

# THE CULTURE OF THE CROSS IN FAMILIES

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Peter Hay, prepared for word ministry, 31 May 2020

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## **Gathered into the Everlasting Covenant**

Today, we are going to continue to look at 'the ministry of the spirit and power of Elijah'. We are particularly going to consider the ministry of Elijah in relation to the culture of our families.

You will be aware, I'm sure, that the culture of our families is very important to the Lord.

It is fundamental to the fulfilment of His Everlasting Covenant plan.

The apostles Peter and John brought this to our attention when they spoke to the crowd who gathered to them after they had healed the lame man at Solomon's Portico.

Peter said to the crowd, 'You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham.' Act 3:25.

It is important to note that he was not referring to the Old Covenant here. He was referring to the covenant that the Lord made with Abraham, which is an everlasting covenant.

We are gathered into the Everlasting Covenant as sons and daughters of Abraham because of *faith*.

## **The blessing of the Everlasting Covenant belongs to families**

'You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your Seed [speaking of Christ] all the *families* of the earth shall be *blessed*."' Act 3:25.

There are two elements here: all the *families* of the earth; and the *blessing*. The blessing that was promised to Abraham is to families.

'To you first, God [the Father], having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent *Him* to *bless you*, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.' Act 3:26.

This passage is amazing because it raises several things.

First is *the initiative of God toward blessing*, which is His Everlasting Covenant desire - for *every person* to be born of His life and joined to His fellowship.

He was saying that families are fundamental to obtaining that blessing.

Then, Peter said that God the Father, to achieve this covenant purpose, sent Jesus to *bless you* with *that blessing*.

Jesus is coming to deal with our families, so that this blessing can be our portion.

## **He is turning us from our iniquities to receive the blessing in families**

How does He do this? It is by turning every one of you away from your iniquities.

Can you see that the spirit and power of Elijah is 'to turn' the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers.

The first point of *turning* is, actually, each *individual* in a family turning from their iniquities in response to the word of the cross.

## **The steps in obtaining blessing**

In the Beatitudes, Jesus outlined the steps of obtaining this blessing.

It is worth noting this, as recorded in the book of Matthew chapter five. Remember that the blessing that is the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant belongs to families. Jesus said that the way in which this blessing is obtained is through these steps.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.' Mat 5:3-6.

Jesus was saying that, when He brings this blessing, it comes to us *by these steps* and in this way.

## **The word of the cross is to have entry to our hearts and to our households**

This is the outcome of the word of the cross having an impact on our lives but, significantly, it is the impact of the word of the cross having an *impact on our families*.

The blessing promised to Abraham is obtained through our *ongoing response of faith to the word of the cross*.

And this word is to have entry, not only to our own hearts *individually*, but also to our *households*.

Just as the word of the cross calls for an individual response, there is actually a response of a whole household in relation to the word of the cross that comes to us so that we, as households, can be blessed.

This is the ministry of the spirit and power of Elijah. This is a particular initiative to *turn the hearts* of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers.

### **The ministry of Elijah happens as the seventh world kingdom is being established**

Remember that the turning is first the *impact of the cross* on every individual to turn us from our iniquity; that is, to turn us from *the pursuit of our own good*.

It is recorded that the Lord said through the prophet Malachi, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' Mal 4:5.

As we have already considered, the ministry of Elijah *precedes* the judgement of the seventh world kingdom in the time of the end. That judgement is called 'the Great Day of the Lord'.

This ministry is a prophetic mandate that is given to presbyteries in the right hand of Christ, to be proclaimed to God's people during the establishment of the seventh world kingdom.

The ministry is happening *before* the judgement, which means that it is happening as the seventh world kingdom is being established - and that is the time that we are in right now.

### **John the Baptist exemplified the ministry of Elijah**

In reference to John the Baptist, the angel of the Lord described the nature of this ministry of Elijah.

Remember that people asked John the Baptist if he was Elijah, and he said 'No'. But when they asked Jesus about John the Baptist, He said that Elijah had already come.

He was not making the point that John the Baptist was Elijah but, rather, that John the

Baptist exemplified this particular *ministry* of Elijah.

The angel said, 'He will also go before Him [before Christ] in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' Luk 1:17.

Today, we are going to focus particularly on the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, as the impact of this word on the culture of our households.

### **Being born of water and of the Spirit to enter the kingdom**

To enter the kingdom of heaven as those who are obtaining the blessing of God, we must be born of *water* and of the *Spirit*.

Remember that the very first *blessing* is, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'.

Jesus said that if you want to enter the kingdom of heaven, you must be born of water, and born of the Spirit. Joh 3:5.

Being born of water and of the Spirit refers to walking in the reality of our *baptism*. That is being *born of water*.

Our *ongoing participation in the body and blood* of the Lord Jesus, which means eating from the altar, is the implication of being *born of the Spirit*.

### **The journey of Jesus involved a cup and a baptism**

Jesus Himself described His offering journey as 'a cup to drink', and as 'a baptism'.

We are 'born to *see*' the kingdom. But then we must be 'born of water' and 'born of the Spirit' to enter the kingdom, which is a baptism and an ongoing fellowship in a communion meal.

Jesus said of His own offering journey that it was a cup and a baptism. Mar 10:38.

Given the focus that we are having today, I love the point that it was two *brothers* who came to Jesus to ask Him, 'Lord, can we sit on one side of Your throne at Your right hand, and at Your left hand when You come into Your glory?' Mar 10:37.

It is interesting that it was two brothers who came to speak to Him in this way. Jesus answered

the two men, in relation to their query, by drawing attention to His cup and His baptism.

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.

Now, this is what Jesus said about His baptism. Remember that He was talking about *His offering journey*. Mar 10:32-34.

The point is that obtaining the blessing that is promised to families, which is the reality of entering the kingdom, requires us to walk in the reality of our baptism, and to be partakers of the altar, as those who 'eat and drink Christ's body and blood'.

This is important. Remember that the spirit of Elijah and the ministry of Elijah began with the recovery, or the restoration, of the altar itself and of our participation in it.

Jesus was saying, in effect, 'The cup that I drink, and the baptism with which I am baptised, is My offering journey.'

### **His eyes of fire are revealing His judgement and His fellowship**

Later, Jesus spoke again about the nature of His baptism. This is important because He connected His baptism, specifically, with implications for our families.

'I came to send *fire* on the earth, and *how I wish it were already kindled!*' Luk 12:49.

We have spent a number of weeks discussing the Lord's 'eyes' that come 'as a flame of fire'.

In the first instance, His eyes are revealing the *judgement* of God on the whole earth.

But, also, His eyes are revealing the very *fellowship of Yahweh*, which is as a *vehement flame*. He is calling us to join this fellowship, as this is where our salvation is.

This the *fire* that He *wants* to bring on the earth.

### **A baptism, His offering journey, that needed to be accomplished**

Jesus said, in effect, 'Before I am lifted up to draw everyone to Me (and My eyes begin to shine in this manner, and men will look into these eyes to have their hearts exposed, so that I can then give to each one according to their deeds), "I have a

baptism to be baptised with, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!" ' Luk 12:50.

He was specifically talking about His offering journey, wasn't He? And this journey ended when He said, 'It is finished [or, it is accomplished]!'

Before the fire on the earth, there is a baptism that needs to be fulfilled, or accomplished.

### **His word as a goad comes to bring division between our soul and spirit to expose our iniquity**

In relation to this offering journey, which is called a baptism, this is the first implication that Jesus noted.

He said, 'Do you suppose that I came to give *peace* on earth?' Luk 12:51.

I don't know about you, but that is what I would have supposed – that He did come to bring peace.

But He was saying, 'Do you suppose [in relation to this journey] that I came to give [bring] peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather [I have come to bring] division.' Luk 12:51.

Now, thinking back on what we have understood over the past number of weeks about the word of the cross, the very first point of division that is effected by the word of the cross is the division of soul and spirit, isn't it?

As we allow His word that comes like a *goad* to pierce our heart, and we do not draw back in unbelief from His word, what does that word do?

*It divides between soul and spirit.*

The important point is that this is the division that is coming by the word of the cross.

It first *exposes the iniquity in our heart.*

### **The sword divides by circumcising the other law from us in families**

Then, there is another division that happens! This division is caused by the *sword*.

A number of weeks ago, we talked about the fact that when Jesus drank the cup that we all had already drunk, *the sword of judgement* was applied to Him. It was applied to all of us, in Him.

But, because He was dying under this judgement by the grace of God, that sword was *turned*, from an instrument to kill Him, to an instrument that was *circumcising from Him that other law* that is exposed in us when the word comes like a goad.

Can you see that both of these elements of division are the effect of this baptism, with which Jesus is being baptised, that results in 'eyes like a flame of fire' coming and *making this division known*.

'Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather *division*.' Luk 12:51.

Where is this division manifest? I would have immediately thought that it is manifest in individuals and, of course, it is.

But, where He first addresses this division, He applies it directly to *families*.

'For from now on five in one house will be *divided*; three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.' Luk 12:52-53.

### **One house is three generations**

Now, in this statement, Christ identified one *house* – 'from now on five in *one house*'. He 'defined one house as being three generations.

He defined grandparents (or you could say, the father-in-law, the mother-in-law), parents and children.

This is an amazing statement!

We often think of a household as being the immediate, or nuclear family, which is parents or a parent, and children. We narrow it down to that understanding.

However, in the eyes of the Lord, when He said that He comes to bless every family, He was actually talking about these three generations as constituting one house in which the blessing is to abide.

We see that right at the beginning, when the Father communicated His Everlasting Covenant desire to Abraham, because all the children of Israel knew that the blessing belonged to *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* – *three generations* of the blessing.

That is to be true in our households as well.

It is important that we find this understanding of the three generations, because the cross is to come between each of those relationships.

### **The cross comes between every relationship**

The *cross* comes between these relationships because it is the *word* of the cross, which is the word proclaimed at the communion (which we partake of as 'eating from the altar') that comes between members of families.

The effect of the word of the cross between three generations within one household is actually the fundamental basis of the 'house to house' aspect of our meeting together.

If this action is not at work in our own lives and houses, and that reality is not happening within that one house, our ability to meet from house to house, more broadly than only one household, is actually impeded.

This is an important understanding that we need to receive as part of the ministry of Elijah that is coming to us in this season.

### **Division, yet turning to one another**

Jesus' initiative to bring division between the three generations – grandparents, parents and children – seems completely contradictory to the spirit and power of Elijah.

Jesus is saying, "My word" that is being communicated as a consequence of "My baptism" is going to bring a division.'

However, the spirit and power of Elijah comes to *turn* the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers.

How do we reconcile an apparent contradiction between the *division* that is coming by the word of the cross, and the initiative of the spirit and power of Elijah to see each generation *turned* to be able to *meet one another*?

### **His blessing is to turn us from our iniquity**

The first understanding that we need to receive is that the *direction* – father to children and children to father – is not the primary emphasis.

The primary emphasis is in the *turning*.

Remember what Peter said to the Jews in the passage that we began with. Act 2:38-39.

He said that Jesus was coming to bring this blessing to every family, by *first turning us from our iniquity*.

### **The cross brings turning so that we can be delivered from familiar cultures**

It is the *turning*, which is the outcome of the word of the cross having entry into our hearts, that is the key point we need to understand.

‘Turning’ does not simply mean that people in a household ‘come to agreement’ on matters, or commit to interacting with one another more regularly.

This might be an outcome, but if that is what your understanding is of the hearts of the fathers turning to the children and the children turning to the fathers, you are not connecting with what Jesus is saying.

It is not even the thought that a father should be able to speak easily into a child’s life, or that a child should be able to speak in relation to other cultural matters.

That is not the conversation that Jesus is talking about because, if our point of coherence is a compromised culture where we just come to a point of agreement together, that, by definition, is a *familiar culture*.

The cross is coming to deliver us from all familiar cultures.

### **The cross removes enmity, bringing true peace**

First, and foremost, turning is the implication of *the cross being established between every relationship in a house*.

This is where *true peace* is found.

The other pursuit of peace, where we reach a degree of compromise, is a contrived peace. It is a commitment to a ‘good’, and we all agree to that good.

Can you see that this is the basis of the workings of our flesh? It is *the pursuit of good from the knowledge of good and evil*.

That is not *the peace* that the Lord wants to establish in our houses. That is not what the spirit and power of Elijah is ministering to us.

The first point is that true peace, or the removal of enmity, is found in the cross.

### **Turning – the veil of our darkness is taken away**

The first outcome of turning is that, as Paul said, when one turns to the Lord, who is coming with eyes as a flame of fire, *the veil of our own darkness is being taken away*.

When we turn to the Lord, the veil of our own darkness, which is the insistence on our own perspective and understanding, is being removed.

### **Looking on Him – responses to the word of the cross**

And, when we look on Him, we realise the condition of our own heart.

We become poor in spirit, understanding that we cannot deliver ourselves from our own fleshly drive and motivation. That is being poor in spirit!

The first response to the word of the cross is to become *poor in spirit*, and that should be the response of every individual within a household.

The next response is *mourning*. ‘Blessed are those who mourn.’

Then, the next response is, ‘Blessed are the *meek*.’

The meek are those who are joined to the travail of Christ Himself. Their strength is not in themselves. Their strength is being found in *resurrection life* in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings.

Can you see that this is how Christ is bringing  *blessing* to every family?

He is doing it by the word of the cross, which begins with turning.

### **Forsaking our old cultures; being established in new creation**

Through the ministry of the gospel, the cross of Christ makes a breach on a family’s culture, requiring each individual to respond to His word.

This is the word that is ministered at the communion. As I mentioned before, this is what it means to ‘partake of the altar’. It is a commitment to this fellowship that is the culture of the cross in which we are walking.

This word of the cross! Remember that Jesus is coming, and He has finished our judgement and He has established our salvation. We are all being drawn to look on Him, and He is calling us to forsake old cultures.

He is calling us to forsake old ways so that we can be established in the new creation, which is His corporate body. That is where His life is.

The word of the cross calls us from a way of life that is of the old creation, to walk in the light of His word, as one who is part of the new creation.

### **What it means to 'hate' our family in order to be a disciple**

What does this 'look like'? What are we forsaking as part of the old creation? And, how are we doing this, so that we are joined to the new creation?

These are the words of Jesus, recorded in the Gospel of Luke. 'Now great multitudes went with Him.' Luk 14:25.

I love the way Luke started this, because he was making the point that Jesus was not speaking only to His disciples here; He was speaking, also, to the great multitude of people who were following Him.

What Jesus said applies to *every* person.

'Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

'And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple".' Luk 14:26-27.

Many people find this to be a confronting statement. It is a challenging statement, because we love our parents, and we love our children, and we love our brothers and sisters.

So what did Jesus mean by this - that to be His disciple, we have to hate them?

There are plenty of mixed understandings about this passage.

Some people have assumed that we actually have to forsake all of those relationships, as though none of them has validity once we come into the body of Christ, in order to be connected to Christ and to be His follower, His disciple.

That would be complete nonsense, because we have just read that He was sent by the Father to give the blessing in *every* family.

He is obviously not destroying families, because that is where the blessing is supposed to be. So that is not what it is saying.

Other people, recognising that somewhat obvious point, think that Jesus is saying that, relative to the so much greater love that you are supposed to have for Jesus, it is almost as though you hate everyone else. This is a comparative approach: because I love Jesus so much, relative to that love, I hate these other relationships - as if loving Him is the priority, and these are nothing.

That is not true neither. How do we understand what Jesus was saying? T

he key lies with *discipleship*.

### **Hating all fleshly validation**

When He said this, while speaking to many individuals, He identified *every individual* in relation to, or connected to, a specific relationship.

So, your father provides a relationship that you have with fatherhood. Mother-child is a certain type of relationship. Your children are in a certain type of relationship to you. Those relationships have certain dynamics, or characteristics, to them, don't they?

The way that you relate to your father is not the same way in which you relate to your children, or in which you relate to your brother, etc.

There are these dynamics, or conditions, that are specific to all these relationships.

When Jesus said that we were to 'hate father and mother, He meant that we are to hate the way in which we find our identity (who we are), and in which we define the identity of others in our families, *from the basis of the flesh*.

He meant that all these relationships have to be *reformed in the cross*.

We need to forsake, or to hate, all the dynamics that we contribute to, and by which we define ourselves, that are all based in a conversation at the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

That is what the Lord wants us to hate. He wants us to hate the validation of our identity, the naming of ourselves, that happened in these relational settings, because our name does not come from them.

### **We are named and verified by the Father**

Our identity is not verified or known because of these relationships.

How is our identity verified?

It is verified when we are *born from above by the Father*, because He is the source of our *name*.

Can you see that we are to *forsake all other ways* in which our identity is being named and expressed?

This is a key point. This is what the cross is coming to deliver us to. Why is this the case? What did Jesus do in this regard?

Jesus *perfected* the pathway of our salvation, which is the pathway of our *name*. This pathway is what we are being joined to.

How do we know this? The Lord is addressing the need for every person in the household to be *delivered from the culture of the old creation*. This involves all of the relationships that have an impact on the way in which our identity is defined and verified.

### **We are given the speech of a disciple – a new culture of conversation**

As I said before, the fundamental emphasis and basis for understanding what it means to hate these things is to *be a disciple*.

I love the way Jesus did this, because He was saying, ‘To be My disciple you have to be joined to Me, because I am a disciple as well.’

How do we know that? It is because He *testified* to that Himself. Isa 50:4. His testimony was that He identified Himself *as a disciple*.

And the way that He spoke about that gives us some explanation regarding how we are to relate to others in relation to father, mother, sister, brother, children etc.

He said, ‘The Lord God [Yahweh *Elohim*; this the relationship in which the Everlasting Covenant discussion specifically relating to you has been and is happening] has given Me *the tongue of [the disciple]*.’ Isa 50:4.

The source of our conversation is not in our perceptions of good or evil. We are receiving the capacity for a different speech. This speech comes as we *receive the word*, or partake of the altar, which is *the fruit of the tree of life*.

### **Weary - living by self-definition**

‘The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the

weary one with a word [‘speak a word in season’ to him who is weary].’ Isa 50:4.

Who, then, are the ‘weary’? The weary are all of those who are *heavy-laden*; those who are becoming *weak and sick in a body of death*.

Why is this happening? It is because they *live by self-definition*.

They live by the principle of the other law under the dominion of Satan, and are becoming increasingly weak and sick, and may die before their time.

### **Deliverance by being yoked to Christ**

So, Christ is saying that we can receive speech, or a conversation, that *delivers* us from a fallen fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood, etc. that only causes us to be weak.

And how do we do it? It is by our *being yoked to Christ*; by being *joined* to that *baptism* and that *cup*, which is the pathway of salvation. It is in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

This is the capacity to ‘speak a word in season’ to those who are weary because they are walking in darkness or, according to the flesh. 2Ti 4:2.

### **He opens our ear to hear His word as we turn to Him as His disciple**

‘He awakens Me morning by morning [this is the path of the just, shining brighter and brighter], *He awakens My ear to [hear] as a disciple*.’ Isa 50:4.

This is beautiful, isn’t it? You cannot ‘awaken your own ear’. All that *you* can do is to *turn*. You can *present* yourself.

But it is *He* who awakens, or opens, your ear to hear what the Spirit is saying so that you can respond to the way in which He is leading you.

‘He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The *Lord God has opened My ear*; and I was not [rebellious] nor did I turn back.’ Isa 50:5.

This is us not turning away from His eyes, isn’t it?

How do we *hear*? We hear by *looking into His eyes*.

And we are not those who ‘draw back to perdition’ through unbelief. Rather, we are those who ‘believe to the saving of our souls’. Heb 10:39.

This is the way of *discipleship*.

### **Walking with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings**

'I gave my back to those who struck Me.' Isa 50:6.

This is the believer who has *had his ear opened*; who has received *the capacity of speech* from the tree of life.

And what does that lead us to?

It leads us to *a pathway in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings*.

'I gave My back to those who struck Me. And My cheeks to those who plucked out My beard.' Isa 50:6.

This refers to the wounds that Jesus endured on His journey.

'I did not hide my face from shame and spitting.' This is the reality for us if we will continue to walk according to the tree of life.

### **Taking up our cross – hating self-definition**

This is the implication of taking up our cross and walking with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

So He said, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, mother etc.', and then, 'You cannot be My disciple.'

He also said that you have to 'hate' *yourself*.

He meant that we have to *hate our self-definition*.

### **Bearing our cross – hating other pathways that are not His offering fellowship**

And He concluded with, 'Whoever does not bear his cross cannot be My disciple.'

So, how do you 'bear your cross'?

This refers to *your* unique fellowship in His offering and sufferings which He has pioneered for you - 'I give my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who plucked it out'.

It is amazing how these two understandings come together so that we recognise what we are to hate – we are to hate a way of life that is *other than this pathway*.

### **No longer defining oneself by the good or evil of our parents' training**

So, the familiar cultures that we have inherited from our parents, the views we may have of our parents, are not to be the way in which we define ourselves.

If you are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, you are being *delivered* from this propensity in the fellowship of His sufferings.

And you are *no longer defining yourself by the good or evil* of your parents' training of you.

### **Not defining ourselves because of our assessment of our parents 'good' and 'evil'**

Neither are you assessing and judging your parents, saying, 'There is no way I'm going to be like them.'

Can you see that if you look at your parents as either being 'good' and you think, 'I am going to be like them'; or as being 'evil' and you think, 'I am going to do everything to be other than them, because they are evil and if I'm not that way, I will be good', that is *a fallen conversation*.

That is complete *self-definition*.

You are, whether you are trying to be different from them or not, 'clothing yourself in unrighteousness'.

So, if we are being delivered from this, we are not saying, 'I'm going to be like or not going to be like my parents', because *our definition* doesn't come from that.

### **The right to be sons of God**

Rather, we are to be giving up the 'right' - the *presumed* right - to name ourselves.

And what do we receive instead? We receive the right to be a son of God! Joh 1:12.

And we find that right when we are with Him who is authoring our salvation, establishing the pathway of our sonship. *He* gives us that right.

And we receive the *authority* to live according to that way.

Can you see what you have to give up, or to hate, so that you can obtain that right?

### **Not defining ourselves as parents according to the responses and behaviour of our children**

Now, that is obvious in relation to parents where we are no longer saying, 'I want to be like or not like my parents', but it's the same regarding our children.

He also said, 'Unless you hate your children.'

So, there is a relational mode in the flesh that we may have with our children that also needs to be despised and put off.

Our worries, our concerns, about the rebellious behaviour of our children, or perhaps our view regarding the successes of our children, can *drive our sense of validity as a parent*, can't they?

You may see that your children are failing or are rebellious or have bad responses at inopportune times, and what do you do? You may think, 'I am a failure as a parent.'

You are already judging yourself as being 'evil', on the basis of what you've seen in relation to your child.

On the other hand, your child may appear to have 'good' responses and behaviour. They are successful at school; they seem to be testifying wherever they go; the life of God seems to be radiating out from them, and you think, 'I have been a good parent.'

That is also self-definition, and you are to hate that, because your identity and capacity for parenthood is not determined by the good or evil of your child.

Your capacity for fatherhood or motherhood is inherent *in the word of your name*, which is found only in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

This is the word of the cross shifting our perspective so that we see ourselves and see one another in a completely different light. This is true *illumination*, isn't it?

### **'Hating' our siblings – not relating in fallen ways**

Now, we read also about 'hating' brothers and sisters. I have a few brothers and sisters myself, and we are finding recovery in the Lord in this season as the word of the cross is illuminating us.

So, what are the aspects of fallen relationships with siblings that we are to hate?

It's the comparisons, the competition between siblings, the ways in which we have defined our siblings or have been defined by them from our past.

We need to let go of all of those things. We need to forget them. They are to go in 'the sea of

forgetfulness' with the whole of the old creation. That's not what we are being called to.

We are to walk in newness of life - to be able to speak to one another and to release one another to their new expression according to the tree of life.

Isn't that the capacity to 'speak to one who is weary'?

It is to encourage them, to reveal them, so that their identity is expressed and they are standing up according to their name.

This is true reformation within a family context of three generations.

### **Hating fallen modes in marriage**

The same applies to our fallen marriage cultures. You can see why we took so much time last week to talk about our family cultures.

Those fallen modes also need to be hated so that we can meet one another in spirit and truth. Remember that this is true romance.

### **Finding recovery through the ministry of the spirit and power of Elijah**

Let us consider the way in which we find recovery.

Remember that the ministry of the spirit and power of Elijah is coming to see this recovery established; to see the word of the cross established as the cultural foundation of our lives and of our families, so that we are *made ready for the coming of the Lord*.

This is a beautiful thought, isn't it? We are all to be made ready for His second coming.

So, how did Elijah's ministry work?

I'm going to take some time to read the account, because this will give us some helpful pointers about the nature of the conversation that we are to have as those who are allowing the word of the cross to do its work in our families.

### **The call to 'come near' to Him; to look into His eyes of fire**

We recall how Jezebel had an impact in the nation that caused the proliferation of the Baal idols - there were 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asher. 1Ki 18:30-40.

The point is that these Baals represent all fleshly interpretations or fleshly expectations of 'good' that we think we should achieve.

The ministry of Elijah comes to say that that all have to go.

This refers to the relationships with father, mother, sister, brother etc., which are based in the wrong tree.

'Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me".' IKi 18:30.

That sounds like Jesus saying, 'All you who are weary and heavy laden, come to Me and I will give you rest', and 'When I am lifted up I will draw all men to Myself.'

Can you see that the ministry of the spirit of Elijah is coming, and that this ministry is not separate from the word of the cross; it is a specific ministry of the word to bring us to Jesus, to bring us to look into His eyes.

### **Turning to the face of Christ's administration**

'So all the people *came near to him*.' IKi 18:30.

This is *turning*, isn't it? They came near to the word of this face of Christ's own *administration* - the prophetic priesthood face.

### **Understanding and participating in the fellowship of communion**

And what was the first thing that this administration recovered?

'He repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.' IKi 18:30.

We are most certainly in a season of isolation and restriction where the Lord is repairing, and calling us to restore, the altar - which is *our understanding of and our participation in the communion*.

And the *fruit* that that is bearing among us is palpable, isn't it? We are seeing this fruit of fellowship remaining among us and being multiplied.

This is the initiative of the Lord Himself to make us ready.

The first aspect of this is that He *calls* us to come to Him.

Then those who are given accountability, or stewardship, in His house are repairing, or restoring, the fellowship of communion.

### **Our naming in Christ is found in our partaking of the fellowship of communion**

'And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your *name*".' IKi 18:31.

This is beautiful, isn't it? He is restoring the altar; and He is saying that our *naming* is not to be found in the pursuit of all the ideals represented by Baal.

Rather, our naming is found in the eating and the drinking of His body and blood, which is partaking of the altar.

The Lord Himself said, 'Your name shall be *this*.'

Will we forsake these Baals? Will we forsake the 'wooden idols' - the 'gospels' that are so familiar to us?

Will we have the 'conversation' to identify them so that we will cease from naming ourselves and one another from the basis of these fallen cultures?

We must hate those! And you'll see that we have to hate them so much that we will 'kill' them. Of course, we are not killing the people - we are killing those fallen ways of relating.

'Israel shall be your *name*.' IKi 18:31.

That is precious. He is restoring the altar so that we are able to be connected to the *truth* of who the Lord has named us to be.

### **The word of testimony to see Christ's life multiplied**

'Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord ['the name of the Lord' is the context of our *fellowship* together]; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of *seed*.' IKi 18:32.

I love the way that this has been illustrated. It could just have said that it was a big trench and that it held any number of different things; but it was *seed* that it held.

In this regard, once the altar is restored, in our capacity of walking as a disciple, what is in our mouth?

The word, which is a seed to another, is in our mouth. We are able to *testify* to this life and to see it *multiplied* in our families, and then from house to house.

### **The water of the word of Christ's restored administration bringing restoration and refreshing**

'And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood".' 1Ki 18:33.

Now, he could have said, instead, 'Gets lots of water!' But we read that they used *four* pots of water.

These represent *the four administrations of Christ*, and they are full of *the water of the word*.

And he is saying to us, 'Douse this altar and this offering with *that* water.'

Can you see that this is the *water that we are to be washed with*?

This is the water that we are allowing to bring regeneration and refreshing in our houses. He is saying, 'Pour *that* water.' This is the water of the restored administrations of Christ.

And how are they restored? They are restored because we look on Him whom we have pierced, and we have begun to *mourn*.

And he said, 'Do it *three* times.' 1Ki 18:34.

This points to the initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the source of the water that is being poured on this altar.

### **The messenger comes to prepare the way of the Lord**

'So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water. And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel" [He addressed the God who is the God of one household; a household of faith.], let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word.' 1Ki 18:35-36.

He was saying, 'I'm not revealing myself; I am completely revealing You in this action.'

That should be the mode of every messenger, shouldn't it? They should not come to reveal themselves. It is not the exercise of a *projection*; it is coming to *prepare the way of the Lord*.

### **He is turning our hearts to Himself**

'Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that *You have turned* their hearts back to You again".' Ki 18:37.

Can you see that even our turning is *not in our own hand*?

This is the initiative of the Lord to turn *us* back to Him.

Can you see that the word that is being proclaimed to us in this season is a great *mercy*, and that it is the multiplication of the grace of the Lord to us? He is turning our hearts back to Him.

### **Being poor in spirit; fearing God, mourning, confessing His lordship**

'Then the fire of the Lord [Remember that Jesus is coming and saying, "How I wish this fire was kindled on the earth." It is coming in judgement, but also to demonstrate God's *love* for us and to draw us to fellowship with Himself.] fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"' 1Ki 18:38-39.

Do you see that this is the response of being 'poor in spirit', leading to *mourning* and to the ability to *confess the lordship* of God as one who *fears* God?

This is the response that we learned about regarding the thief on the cross, who was illuminated by the blood of Christ.

### **Hating and being delivered from false doctrines**

'And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and *executed* them there.' 1Ki 18:40.

This is the response of those who 'hate father, mother, sister, brother, wife, children', etc. It refers to our hating those false doctrines about how we should be relating in our families; about how we should be living our lives.

They are the doctrines that we need to speak about in the light of the word which is coming as water to wash us, so that we can be *delivered* from them; so that we can receive true perspective to see them.

Therefore, we need to take time in our families to discuss these matters, because we will *all* have had these alternative gospels as part of our thinking and understanding.

And remember that this does not refer to only 'religious' thinking; these 'gospels' are simply the ways that *we believe lead to life*.

Further, we need to *release* one another to find Christ and the life that He wants to give us.

We are not to hold one another to a fallen understanding of what the gospel is - to what we think it means to obtain life or to be successful; or to whatever our goal or understanding of 'good' is. That has to *die*.

We have to grab those things in the light of the word that we are receiving, and put them to *death*.

### **Family conversation and culture according to fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ**

Now, remember that the idols of the Baals were focused on the pursuit of a *romantic* ideal, a romantic 'good'. The people believed that Baal would give them rain so that they would be fruitful and productive, and would not suffer loss.

In this regard, I was thinking about the nature of the conversation we have with our children at times - for example, when they have some difficulty at school.

Is our first response one of *fear*, having the urge, or drive, that needs to go and rectify that situation or to alleviate our child from the pain of that difficult circumstance?

Or are we *demonstrating faith in Christ's blood*?

Are we teaching our children to have faith in Christ's blood?

Jude wrote that we are to 'build ourselves up in our most holy faith by praying in the Holy Spirit', because we don't even know how to pray about the matter.

So, on one hand, the child is having a difficulty at school, and our immediate drive, which is the way that we are relating to this child, according to our fleshly response, is to go and do something about it.

On the other hand, as those who are receiving the word of the cross, our first response should be to

say, 'Lord, we don't know what to do. We see that this pain is part of the sufferings that You have already suffered for this child' - and to teach that child to believe in Jesus.

And the acceptance of our weakness, or our poor in-spirit reality, is not that we have the answer; rather, it's that we first *don't even know how to pray as we ought*.

However, we believe that the Holy Spirit, who knows our weaknesses, is praying on our behalf - and what is He doing?

He is *joining us* to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings so that the answer is found *in the resurrection life of Christ*, not in our own good.

Now, I'm not saying that if something is happening at school we don't need to take an initiative. Rather, don't let that be our *first* initiative. If you do that, you will teach your child to fear.

Let our response be the outcome of being *led by the Spirit*, not the drive motivated by fear.

We are to teach our children the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and we cannot do that if we ourselves are not joined to the offering and sufferings of Christ.

Can you see that this is where the *grace* is?

He died this death *by grace*. And He is joining us *by grace* to that death so that, as heirs together of the grace of life, we can teach our children the nurture and admonition of the Lord, so that they can turn to the Lord, themselves.

### **Knowing the assurance of God's grace; joined to His overcoming offering**

When participation in Christ's offering and sufferings is the culture of a family, each person within the family can know the *assurance* of God's *grace* in every circumstance of life.

They do not need to be afraid of the repercussions or persecutions arising from their obedient commitment to the culture of godliness, which is sanctification.

This is because they are joined to the offering through which Christ *overcame* the world!

We can attempt to overcome the world through our initiatives to alleviate stress, which would be our own gospel.

Or we can recognise and accept that Christ overcame the world.

By what means did He overcome? It was through *obedience*.

And that is 'the ear of a disciple', isn't it? A disciple is someone who hears and *follows* in the way of their teacher. That's what we are to be.

### **Finding validity and naming though our obedience to the Father**

Jesus said to His disciples, 'Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.' Joh 16:32.

This is a beautiful statement, because that should be true for each of us, shouldn't it?

Instead of trying to find validity and security for our identity through our own initiatives, even when everyone is leaving us and we feel alone, we are not alone when we are obedient to the Father.

Why? It is because *He* is *naming* us. Our validity and viability, and the veracity of our identity is found in Him.

We need to teach this to our children - not to 'name' them through our own anxieties.

### **Overcoming in Christ**

So, having testified, 'I'm not alone, because the Father is with Me', Jesus said, 'I have spoken these things to you *that in Me you may have peace*. In the world you will have tribulation [if you are seeking for a way out of that, you are worshipping a Baal]; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' Joh 16:32-33.

So then, those who receive illumination through repentance and faith in response to the word of God, die with Christ, by grace, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

We are being delivered from our fallen and familiar relational propensities.

### **Meeting in Spirit and truth; in a fellowship of offering and love**

Consequently, we are able to present ourselves to meet the other members of our house - remember the three generations - in the *Spirit*, and according to the *truth* of our name as a son of God.

We are not to meet by our self-definition, nor by the definitions of others but, rather, by the *truth* which we have received in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

This is a great relief - it means that we can actually *meet* properly.

This is the reality of the hearts of the fathers being turned to the children and the hearts of the children being turned to the fathers.

They are actually *meeting in Spirit and truth*.

This means that they are able to *present themselves to meet in a fellowship of offering*. God desires that every member of a household meets in this manner.

### **Not judging another**

However, if a person continues to walk according to the sight of their own eyes, they will remain in darkness and under the judgement of God.

In this regard, we have no comment to make. We don't impose our judgements on them.

Everyone has an individual response to make. *Every heart* is exposed before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account, and our account is to say, 'Lord God.' If someone else is not doing that, we don't make any judgement. We have been learning not to judge a matter before its time.

### **The word of the cross brings division as well as healing, life and peace**

In this instance, the word of the cross makes a *division* between those who are dying in a body of death under the judgement of God, and those who are dying with Christ, by grace, as a member of His body.

We see that the word of the cross brings *healing* and *life* in a family if it is *received*.

However, if it is not received, the cross makes a clear division between a family's familiar culture that is under judgement with Christ, and the culture of His house.

Life and peace are the fruit of God's culture.