a man is wrath, or anger. Living according to this way produces anger, or wrath, in a man. It is not the only thing, but it is a notable and distinguishing fruit.

A man may react with anger, or wrath, in order to take dominion over something that is challenging him. He may feel that his authority is being challenged in his house, in the church, in his workplace, on the sporting field - and he rises up with anger to assert his place within this order.

A man may react in this way either to take dominion over something that is challenging his authority or because of the *loss* of authority, or dominion. Someone may be seen to have taken it from him, and he is angry that that has happened. This reaction is because of the loss of identity verification.

Now, this anger, or wrath, can be *explosive* or it can be *internalised*. When it is internalised, it results in the vengeful - deliberate and malicious - isolation of one’s self or the isolation of others. Can you see that that is an angry response?

A person may, through malice, isolate themselves from those who are not verifying their capacity to rule; or they may isolate others from themselves. So they isolate themselves or others.

Believing a corrupt and fallen understanding of who God is - hierarchical

This fallen, hierarchical mode of relating in the church, which the Lord likened to sun worship, is actually the result, or the outcome, of alternative gospels.

It is the belief in a word that does not come from Christ. And these alternative gospels particularly relate to *our understanding of who God Himself is*.

So, this fallen view of where we fit within our families and how we should express ourselves within the church or in our workplaces is actually connected to a corrupt and fallen understanding of who God is.

For example, an hierarchical view of the Godhead - of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - is enshrined

in the Athanasian Creed and in the Westminster Confession. Now, the Athanasian Creed and the Westminster Confession are nominated as two of the primary or universal creeds of the church, particularly the Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican churches. And the Westminster Confession is the fundamental regulatory and doctrinal statement of the Presbyterian Church.

These are the doctrinal statements on which these churches are built; the reason or the cultural statement.

Now, both of these statements, both of these documents, make the same statement about who God is. They both agree that there is a Trinity. They both believe in the oneness of God.

And then they make this statement about what this oneness means. This is from the Westminster Confession, which was 100 years on from the Athanasian Creed, but they are the same statement, just with more easy language.

This is the statement. ‘The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Holy Ghost is eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.’

Now, a fundamental implication of this Trinity theology, which forms one of the foundation stones of many of these churches, including where some of us come from, is that *the Son’s existence depends on and is sourced from the Father*. So it doesn’t matter how you ‘cut it’ - whether you say Father, Son and Holy Spirit are completely equal - an implication of this understanding of the Godhead is that the Son’s existence depends on being *begotten of the Father*.

However, we understand that the Son was *completely coequal* and *laid down His life* to be begotten of the Father.

So a fundamental implication of this Trinity theology is that the Son’s existence depends on and is sourced from the Father. And the Holy Spirit’s existence depends on the Father and the Son, implying a fundamental *hierarchy* in the Godhead. Do you see that?

As soon as a person views the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in that way, there is a hierarchy. It is a little like a sun god who has superiority over other deities.

Do you see that that view feeds a whole theology which is the worship of the sun? That should be confronting.

Now, I don't know all of the orders of the clergy, but you can see that, while they may all claim to be one, there are some who are 'more equal' than others.

So this carnal understanding of the Godhead informs the administration of many churches where one's authority and the nature of their participation in the church reflects their place *within a hierarchy*.

The authority in our name as a son of God

Now, to be patently clear, I am not saying that there is no authority in the church. That would also be a heresy.

What I am saying is that authority is not according to one's station or by qualification. The Lord spoke very clearly in the Scriptures - and the gospel of sonship proclaims this - that authority belongs to one's sonship; one's name as a son of God.

We draw that from the parable of the minas. Luk 19:17. Those who multiplied that mina were *given authority over cities*.

We receive this authority when we are *born again*, and it is activated through *baptism into Christ*.

This is the authority, not for a particular ministry or a particular position in the church; this is the authority to, by love, *serve one another*. That is what your authority as a son of God is for - to serve one another by *agape*. Gal 5:13.

This authority that we receive in our sonship is the right to participate in the *agape* meal at the tree of life, according to our sanctification.

So we have differing authorities and capacities, but they are for the purpose of *laying down our life to reveal someone else*.

Our authority is not to make ourselves as 'something' within this hierarchy.

The perversion of the *agape* meal - hierarchical administration

Now, we can see that the perversion of the *agape* meal, with sacraments, is a way of enforcing and making official the hierarchy connected to God Himself. That is why we need to be quite

repentant about our former communion practices, accepting that that is what we are turning from.

And we are growing in the capacity to serve one another by love, according to the authority that belongs to our sanctification - not presuming to go beyond it, and not drawing back from it.

So there is a 'gospel' about God that gives rise to an hierarchical administration.

The perversion of *agape* fellowship has then been reinforced by 'gospels' that deny that a person can be literally born of God and can know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, themselves.

So the implication is that you know or are connected with God, because of your *connections* to the hierarchy.

A classic, and overt gospel understanding that reflects this form of worship in the church is Calvinism.

For example, John Calvin wrote, 'Christ calls Him His God, talking about the Father, insofar as, by taking upon Him the form of a servant, He humbled Himself. This is, therefore, peculiar to His human nature, but is applied to His whole Person on account of the unity, because He is both God and man.

'As to the second clause in which He says that He ascends to the Father and to our Father; there is also a diversity between Him and us, for He is the Son of God by nature while we are the sons of God only by adoption.'

Letting go of such 'gospels'

Now, there are entire churches built on that statement. And some of us need to let go of our loyalty to that because, if we do not, we are letting go of our inheritance by denying that we need to move from our adoption to sonship.

It denies the fact that we are to be changing from one degree of glory to another, so that, when we see Him, we will be like Him as He is.

How more blatant can it be? Paul said that Jesus is not ashamed to call us His 'brethren'. That means that we are like Him.

Imagine 'spitting' on that for the sake of a gospel that offers you only adoption.

Do you see that the word of the cross is coming and putting to death those gospels so that we can

be delivered of them and can grow in the glorious liberty that belongs to the sons of God! That is cause for great thanksgiving.

Calvin then went on, and what he said is just amazing in relation to the worship of the sun.

Calvin considered man's identification as a son of God to be an allegory; adopted as a son, but not born as a son. The notion of sonship is an allegory, or a picture, of man's relationship with the Creator.

With this in mind, Calvin likened one's relationship with God to a flower's dependence upon the sun for life. This means that we worship God the Father because He gives us existence and sustenance.

However, in doing so, this ignores the miracle that He is saying, 'Come into My fellowship.' That is amazing isn't it!

We would be sitting there with our backs to this while we worship the sun, validating our own carnal propensities, as if that is understandable because we are less than God.

That, the Lord said, was the greatest of the abominations that He listed in the courts. We need to let that settle on us, don't we?

Judgement on these abominations today

Now, the story goes on. Ezekiel Chapter 9 continues the same vision.

Having made known to the prophet Ezekiel the abominable practices of the those who presume to belong to the society of the temple, the Lord initiated His *judgement* on these abominations.

'Then He called out in my hearing with a *loud* voice [I expect that He was particularly motivated at this point, having shown Ezekiel all these abominations], called out in my hearing with a loud voice [this voice is ringing out throughout the generations, right to the time of the end], saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand."

'And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle axe in his hand. And one man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's ink horn at his side. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.' Eze 9:1-2.

This is an amazing passage. There were seven men. Six of them had battle axes in their hands, and one of them had an ink horn. He was a writer. Most of the commentators suggest that the sentiment of it was that he was like a scribe; someone whose work it was to teach.

So these seven men were overseers of the city. We read, 'Let those who have charge over the city'. They were overseers who were appointed by the Lord.

And we note the connection between *these seven* who were called by Jesus, who is coming in the spirit of judgement and burning, with *the seven stars in the right hand of Christ* who is coming to His seven churches, writing letters to them.

The seven who are coming to execute this judgement are like the seven stars in the right hand of Christ!

They were the presbyteries, or overseers, of this city. 'And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's ink horn at his side; and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it."

'To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him" [The one who had the ink horn went through first, putting a mark on the forehead of those in the city.] through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary".' Eze 9:3-6.

The presbytery is to give account

Now, I don't know about you, but I am keen to know how we ensure that we have that mark on our heads, lest the battle axes come and lop our heads off.

Now, the man with the ink horn could be a pre-revelation of Christ, but it is more likely that he was referring to an actual man here. And we read this sentiment from Paul himself.

Remember, this person was writing. He had an ink horn and was putting a mark on some of the people. He was part of a presbytery. And Paul wrote, 'Obey those who rule over you'. Heb 13:17.

So, these men had charge over the city; they were overseers. And Paul wrote, saying, 'Obey those who rule over you.' 'Those who rule over' are those who have charge of the city. They are the overseers.

'And be submissive [for what reason?], for they watch out for your soul, as *those who must give an account*.'

Do you see that they were 'giving an account' by putting a mark on a person's forehead?

So, obey them. 'Be submissive, for they watch out for your soul as those who must give an account.'

They have to give an account for their work; but they also have to give an account of those who have the mark.

'Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would certainly be unprofitable for you.'

Carnal sighing and crying

Now, how do we 'sigh and cry'? We need to understand this, because there is a good deal of sighing and crying that goes on in life which is completely *carnal*.

It is just being 'pathetic', isn't it? You know – life is just not going all that well. Maybe the dog dug up the plants. I only say that because my wife picked up on how much sighing I was doing the other day.

So there is a fair bit of sighing and crying that we are *not* referring to here. This is *not* the sighing and crying that will get you a mark to keep you in the heavenly kingdom. That is the sighing and crying of those who are either lamenting that their dominion is being usurped or that they are not living the culture that they want. Obviously, that is not the sighing and crying that we are talking about.

So, a person does not sigh and cry over the abominations in the house of Israel by pointing out, or even lamenting, what they perceive to be the inadequacies of the presbytery or the church. Sighing and crying is not your judgement of everything that is inadequate about the church.

The Lord described this behaviour as 'the pointing of the finger', and identified it as being a characteristic of those who are transgressors and slaves of sin. So we should do far less pointing, because that marks us as the one who is going

out. That is not sighing and crying for the abominations done in the temple. Isa 58:1,9.

True sighing and crying for the abominations in His church; our repentance and faith

We begin to sigh and cry *when we do not hide ourselves from our own flesh*.

Remember, we are supposed to be *built into the walls of the temple*.

So, if any abominations are happening in that city, it is because we are doing them - not anyone else.

As soon as you mark yourself as pointing a finger, what have you done? You have put yourself outside the city, haven't you?

So, we begin to sigh and cry when we do not hide ourselves from our own flesh in response to the light of the word. Isa 58:7. That is, we respond with repentance and faith to the word of the Lord that is proclaimed by His messengers.

Because of this, we are able to mourn for our iniquity and sin – this is our acknowledgement that it is our iniquity and sin that is causing the desolations in the temple.

Beginning to sigh and cry means that you don't hide yourself from your flesh. And, as the word comes, it comes with grace that draws back every other influence on your capacity to receive it, so that you can turn and look on Him whom you are piercing through your carnal activity.

And as we do that, we are able to avail ourselves of the very cleansing, which is blood and water from His side, that is necessary for our entry into the city.

It must begin with our 'mourning alone'.

Now, sighing and crying is not pathetic. You will not spend your life as a sigher and crier by moping about.

Rather, it is an expression of *faith*. Sighing and crying is an expression of faith that comes by *hearing the very word* that reveals to us our carnality.

The beginning point for sighing and crying is to accept our weakness

The communication of faith is *enabled* by the Holy Spirit, and *begins with our fellowship in prayer*.

'Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.' Rom 8:26.

The beginning point for sighing and crying is to accept our weaknesses.

That is the opposite to someone who says, 'I am eating my own food and dressing myself.' As soon as we say, 'I don't know what to pray', we have foregone our 'own food'.

And we have stopped clothing ourself with the priestly work of defining our own prayer.

Sighing and crying is the culture of those who are blameless

'For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings too deep for words [or, which cannot be uttered].'

That is the beginning of sighing and crying. It is a spiritual activity of faith, enabled by the Holy Spirit.

And that prayer by the Spirit *joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings* each day, which He called His 'travail'. Sighing and crying encompasses the pain that is associated with the sufferings that we experience with Christ.

In this fellowship, our carnality is being circumcised from us, and Christ's blood is sprinkling our hearts clean from an evil conscience.

Wonderfully, this is also how *the life in His blood is becoming our life*, and we are fulfilling the will of God which belongs to the elect.

Now, that is the summary of what it means to be blameless. Evidently, sighing and crying is the culture of those who are blameless. The blameless are not perfect, but they are overcoming Satan, individually, in their families, and in the church.

Called to overcome the abominable practices

This culture of blamelessness and sighing and crying belongs to those who are responding to Christ, who is coming to the seven lampstand churches.

And what is He calling them to do?

He is calling them to overcome all of the abominable practices that He highlighted in His letters.

The culture of sighing and crying belongs to those who are responding to Christ, who is coming to

the seven lampstand churches, calling them to overcome. As we respond in repentance and faith, we are obtaining what Jesus promised belong to the overcomers.

Remember that Jesus is coming with the spirit of judgement and burning. He is first revealing what it is that we need to *overcome*.

He said, 'To those who overcome, I promise to give you ...' So, *obtaining* the promise progressively - what does that mean?

It means that they are the ones who are being 'left in Zion and remaining in Jerusalem'. They are being polarised 'in'. And they are becoming part of the branch that is beautiful and glorious.

Receiving the mark of those who sigh and cry; our culture of fellowship with the presbytery

Now, this speech of faith that belongs to sighing and crying continues through *fellowship with the presbytery*.

This is how we are known and 'marked' by the presbytery. We are to sigh and cry but, remember, the presbytery is marking us as those who sigh and cry.

So the question is, 'How do we get the mark?'

Do you just go and put your head near to the presbytery and hope that they put a mark on your head? How do we get this 'mark'?

Importantly, this does not mean talking with a presbyter every time that the word brings conviction. That is not what it means to receive this mark.

Rather, it means that *our conversation and conduct in response to the word* is the same as that of those who are part of the presbytery. It is the same conversation; it is the same expression.

Now, describing this culture of fellowship, John testified in 1 John 1. Let us read it in the context of this principle of sighing and crying, and receiving a mark. Remember, this is a presbyter, on behalf of a presbytery, saying that this is what our culture is. This is what we are being restored to.

'That which is from the beginning, which we have heard [we are *hearing*], which we have seen with our eyes, which we've looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the word of life, that which we've seen and heard we declare to you,

that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.' 1Jn 1:3-4.

Now, that can equally be translated as, 'These things we write to you that *our* joy may be full.'

That sounds a little like Hebrews 13 verse 17. 'Let them do so with joy and not with grief.'

Can you see that, if you are joined to that fellowship, that is where an account is able to be given - with joy!

Fellowship with the presbytery means that we hear and respond to the word, and testify, in the same manner as those who care for the church. We have an ear to hear the proceeding word.

Now, as I speak, you should be thinking, 'Yes, I am fully that.' And you *can* say that, because faith is coming to you to say that this is where you belong.

We have *an ear to hear* the proceeding word. We receive *illumination* that comes by the Spirit. This is that which we've heard; that which we've seen with our eyes. Illumination comes to us by the Spirit.

We look upon Christ whom we have pierced, and *mourn* for our sin with godly sorrow that leads to *repentance*.

And then we *participate* in the expression of the word that belongs to our sanctification. That is 'rightly handling the word'. It is the word that's in your heart and your mouth, which you are proclaiming according to your sanctification.

Can you see that is the very same fellowship from which the word is proceeding, as you participate in the way you are; and there is joy abounding.

His word comes to bring a response of obedience

Now, I'm afraid that we have to go back to 'the battle axes', but we will finish on a happy note.

The weapons in the hands of the other six men, or the overseers of the city, were called 'destroying weapons' in the hands of presbyters who were sent to bring destruction.

They were also called 'shattering weapons'. This is an interesting term. The apostle Paul referred to

these weapons and the way in which they are utilised.

'Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ - who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent and bold toward you.' 2Co 10:1.

The first thing to note is that those who are coming with battle axes are not coming with the intent of causing mass destruction. The mode in which those who are overseeing the city, come, is *in the meekness and gentleness of Christ*, because it is the word that is doing the work. It is not the person who is speaking the word that is wreaking havoc.

'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.' They are not the exercise or motivation of the intensity or energy of the flesh. 'But mighty in God for pulling down strongholds [shattering them], casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.' 2Co 10:4.

That 'high thing' sounds like the worship of the sun, doesn't it - bringing all that high stuff, the hierarchy, down. The word is doing this.

'Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.' 2Co 10:5. While it is shattering some things, it is doing it to release us to obedience, which belongs to *agape* fellowship in the city.

'And being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.' 2Co 10:6.

That is an eschatological statement as well, isn't it? The word, which brings the judgement of God upon a person is not wielded by overseers with malice or with the intent to harm.

Rather, *in obedience* to the Father, they speak the word of truth that makes a distinction between darkness and light, and between what is unclean and clean.

The effect of the word depends on how it is received or rejected

The effect of this word depends on *how it is received*. The effect of the word depends on how you and I receive it; not how it is 'swung as a battle axe'.

Those who *receive and believe* this message are connected to the process through which they can be delivered from their iniquity, cleansed of their sin, and established in their sanctification as part of the body of Christ.

However, those who *reject the word* are polarised *out* of the heavenly city, where they are forgotten by God. This is the desolating effect of the spiritual weapons of warfare in the hands of the presbytery.

Jesus identified these two effects of His word, recorded in the Gospel of Luke. 'And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him?' Luk 18:7.

So we see that the elect are those who sigh and cry, and that He will avenge them.

'Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears with long with them?' Luk 18:7. He is bearing long with us, isn't He? Thank the Lord for that. And, as His word comes and we receive it, it is bringing us in.

'I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?' Luk 18:8.

When Jesus made this statement, He was referring to His physical return to earth at the conclusion of the eighth world kingdom. Remember that Ezekiel was lifted up and he saw right down to the end.

This polarising effect of the word will occur across time, right down to the conclusion of the eighth world kingdom.

No faith will be found in the earth

'The last hour', which precedes the establishment of this final kingdom, is the final period in which the gospel will be preached as an evangelistic initiative in the earth.

At the conclusion of this period, not one person remaining in the world will be a believer. It is for this reason that, when Jesus appears the second time, He 'will not find any faith in the earth'.

The word will have gone out into the whole of the earth, and those who receive it will have been polarised into the heavenly Jerusalem.

And those who didn't want it will remain on the earth, where there will be no faith; and no word to grant faith any longer.

Here is an interesting thing. All of those abominations that Ezekiel saw, he saw *in the courts of the temple*. And, when Ezekiel watched the man with the ink horn go and put a mark on the people's heads, and the 'battle axe' men were sent out, do you know how many people were saved? Not a single one! The entire number of them were slaughtered.

And that will happen in the time of the end when the Lord *closes down the outer court*. There will be no more entry into the sanctuary. And it says that 'the outer court is given to the Gentiles to be trampled'; to be *desolated*.

So we see that this prophecy of Ezekiel carries us right down to the end of days. But we are not those who are drawing back in unbelief, are we? We are those who are hearing the gospel and saying, 'Thank the Lord for the illumination. Today, I know what to put off. And I am walking in faith, in obedience to what the will of the Lord is for me today.'

As we do that, those promises are becoming yours, and you are being set in that heavenly city. Praise the Lord!