

WHAT IT MEANS TO BELIEVE

Peter Hay, prepared for communion word, 18 April 2020

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Introduction

We are going to continue today in our series on 'The word of the cross'. In the last two sessions, we have been considering 'what we are to know' in relation to the cross, as those who are being conformed to Christ's death, and to the likeness of His resurrection.

As you are considering this content and are reading and discussing together *The Steps of Salvation* Part 8 in your houses, and even though these are amazing understandings that the Lord is illuminating to us in this season, I am sure that you would agree with me that we are really 'scratching the surface' of the word of the cross and its implications for us.

You can see why Paul said, 'That's *the only thing* that I proclaim and preach.'

He said, 'I sought to know nothing among you *except Christ and Him crucified*.'

Indeed, that is the gospel that is being restored to us. It is *the gospel of sonship* that we are proclaiming, and are breaking open together in our houses, and are ministering one to another.

Believing – hearing, receiving, believing, speaking the word of the cross

Today I want to move from looking at what we need to know, and to start to look at what it means to *believe*.

Believing is the *evidence* that we have *heard the word* of the cross; that we are receiving that word; that we are receiving faith by *hearing that word*; and, having received the same spirit of faith as Christ, we *believe* and therefore we *speak*.

Speaking by faith

Our speaking is first a *participation* through testimony in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

Further, of course, speaking refers to an entire *culture* which the Scriptures refer to as 'our conversation and our conduct'.

I am going to begin by understanding what it means to 'speak by faith'.

RECEIVING THE FAITH OF CHRIST TO SPEAK

However, first, we need to recognise *how* we *receive that faith*, and what it 'looks like' for someone to have received that word and to begin to *speak by faith*.

In our previous session, we noted the words of Christ who said, 'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' Joh 12:32.

If you have been following the books over these last couple of years, you will remember that in both Part 6 and Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we made the point that this statement of Jesus in the first instance is not an evangelistic proclamation. Although there is an implication of that.

The cross for all - judgement and salvation

But, in the first instance when Jesus said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man I will draw all men to Myself', He was proclaiming the reality that when He was 'lifted up', *everyone's death would now come through the cross*.

All men would be drawn to Him, and He would now be the expression of our death, in *judgement*.

Then, also, as He died our death by the grace of God, turning it to chastisement, He was also *authoring a pathway of salvation* that belongs to every person.

Therefore, He was *the full revelation of our sonship and our obedience*.

So, Jesus' statement is amazing. 'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.' Joh 12:32.

Now, we need to understand the *response* that we make when we look on Him whom we are being drawn to see.

That is our response to the word of the cross.

Remember that when Christ was lifted up on the cross, *every person's death*, as judgement and as salvation, was *finished*.

His body was the full revelation of *damnation*, and the expression of *sonship* for each individual of the whole of humanity.

This is a wonderful understanding that we are recognising, because we can have great confidence as those who know the Lord and are joined to Him.

We can walk by faith in that confidence, knowing that there is a work being done in us to see us fully included and connected to Christ's finished work.

Remember that we are all coming to look on Him, and He is the full representation of our *damnation under judgement*, and of our *salvation which is perfected through His obedience*. Both of those things are true when we come to look on Him.

Our response to the word of the cross

So, an individual's salvation or damnation depends on their response to the message of the cross as they are caused to look on Christ, and to see the wounds that Christ received as He died their death.

Every person has this choice to make.

And you can see that you need to *believe* something when you hear this word. What you believe then becomes the *choice* that you are making.

Faith is received by hearing Christ's blood speak

This message that causes us to look on Jesus is what the blood of Christ speaks to us. Chapter 3 of *The Steps of Salvation* Part 8, explains the principle of the blood of Christ speaking.

You will remember that the message from the National Bible School last year, which was our Easter message this year, was all about how the blood speaks to us.

And the *faith* that we are to respond with is the faith that we *receive* by hearing His blood speak.

In relation to the communion, we have been considering that, as we have faith in His blood, or faith arising from the word that is proclaimed by His blood, *Christ is set forth in our hearts as a mercy seat*. We are recipients of *atonement*.

Christ's messengers publicly portray Christ crucified

The blood speaks through the word of the cross that is proclaimed by Christ's messengers.

These messengers do not come with mere theology.

Rather, through their *fellowship* in the offering and sufferings of Christ, Christ's messengers publicly *portray Christ Himself as crucified* among those to whom they are proclaiming the word of the cross.

Through the ministry of *their* word, we are drawn by Christ to see that we are already dying with Him under the curse of sin.

Two responses to the proclamation of the blood of Christ

You will remember that when Christ was lifted up as crucified, two thieves were crucified with Him.

Now, these two thieves represent the two possible responses that a person can make when the blood of Christ is being proclaimed to them through the ministry of the word of the cross by His messengers.

It is helpful to recognise that, in reality, for each of us, in relation to our response to the word of the cross, there is only Christ and us on the cross.

We don't need to worry about anyone else's response.

And those two thieves represent the two possible responses that we as an *individual* can make when we see Christ lifted up.

This is why the responses of these two thieves are so important for us to understand. It is because what they expressed as they were crucified with Christ (noting that we have *all* been crucified with Christ) reveals to us the responses that every person may choose to make.

There is the response that is the confession of faith as those who have received faith by believing the word. This then involves the implications of how we are to live as those who are being born to see, and are being illuminated to see the kingdom in which we are remembered.

There is the other response of those who remain in darkness and are taken out as part of the body of sin.

The reproach of Christ

Regarding these two thieves, the first thing that we note is that both of them began by *reviling* Jesus. This is important to note!

It was not that one thief was 'a better person' than the other thief. Both of them were under the

same condition, and expressed *the same sinful reproach against Christ Himself*.

I want to make a point about those two thieves.

We read, 'Even the robbers who were crucified with Him *reviled Him with the same thing*'. Mat 27:44.

In the preceding verses, Matthew listed out all of the things that the different groups said. Then he summed it up and said that these two robbers who were crucified with Jesus were saying the same things as all of the people who were gathered near the cross.

The point to note is that all of those responses were gathered up into the expression of the two thieves on the cross. All those elements that were being proclaimed by the scribes, the Pharisees, the people who were passing by, were gathered up into the articulation of those who were dying with Christ.

Responses from our own perspectives under the fear of death

'And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads [shaking their heads] and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross".' Mat 27:39-40.

We note the first expression of carnality there.

We observe the claim that if this were God, not only would He be able to save Himself but, also, He would be the source of deliverance for them from their suffering. This is the mindset of a person who wants to save their own life.

'Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders [the *mocking* element here is part of this reproach], "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel [this is the One who is exercising an authority], let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him".' Mat 27:41-42.

In other words, 'We will believe, *if* what is said and done accords with our own understanding and perspective of who God should be.'

So, this indicates 'leaning on our own understanding'. It is a deluded perspective on the gospel and on who we believe God is. Yet this is a *reviling accusation* made against the Son of God Himself.

'He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him [meaning, He trusted in God the Father, so let the Father deliver Him now *if He will have Him*]; for He said, "I am the Son of God".' Mat 27:43.

So, the Son of God was *mocked* because of His *obedience to the Father*.

These were the expressions of those who are *in bondage to the fear of death under the dominion of Satan*, and are all of the elements that were gathered up into the expressions of the two thieves while they were crucified with Christ.

These statements were the indication that they were seeking to *preserve their own lives*. They demanded that if Jesus really was God, He would save Himself, and they would be able to see and believe that, and He would deliver them from their condition.

Judgement from our other law or from illumination

Now, of course, when the word of the cross comes to us and we start to *receive illumination*, there is something that *shifts in our perspective*.

To this point, we have been seeing Christ and Him being crucified, and we are seeing the condition of our life, purely from the basis of our own other law.

So, here is another important point to note. *Everyone* makes some kind of *judgement* when they come and are drawn to see Jesus lifted up on the cross.

On the one hand, judgement may be made from the basis of our *other law*, and this is the judgement that is based in the knowledge of good and evil.

On the other hand, we may *receive illumination* from a word outside of us which causes us to judge in a different way.

A choice – being joined to His death and fellowship; or trusting in ourselves

When the word of the cross, which is spoken by the blood, is being proclaimed to us, we can choose to come into Christ and to be *joined to His death*.

Then, through *fellowship in His offering and sufferings*, we obtain the salvation that He has already finished for us

On the other hand, we can continue to trust in ourselves, and will be condemned to the fiery sea of God's forgetfulness as part of the body of sin.

Can you see that the word of the cross is calling everyone to make this *choice*?

And, because we are *all* called to make that choice, we are *all accountable* for the way in which we live, having heard this gospel proclaimed to us as Christ is lifted up. That message has gone to *the whole world*.

Unless we are converted and are baptised into Christ and His death, we will die in our body of death, which is controlled by the other law and the law of sin. This is the condition of the 'old man'.

In this state, as the other law and the law of sin were taken out into the fiery sin of God's forgetfulness through Christ's offering (this was the impact of the sword which circumcised this body of sin from Him), we will be *taken out with that body of sin* when we physically die.

Now, this is a *critical point* to note. Remember that *Jesus has finished our judgement*.

He has suffered and satisfied eternal burnings, and He came back from those.

But He also *perfected the obedience of our sonship*, and that is *already in Him*.

The amazing point is that for *every person in humanity*, their sonship was made alive in the Sheaf of Firstfruits.

So, we may choose not to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings and, instead, to lean on our own understanding of what the gospel should be, and what God should be to us. We may choose to trust in what *we think will give us life* (in the end, there is very little difference between the religious person and the carnal person; they are still going to the same place, because they choose their life from the same source).

However, if we continue to trust in that, we will *not* obtain the obedience or the sonship that was perfected for us.

In this case, the book of Revelation indicates that our names are blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life.

Choosing the salvation that is already perfected for us

Can you see that the point is not what we have to *do* to get our name into the Lamb's Book of Life; rather, the question is whether we will *choose* to obtain *the salvation that has already been perfected for us*?

This is a precious understanding, but it is also a sobering *judgement* that we must make. We have to make a choice, and we have been given the dignity to make that choice.

Enabled, by grace and supplication, to look on Christ and to choose to be joined to Him

How do we make this choice?

What does it 'look like' to be *delivered from our deluded perspective* that sees Christ only in relation to what He can achieve for us, and *to come to the illumination and the understanding* of being joined to Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings?

The beginning point is to *receive grace and supplication*.

This is a ministry of grace and supplication that is coming from Christ's own heart as blood and water, which are the elements of the word of the cross being proclaimed to us.

Under the influence of grace and supplication, we are, for a moment, able to *have the veil of our own perspective removed* so that we are able to look on Jesus and to make this choice.

So, under the influence of grace and supplication, as we hear Christ's blood speak to us through the preaching of His messengers, we are caused to 'look on Him whom we have pierced.'

Looking on Him and mourning

This 'looking on Him whom we have pierced', under the influence of grace and supplication, causes us to *mourn*.

This mourning is very important for us to understand. I want to draw our attention to two elements here.

The first is that every individual must *look on Him whom they have pierced*.

And, if they will *not draw back* (because of unbelief and fear) from looking into the face of Christ and into those fiery eyes, then they will begin to

mourn as those who look on Him whom they have pierced.

The mourning of individuals and families in the house of God

That is the first element. There is an *individual* reality to that.

Second, when Zechariah was writing this, he made the point that is not only every individual who mourns, but that *every family* is to mourn as well.

He wrote, 'In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the *mourning* at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, *every family* by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves; all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.' Zec 12:11-14.

Can you see the amazing principle that this *mourning begins in the house of God?*

Those in the house of God are committed to the culture of Christ and to His name. Remember that He places His name where He will *meet* with us.

So, there is a beginning participation for every person, which is a mourning; and for every family mourning.

I was reminded this morning that the four administrations of Christ are listed here, and that is the mourning of every element of the administration of Christ.

This is the mourning that begins in the house of God, and *every person* will look on Him whom they have pierced, and will begin to mourn.

True illumination through the blood speaking

Like the thief who found salvation, as those who are beginning to see Him, being relieved from our deluded perspective by grace and supplication, we are illuminated to see that we are under the same condemnation as Christ who became the body of sin; and *we begin to fear God*.

There are some important points here that demonstrate true illumination.

Remember that two thieves were crucified with Christ, and they reviled the Lord. They, if you like, expressed everything that everyone else reviled Him with.

Then, one of them received an illumination by the blood of Christ that was speaking to him, even though Jesus did not make a sound to him.

Can you see that this is 'the blood speaking'?

It is not just 'good theology' rationalising our understanding so that we say, 'That is a better perspective than what I have.'

Rather, this is *the very life of God in His blood* coming and bringing light to men.

Remember that the life that was in Him was 'the light of men'. This is an illumination that is beyond and far different from rational thought.

Luke chapter 23 verse 40 was written as the confession of one who has begun to receive illumination, and has looked on Jesus and begun to mourn.

He said to his companion, who was still reviling Christ, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we received the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Luk 23:40-41.

Think for a moment about the implications of this. This man, as he looked on Jesus and began to mourn, recognised that he was suffering these wounds justly because he was a thief.

That was the first point of *illumination*, and that was possible because he was becoming a God-fearer.

Beginning to come away from a place of seeking to save his life, the thief now recognised that He was suffering justly; he knew that he was receiving this suffering because he deserved it - and perhaps deserved more.

He looked over to Jesus and saw that when he himself was having his hand nailed for being a robber, Jesus was having His hand nailed as well.

He was now seeing that he was being judged justly, while the Son of God, the Son of Man, was receiving *the same wounds* for His judgement.

That's what he meant when he said, in effect, 'He is under the same *condemnation* as me, even though He didn't steal anything.'

This is the true *illumination* of a person who begins to see that Jesus died his death.

But He died it a different way, didn't He?

He did not die it because He was a thief or because He was disobedient. In fact, He died it because He *was* obedient; He died it *by the grace of God*.

The other thing that the thief who was starting to get illumination recognised is that his *name* is in the One who was suffering under the same condemnation as he was.

That's why he said, 'Remember me.' He could only be remembered by Jesus if Jesus *knew* him; if his *name* was in Jesus.

All of a sudden, there was a desire and a confession of faith (remember that the thief heard the blood speaking) to be *joined to the fellowship of that suffering*. This was a person who was beginning to *express faith* under the influence of *grace and supplication* as the word was proclaimed to him.

Mourning as we look on Him

When we receive illumination by the word - remember that it is the *word* that proclaims to us this message - and we begin to mourn as those who are looking on Him whom we have pierced, we are mourning because *we accept that we are causing the death of the Firstborn*.

We are also mourning because *we accept that our sonship was lost* because of our disobedience. As well, it was being lost because He was dying.

There are two things we are mourning for - the death of the Firstborn, which we're causing; and the loss of our sonship.

Mourning turned to travail

Here is a most important point to understand.

The Holy Spirit enables our mourning to be turned from grief for what is lost - the grief of one whose heart has become broken, and they are poor in spirit, accepting that they cannot save themselves; and neither should they - to *travail*.

When we can say that we are dying 'justly', we accept that we deserve whatever condition we are experiencing. That is a 'poor in spirit' response.

But when we are poor in spirit ('blessed are the poor in spirit'), the next element is 'blessed are those who mourn'.

So, we are grieving for the injuries that we've caused, but the Holy Spirit turns that mourning and grief to *travail*. And this is a most amazing point.

The Holy Spirit joins us to Christ's travail; His prayer and supplications

He *joins us to the travail of Christ Himself*, who was 'heard because of His godly fear' as He confessed with great prayers and supplications to the One who could save Him from death.

So the nature of the travail is the travail, for Christ, that began in Gethsemane and continued as He prayed throughout His entire offering journey.

That is the travail to which *we* are joined. These are the prayers and supplications of Christ.

And it was not only His prayer at the end; not only His prayer at the beginning. Remember that the incense, or the cloud, of prayer that went with Christ, went with Him *for the whole journey* as He was sprinkled seven times as the Mercy Seat.

Now, the Holy Spirit joins us to that travail which first began in Gethsemane.

And we don't know how to pray as we ought. That is the first confession of one who is poor in spirit. They accept that they don't know how to pray as they ought.

However, by the Holy Spirit, we are joined to the prayer of Christ's own travail, and He was the One who was able to pray what we cannot pray - 'Not My will, but Yours, be done'.

The nature of the travail of Christ

This was the nature of the travail of Christ that Paul described as the prayers and supplications that Christ offered up throughout the course of His offering journey. That's what we are being joined to.

Travail, then, is the *reality* of one who has been illuminated to the gospel and is now joined to the travail of Christ.

So, considering the degree of His sufferings and travail, if this is to be the reality of our life, you would think that it will be a fairly miserable life.

Does that mean that we will be disappointed, sad and grieving as the reality of our life now that we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings?

No, it doesn't. What we need to understand is the nature of Christ's travail.

Obviously, when Christ journeyed, experiencing the sufferings of our death, He turned it into a *chastisement* by which He was brought to God, and by which sin and the other law of the body of sin were done away with.

When we are joined to that same offering and to that same travail, *we are joined to the same process*.

We are not alleviated from our sufferings; rather, our sufferings now are a chastening upon us which is bringing us to God.

Knowing the joy that was set before Christ

And *joy* is found in the fellowship of this travail that is not grief because of what has been lost.

This travail is *bringing forth new life*, resulting in joy.

Can you see that when the Holy Spirit joins us to the travail of Christ, we are joined to the joy that was 'set before' Christ?

The joy that was set before Christ, for which He endured the cross, is not the joy found right at the end, once He finished the course.

That literally means 'for the joy that was before His face', at each moment of obedience.

What is happening for us in this process?

Death is coming to that which needs to die; and *new life* is coming up at that point. That becomes the expression of joy of one who is joined to the travail of Christ.

The pathway, or journey, of joy

This is an amazing point.

One of the songs that Jesus would have sung as part of the last Passover, which is the first communion, as His testimony or, if you like, as part of His prayer, or His travail, as He travelled His journey as the Father's Passover Lamb, is found in the book of Isaiah.

'For you shall *go out with joy*, and *be led out* with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth with singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for *an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off*.' Isa 55:12-13.

Can you see that this was Jesus' *travailing journey*? He went out from the last supper and then out from Gethsemane to endure these wounding events *with joy* - 'the joy set before Him'.

It is a *pathway*. He was 'led out' by the Father as the One who is the obedient Slave.

He turned our cursed condition - the *thorn* and the *briar* - into different trees - a *cypress* tree and a *myrtle* tree.

And He proclaimed the name of the Lord in the fellowship of this travail, which becomes 'an everlasting sign' that will *not* be cut off.

Remember that, along His journey, something *was* being cut off. That was a body of sin that was cast into the sea of God's forgetfulness.

But those who are joined to the name of the Lord and are journeying with joy, as a travail with Him, are part of this everlasting sign that shall *not* be cut off.

This is the *new creation*.

Praying always

So, when we journey with Christ each day in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, this is how we 'pray always'.

The 'praying at all times' is the fact that *we remain connected to the fellowship of His travail and His offering*.

Baptism and communion join us to new creation life

We will consider baptism and communion, because *everyone* was joined to the fellowship of Christ's body when He drank the cup in Gethsemane.

But baptism and communion are the two elements that *join us to the new creation* so that we are *participants* in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

We are dying *His* death, with Him, remembering that He made our death to be His death, and He died it by the grace of God.

Through baptism and communion, we are joined to that death. We are no longer dying our death in a body of death.

Baptism and communion are responses of faith

So baptism and communion are *responses of faith* that we make, having been illuminated to the word that reveals to us the 'so great salvation' that He has authored and pioneered for us.

Through baptism and an ongoing participation in the elements of communion, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's death, burial and resurrection as a member of His body, the corporate new creation.

It's important to remember that baptism and communion go together. It's not that we are baptised as 'an initial entry point', and then communion is our ongoing participation in the faith of that.

Jesus described His *whole journey as both a baptism and a cup*.

He said, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptised with, you will be baptised." Mar 10:39.

We need to understand how we live in the *faith* and *reality* of these elements every day; not merely as a sacrament or as a one-off experience.

What is the *reality* of these for our daily fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ?

Baptism – our response to be joined to Christ's offering journey

In relation to *baptism*, we note that a person who has been born to 'see' the kingdom receives *illumination*.

We have to be *born* of that word to then 'see' that we have a *participation* under the authority of Christ as part of His kingdom.

A person who has been illuminated to see the kingdom will proceed to be baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in order to *enter* the kingdom.

This is the 'name above every name' that Jesus proclaimed in the midst of the assembly at every step of His offering journey.

'I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You.' Psa 22:22 -23.

As Jesus suffered under the sword of reproach through His offering journey, what was He doing? What was His blood proclaiming?

It was *proclaiming the name of the Lord*, in which we have fellowship in Him.

Baptism is our desire to be joined to that fellowship, and to not walk in the course of our own name and destiny - as if we can determine them. That is all 'old creation' and it is all going out.

Baptised into the fellowship of new creation; into the fellowship of His death

Through baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are delivered from the old creation which is passing away under the judgement of God, and we are joined in Christ to the corporate new creation.

This is the significance of baptism. It is delivering us from an old creation on which judgement has already been proclaimed, and which is already passing away.

And we are joined to the fellowship, or the ark, of the corporate new creation.

Paul said, 'As many of us were baptised into Christ Jesus [or, 'into His name'], were baptised into His death.'

They are no longer dying their death in a body of death. Now, as one who is *baptised into the fellowship of the corporate new creation*, they are joined to the fellowship of *His* death.

Remember that He died our death, but that He died it in a completely different way. Paul said, 'This was the death that He died'. That is what we are being baptised into.

We die, with Christ, in the body of death or as part of new creation

Having come into Christ, we are no longer dying with Christ as a body of death.

Remember that *everyone* is dying with Christ; but you will die either with Christ *in a body of death* or with Christ *as part of the new creation*.

The two thieves were still dying with Jesus on the cross, even though one was illuminated. He was then joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and the promise to him was to be with Christ in Paradise.

The other man continued in his own self-centredness, and he was forsaken by God.

In Christ, we are dying our death that He made to be His death, by grace

So, having come into Christ, we are no longer dying with Christ as a body of death.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the death that we are dying is *our* death that Christ made to be *His* death, and died *by the grace of God*.

In Him, we are also dying this death by the grace of God. That's amazing, isn't it?

It is not that our experiences are just the experiences that He is giving to us. We are saying that we are now *dying* by the same principle that He died – *by the grace of God*.

And we are *enabled by Eternal Spirit* to journey in the fellowship with Him.

By this means, our sufferings are turned from a judgement to a circumcision and a chastisement.

Sin *remains* dead within us as the other law is being cut from our heart by the circumcision of Christ.

In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we are ceasing from sin, and we are living to fulfil the will of God as new creation sons in Christ.

Judging rightly by the love of God as we eat and drink of communion

If we reject the light of the word that joins us to the fellowship of Yahweh, the sufferings that we experience are the *judgement* of God upon us.

Unless we turn from walking according to our own deluded perspective and the lusts of our flesh – which have a particular articulation, because 'out of the heart, the mouth *speaks*' – the sword that would otherwise deliver us from these fallen propensities will cut us from Christ as part of the body of sin.

We have noted that it is important that we need to *judge ourselves rightly when we come to eat and drink of the communion*.

Remember that the two thieves on the cross *both* made judgements about Christ from the basis of the other law.

However, when the thief who found salvation was illuminated, and began to fear God, he began to judge in a different way.

Can you see that there was a ministry of a spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit, from Christ, to that man so that he could begin to *see* his condition?

And what did he judge? He 'judged' that he was under the same condemnation as was Jesus, but that he was dying justly under judgement, and Christ was not.

This is the judgement that a person makes when *the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into their heart*.

This love of God being poured into the heart of a person is the outcome of the ministry of a spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit, because it is the Holy Spirit who pours the love of God into our heart.

And when that love of God is poured into our heart, we are compelled, or constrained, to judge in *only one* way. Instead of judging our circumstances, God and others from the basis of our own other law, we are judging under the compulsion of the love of God that 'if One died for all, then we died with Him'.

That is the judgement of an *illuminated* person.

And that requires *a spiritual gift* which ministers to us the word of life as the blood is speaking to us.

This word brings us *illumination* so that we can judge according to this way.

And, when we judge in this way, we are judging ourselves rightly, discerning the body and discerning our participation in the body.

And what happens when we judge that way?

The judgement that we are under is being turned to a chastisement and a circumcision, in Christ, to deliver us from that propensity that would otherwise take us out; and *to bring us to God*.

Can you see that the communion and the way that we partake of the elements of the

communion is critical to our ongoing and daily participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, by which we are obtaining the *salvation* that He has authored for us.

Communion – our participation in His body; ministering His life to one another

In the same way that we are to continue to live in the reality of our baptism, *we must not forsake the gathering together for communion.*

Communion is our *ongoing participation* in the fellowship of Christ's offering as a member of His body.

'The cup of blessing which we bless' is our participation in His blood that flowed as a consequence of His circumcision.

In this *fellowship*, the resurrection life in Christ's blood is becoming *our* life, and is the life that we minister to others.

This is a beautiful reality of being made a member of the body. It is not only for the sake of our own deliverance.

The *evidence* that we are being joined to that body is that we become part of the *ministry* of the same life.

In fact, if we are not ministering that life, it means that we have not eaten and drunk in faith, discerning the body.

So there has to be an acceptance, or a judging, of ourselves being *dead with Christ.*

Then, the reality of that is the ability to *speak and to minister life to another.*

Is that not what the one thief did with the other thief? Who was proclaiming the message of the cross to him? Why, it was the thief who found salvation. He said, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing as we are under the same condemnation?'

The bread that we break and eat is *our participation in the body of Christ.*

As a member of His body, we are no longer dying as the body of death. Rather, we are joined to Christ's death. We recognise that, each day, Christ is priesting to us our participation in the death and life that He finished for us.

In the next session, the Lord willing, we will consider how are we to 'reckon' ourselves every day in relation to dying with Christ, and in being

united in the likeness of His resurrection, having eaten and drunk in faith for that at the communion.