

DISCIPLESHIP

Peter Hay, prepared for Communion word focus, 30 August 2020

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Discipleship is foundational

Today we are going to continue in our series on the fourfold foundations of fellowship.

We looked at the apostles' doctrine last week, and this week we would have been moving on to 'the apostles' fellowship'. But, in fellowship more broadly, I felt that it would be prudent to take some time to consider the subject of discipleship.

'Discipleship' is foundational to our participation in the apostles' doctrine, and particularly the second foundation, the apostles' fellowship.

We will look at 'discipleship' this week, and then we will look in more detail at the apostles' fellowship in the coming session.

'Discipleship' is a term that is foundational to the Christian faith.

Yet, among the Christian community, there are many different understandings of discipleship.

For some people, the term disciple is a synonym for a believer, or a Christian.

Of course, Christians should be disciples. The Scriptures are plain about that, aren't they?

However, discipleship is much more than a designation, or an identification.

Discipleship is not loyalty to a particular leader or doctrine

Now, for others, either by confession, or through their practice, discipleship is their loyalty to a particular leader or a particular doctrinal tradition.

This form of discipleship has many types of variations, and I will list a couple for illustration.

Some people are loyal to a leader whom they find appealing or sufficiently qualified to speak to them.

They will hear from these ones, and follow their directions, *but* they will be less inclined to hear from others or they just won't hear from them at all.

Can you see that they have become the disciple of *that* person and their teaching, rather than as a disciple of Christ; or they are confusing

discipleship to Christ, with following that charismatic or appealing leader?

Practices of discipleship can be leaven

The apostle Paul addressed this tendency in the Corinthian church, and identified it as a 'leaven' among them.

Remember, leaven is important for us to consider because, if we don't get rid of leaven from our lives, and from our houses, then we are unable to keep the Feast of Passover, which is our connection specifically to the household of the Father.

So, if this is a 'leaven-ness' practice in us, and in our houses, then we are not part of the household of faith.

Paul identified a particular practice of discipleship that he described as 'a leaven'.

Messengers speak from the fellowship of Christ

This 'leaven-ness' attitude, which is following after a particular leader, or being able to hear from one and not the other, does not recognise that messengers of Christ speak from the *fellowship of Christ*.

They don't see that the word being proclaimed is *coming from fellowship*, because their loyalty is with a particular person.

This is what Paul was addressing with the Corinthians. 'Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas [which is Peter]," or "I am of Christ".

'Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised into the name of Paul?' 1Co 1:12-13.

Now, I love the way Paul listed this. Paul was the one who proclaimed the word that established the Corinthian church.

Then he named Apollos, because he was the one whom the Corinthians loved. He was charismatic; he was an excellent teacher; he was a good speaker, and the Corinthians were enamoured by him.

Then he listed Peter, of course – the foundation of the church.

Then he listed Christ, because there would be those in the Corinthian church who would not be loyal to any person, because they hear from Christ individually.

Paul was saying, ‘None of that is discipleship. That is corruption.’

Partiality is a sign of carnality

He continued in his letter. He said, ‘And I, brethren, [I] could not speak to you as spiritual people.’ 1Co 3:1.

He was saying that that way of walking as a Christian is *not spiritual*. It is *carnal (fleshly)*, like ‘mere men’ and no different from the way in which people behave in the world.

‘I, brethren, could not speak to you as spiritual people but as to carnal [and then he said], as to babes in Christ.’ 1Co 3:1.

If we maintain this notion of discipleship as being loyal, even to Christ, over and against His messengers, then we remain like little babies in Christ. Or, to say it another way, we remain as little ‘shoots’ that come out of the ground that don’t bring forth fruit.

‘For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you.’ 1Co 3:3.

This is a key for us because, on the one hand, the discipleship that we are called to has a certain *fruit* – it is called *firstfruits*, isn’t it? This is what we have been considering.

However, if that is not our discipleship, it will inevitably be demonstrated through these types of attitudes and practices – envy, strife, division, agitation, prickliness. That is what Paul was saying.

He was saying that where those things are present, are you not carnal, and behaving just like everyone who is not saved.

‘For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?’ 1Co 3:4.

Not thinking outside the word of present truth

‘Therefore let no-one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or

things to come – all are yours. And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’ 1Co 3:21-23.

In fact, continuing this discussion, Paul said, ‘Now these things brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes.’ 1Co 4:6.

He was saying, ‘I am using myself, and Apollos, as examples to exemplify this principle to you, and to explain the problems that it will bear for you if you continue to live this way.’

‘Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written.’ 1Co 4:6.

Remember that the apostles’ doctrine is what is being proclaimed as *the word of present truth* from the Scriptures, by the Holy Spirit.

He was saying, interestingly, that these people were outside of what was written.

Get rid of the leaven of partiality

‘That none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.’ 1Co 4:6.

Paul was highlighting the principle that, if we say we are of ‘this’ person or ‘that’ person, or of ‘that’ doctrine or of ‘this stream’, then we are carnal, and we begin to get puffed up, one against the other.

Now, the term ‘puffed up’ is specifically connected to leaven, because leaven is the agent that is added to dough to cause that dough to puff up as bread.

Of course, as I said before, we are to get rid of the leaven, so that we can keep the Feast of Passover without leavened bread. We are to remove it from our houses.

That is loyalty to particular leaders, and to be able to hear from one and not another is fundamentally a denial that the word is being proclaimed by messengers from a presbytery that is the fellowship of the Father and His Son.

Delivered from historical loyalty

Now, some people are loyal, not only to a particular leader, but they are loyal to *former* leaders – historical figures. They even go so far as to identify themselves as adherents to their doctrines.

Some people say, 'I am a Calvinist.' That is an odd thing to do - to define yourself by another person's identity.

Or, 'I am Augustinian', which is very sophisticated, isn't it? That means you have quite a strong theological tradition that goes right back to the early church.

Or, 'I am Lutheran' - after Martin Luther.

These adherents who follow or identify themselves in these particular ways forgo *present truth*. Remember that these are historical figures proclaimed a doctrine hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

These adherents forgo present truth by the Holy Spirit, which comes through a presbytery, for loyalty to that history.

The amazing thing is that some of those doctrines are quite spurious; they are questionable.

The point is that we are to be delivered from those loyalties, to be those who are established in the present truth.

Discipleship is not simply a season of training

Some people - and this probably resonates most with many of us, particularly for me as I was growing up - think of discipleship as being a season of training!

For example, they may view discipleship to be particularly relevant to young adults. Now, it is relevant, but not because it is to do with a transition from immaturity to maturity.

Discipleship is important for young adults in order to *connect* them to discipleship as *the way of their entire life*, not just the season of their young adult life.

So, in the case where discipleship is considered to be a season of training, it may be viewed as being particularly relevant for young adults and new Christians.

From this perspective, a person 'graduates' from discipleship, which means learning the doctrine and culture and practices of the church to which they belong, then 'graduating' from discipleship to ministry maturity so that, as those who are now mature, they can disciple others.

Do you see the point that when discipleship is viewed as a training season, so that once you

graduate from discipleship, you have the capacity to disciple others?

Christ, the first Disciple

Now, as we consider what the Scriptures teach us about discipleship, let us begin with a fundamental point; and that is that no-one 'graduates' from discipleship in this age, even though we are called to *make disciples of others*.

I am going to talk about how we do make disciples of others, but it is not because we are no longer disciples. We make disciples of others by *testifying* and *joining* others to the very *same fellowship* and *way of walking* to which we have been connected.

In this regard, those in the presbytery are to be the exemplars of discipleship. The presbytery are not those who disciple everyone else, even though they *do* have a discipleship initiative.

However, they do that because *they are disciples* themselves, having learnt from the *Disciple*, Christ Himself.

Christ Himself was the first Disciple. This is a massive point, isn't it?

Labouring and heavy laden - living by the flesh

A disciple of Christ is a *learner*. We are all called to come to Christ, and learn of Him.

'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden.' Mat 11:28.

So, those who labour and are heavy laden are those who are living by the flesh, which means that they are motivated, or driven, by their own law, pursuing what they perceive *to be good*, and avoiding what they view *to be evil*.

This is the condition of the Fall, and a person who is living like that is labouring, and is under a heavy burden. They are actually in captivity.

Rest - the blessing of sonship

'All of you who labour and are heavy laden [everyone], come to Him, and He will give you *rest*.'

Now the 'rest' that Jesus referred to there is the inheritance that belongs to the children of Abraham.

It is *the blessing of sonship*.

If we are labouring and heavy laden, and we want to attain or obtain rest – to obtain the inheritance of our sonship, which is the blessing of Abraham – we have to come to Christ.

He said, to do that, ‘Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

‘For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’
Mat 11:29-30.

So, we obtain the blessing of our inheritance, which is rest, by *learning* from Christ, and we can learn from Christ only if we are *yoked* to Him.

I am summarising what Jesus said to us there.

The yoke is connected to a priestly service

So, what is a yoke?

For the children, this term ‘yoke’ may not be all that familiar. We are obviously not talking about egg yolks.

We are referring to an instrument, or a harness, that connected two animals together – usually oxen, so that they could be then directed by a farmer to pull along a plough; to do a work!

This yoke, or harness, was usually a wooden beam which joined one animal to the other so that it could be driven. And they could have a series of animals, in pairs, pulling this plough.

Usually, those animals that were yoked together were oxen. In the Scriptures, the ox is the face of the prophet-priest.

This is important because, when Jesus said, ‘Take My yoke’, He was saying that, for you and for me to personally be connected to Him, is to learn to ‘priest’ ourselves as living sacrifices to the Father.

The yoking is specifically connected to a *priestly* activity.

We are personally yoked to Christ

I want to highlight the point that we are *personally* yoked to Jesus.

It is not a whole lots of yokes – millions and millions of them – so that we are just one big company of yoked people.

When He said, ‘Come to Me’, He was saying that you and I, individually, are to be yoked to Him and to walk with Him; and to learn from Him the priesthood that He learnt, by which we obtain the blessing.

As a disciple, we learn what Christ learned

As we will see, if we are yoked to Christ, learning that priesthood, we will exercise that priesthood in the community of believers.

The point that I want to highlight is that we do have to have a personal connection to Jesus, but that personal connection to Jesus has no reality outside of a practical service *in the community of believers* to which the Father has appointed us.

When we are yoked to Christ, we are walking with Him on the path that He pioneered uniquely for each us, as He ‘priested’ Himself as a living sacrifice.

We are learning from Christ what He learned. He is the Disciple; He has *learned* something.

Now He is teaching us what He has learned through the things which He suffered.

We know this passage well, but it becomes a very rich Scripture for us to understand in relation to discipleship.

Learning the obedience of priesthood

Paul’s discussions teach us that Christ learned *the obedience of priesthood*.

Paul said, ‘As He also says in another place [this is the Father speaking]: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”.’ Heb 5:6.

Now, the Melchizedek priesthood is specifically *the priesthood of Christ*, and He was glorified by the Father as the High Priest of this order.

‘Who, in the days of His flesh [talking about Jesus as the Son of Man], when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear [or piety].’ Heb 5:7-8.

‘The days of His flesh’, when He was offering up cries and tears, was the *journey* that He was on.

His journey commenced at the first communion service, which was the last supper, but it’s travail began in Gethsemane. This is where His prayer and crying with tears is most acutely seen, and He continued this in each stage of His offering journey.

Christ priested Himself as a son of man

‘Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been

perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.' Heb 5:8-9.

That is an amazing, amazing passage, isn't it? Jesus, although He is a Son, perfect in every way, learned obedience, and was perfected.

Why is this the case? What was He learning? What had He not done before that He was now doing?

He was now priesting Himself as a son of man, like you and me in every respect: human; bodily frail! Do you see that this is an amazing point?

It is not as though He had not learned the obedience of sonship. He was already the perfect Son.

What He had never done before was that He had never priested Himself as a man. Moreover, He was learning *that* priesthood, to which He was going to become High Priest so that you and I, who are sons and daughters of men, could learn *that same* priesthood.

It is brilliant, isn't it? The priesthood that He learned as a son of man is the priesthood that we are learning as sons and daughters of men in fellowship with Him.

Jesus had never priested this way before

Paul then said, 'And having been perfected, He became the Author [which means the Pioneer, or Forerunner] of eternal salvation for all who *obey* Him.' Heb 5:9.

Jesus did not need to learn the obedience of sonship. He was never a son of 'disobedience'. That was not the obedience that He learned.

When Paul explained that Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered, He was specifically discussing the 'priesthood' of Christ.

'"You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"; who, in the days of His flesh'. Heb 5:6.

Paul was specifically referring to priesthood when he designated the obedience that Christ learned.

Through offering, Jesus learnt how to be a high priest, as a son of man, in every situation and in relation to the human condition.

Significantly, the Son had not priested Himself this way before.

The yoke of grace binds us to the Son

When He priested Himself as an offering, the Son of Man, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. Heb 2:9.

Now, that *grace* of God is *the resurrection life* of God that was in His blood.

As a son of man, by the grace of God, or the capacity of the resurrection life of the Father, which Paul called *exanastasis* life, He tasted death for every person, and came back from the dead. He was made alive from that death.

Importantly, obtaining rest, or the blessing of our inheritance as a son of God, requires us to be yoked to Christ and to learn and participate in the priesthood that *He* learned.

We too are to 'priest' ourselves as living sacrifices, by the grace of God.

In fact, we learn from Paul in Hebrews Chapter 4 that *grace* is the very element that *binds* us to the Son Himself. Heb 4:16.

If you want to know what the yoke is, that yoke is *grace* coming to you by the Holy Spirit.

And, that grace is the outcome of coming to the throne of grace to obtain help in time of need. The term, 'to help in time of need', literally means 'to bind us with bindings like those of a boat'.

Our discipleship is the daily application of our baptism

Do you see the point? The boat is like an ark and, by grace, you are being bound, or yoked, to Christ, which means that your discipleship is the daily implication of your baptism.

How do we know that? It is because Peter noted that the ark, through which Noah was saved, was a picture of our baptism - our *connection* to the body of Christ.

When we obtain the yoke and are joined to Christ, we are *bound by grace to Him* - which is like being bound to the boat - which is bringing us up out of the waters of judgement. This is being made alive from the dead with Christ so that we can priest ourselves as a living sacrifice; so that we have an eternal work with Christ as priests to His God and Father.

That is quite a mouthful, and I am going to work my way through it.

It is an amazing point - that is what we are bound to. Do you know that that is what you are obtaining when you come to the throne of grace?

It is not helping you to 'do your own thing' - that would cause you to be more laboured and weary.

When you come to the throne of grace, you are obtaining grace to bind you, or to yoke you, to Christ. Then you will find the rest and the blessing that is obtained through service, through obedience that you learn in fellowship with Christ, day to day, as you journey with Him by the Holy Spirit.

Christ was given the tongue of a disciple

Now we will consider the point that we are learning our discipleship *from* Christ, the Disciple Himself.

We do get the point that He desires to be our Lord and Master, and that we would, then, learn from our Lord and Master.

However, it is a different thing again to learn that Jesus, Himself, was a disciple, and that we are learning as disciples from His discipleship.

'Thus says the Lord.' Isa 50:4. The 'Lord' was speaking as recounted in this passage. And this was Jesus, who is Yahweh, speaking. So, it is the *testimony* of Jesus.

'The Lord God has *given* Me.' This is amazing! Jesus Himself was saying, 'I received something from Yahweh *Elohim*.' And what was that? It was 'the tongue of a disciple'. Isa 50:4.

He received the tongue of the *learned*. The term 'learned' literally means 'disciple'.

Yahweh said, 'The Lord God has given Me the tongue of a disciple.'

We receive the same capacity for speaking as Christ received

This is a focal point. We are to *learn from Jesus* what He learned.

And the first thing that He learned is *the words that the Father had given to Him*.

He said, 'I speak nothing except that which the Father has given to Me to speak.' Joh 8:28.

So, He had received the tongue of a disciple. This term, 'given the tongue of the disciple', means that there is a *capacity for speech*, for conversation, that

belongs to disciples, which they receive from God the Father Himself.

It didn't reside in them before that.

Do you see that you do not *have* 'the tongue of a disciple' unless you *receive* it - in the same way that Jesus Himself did not have the tongue of a disciple unless He received it from the Father?

Now, on the one hand that might be jarring for some people to hear. However, I imagine that, for most of us, it is a great relief, because it means that you don't have to conjure up, for yourself, that speech or conversation.

It means that all you have to do is to *receive* it.

And God is *giving* to us the tongue, or the conversation, or the speech, of disciples - the very same speech that Jesus Himself obtained.

Given the tongue of a disciple to speak a word in season to the weary

Why do we receive the tongue of the learned, the tongue of the disciple?

It is 'that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is *weary*'. Isa 50:4.

So, there is a *how to speak*.

And there is an *effect* of that word to another.

So we are receiving the *capacity* to speak as a way of speaking that has an impact on others, particularly the weary, remembering that all those who are weary are living by their own flesh.

When we are yoked to Him, we speak by the faith of the Son

This capacity for speech that we are receiving is called 'faith'.

The capacity to speak is *faith that comes from the word that proceeds* from God, the Father.

As the Scriptures teach us, 'And since we have received the *same spirit of faith*'. 2Co 4:13. Remember that you and I are yoked to Jesus.

The Spirit of faith that He received is the same Spirit of faith that we receive.

'Having received the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak.' 2Co 4:13.

Remember that we are talking about the tongue, the speech, of the disciple.

So, having received faith, I *believe* the word; and the evidence of believing is that I *speak*.

'Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.' 2Co 4:14.

The point is that Jesus was raised from the death of sin and, if you are yoked with Him, because you have received the same Spirit of faith, then you are coming up out of the death of sin with Him.

That is only possible if you are *yoked* to Him, joined to Him, bound to Him, in the *fellowship* of His offering and sufferings.

Speech is our conversation and conduct by faith, in love

'Speech' is our conversation. The word in both the Old Testament and the New Testament for 'conversation' is the same word as for 'conduct'.

'The tongue of the learned', or 'the tongue of the disciple' is our *conversation* and *conduct*, which is *by faith*.

Speech is our conversation and conduct. It should be the expression of the *love* of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Why is that? It is because *faith works by love*.

We receive the love of God poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit enabling our faith, which is demonstrated by the way that we 'speak'; our conversation and our conduct.

What will that conversation and conduct be?

It will be offering, because offering is *love expressed*. It is our willingness to lay down our life to reveal another.

This is 'the tongue of a disciple'. That is very simple, isn't it?

Faith enables us to speak to another in season

Faith enables us to speak a word in season to him who is weary.

I love this point that, in the end – and this is the point of *offering* – we are not receiving that faith for our own sake. The evidence that we have received it is that we are able to minister life to someone else.

Faith enables us to speak a word in season.

What does 'a word in season' sound like?

It sounds like *the word of present truth*.

Do you see that our connection to the apostles' doctrine, which is the word of present truth, is that we've received faith and are able to speak that same word?

A word in season to the weary to yoke them to Christ

We are to speak a word in season to him who is weary - who are the weary? The weary are those who have been born of God - our brethren - but who are *wilting*.

This is indicative of the parable of the grounds again, isn't it? The seed has germinated and life has emerged, but it hasn't borne fruit. The person is not actually exemplifying the culture of fellowship to which they have been connected through birth.

The shoot comes up, but it is vulnerable; it's starting to become weak, because it hasn't put down deep roots; or it is becoming weak because other things are crowding around it and choking it. *These are the wear ones*.

The 'weary' are those who have been born of God, but are wilting. It is the issues of stony and thorny grounds. Why are they stony and thorny? It is because they are *connected to a different conversation*.

If you are yoked to Christ, you are joined to His conversation, which is a conversation of *faith*. It is a conversation of *participation*.

You are finding rest in the midst of your labour.

When a person labours from *their own initiative*, all that happens is that they become fatigued.

They are easily offended and draw back; or they are 'prickly', aggressive, angry and reactive to others. They are fatigued in the way.

There is a word - the word of present truth - that we proclaim and, if they will hear and turn to it, they too will find rest for their souls.

Why? It is because they will be *joined to the same fellowship* from which we are speaking a word through testimony.

The expression of faith by a disciple has an effect on others.

I love this point! It ministers to them ‘the refreshing and rest’ of resurrection life that belongs to those who are yoked to Christ.

When you are yoked to Christ, it doesn’t mean that you will avoid difficulty in life. It means that you will endure it in fellowship with Him.

You, in the midst of pain and difficulty, are obtaining resurrection life.

This is the refreshing and rest that we are able to minister to others.

Disciples participate in the ministry of the body of Christ

While this has a daily implication regarding the way in which we speak and interact with one-another in our houses; it also applies to our participation in body ministry when we gather for communion.

Do you see the point that only *disciples* have a participation in the ministry of the body?

Anything else that is not connected to the body is another ‘conversation’. It’s not by the Spirit at all. It is carnality, isn’t it?

The connection to the body of Christ, which is the expression of our discipleship, is a *priestly* work. And that priestly work is a ministry to one another as part of the body.

Remember that it is part of the ‘voice’ of Christ, the great High Priest, which is as ‘many waters’.

Making disciples

Here is another key point which I’ve already mentioned. By speaking as disciples we *make disciples of others*.

We do this by *connecting* them to, and encouraging them in, the very fellowship of which we are a part. This is the great commission.

An awakened ear – alive from the dead

Let’s continue with our Isaiah passage. The next verse is, ‘He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to *hear* as a disciple’. Isa 50:4.

The first point is that I have received the tongue or speech of a disciple.

The second point is Jesus Himself saying, ‘The Father has awakened Me morning by morning; He awakens My ear to hear as the learned’.

Fundamental to discipleship is the ability to hear what the Spirit is saying.

That is obvious, isn’t it? How can you *learn* if you don’t *hear*?

So we have to have our ears *awakened*.

The Scriptures use the term ‘asleep’ to describe being dead. There are many examples of that, some of which I have listed here.

‘For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, *fell asleep*, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption.’ Act 13:36.

‘After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have *fallen asleep*.’ 1Co 15:6.

‘Then also those who have *fallen asleep* in Christ have perished.’ 1Co 15:18.

‘Saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers *fell asleep*, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation”.’ 2Pe 3:4.

These Scriptures all talk about people who ‘*fell asleep*’; that is, they died.

When this passage says that He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear, it means that it is being *made alive from the dead*.

Do you see that an ‘awakened ear’ speaks of one that is asleep because it is dull and unable to hear? The *Father* Himself awakens it and makes it alive from the dead; from the death of sin.

For us, this is possible only through our connection to the offering and sufferings of Christ through baptism.

Discipleship is a daily - which means, morning by morning - implication of baptism. He awakens my ear; He awakens it morning by morning; it’s a *daily* implication.

For our ‘ear to be awakened’, it has to be ‘made alive from the dead’, and that is possible only through our connection to the crucified body of Christ, which we join by baptism.

In this regard, Paul said, ‘Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death [into being ‘asleep’], that just as Christ was raised

from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

‘For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death [united; joined and held together in the likeness of His death], certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His [wakefulness!] resurrection [awake or alive].’ Rom 6:4-5.

This is an ear that is being awoken morning by morning!

Yoked to Christ; crucified with Him

To be united in the likeness of His death and resurrection is to be crucified, *or nailed*, with Him.

Here is another beautiful point. We have talked about grace. Remember that He, by the grace of God, *tasted death*. Grace is joining us to Christ.

But, remember, the *yoke* between the two oxen is a piece of *wood*. This joining is our being *nailed with Christ* to the cross, *nailed in Him*.

That is the yoke. Do you see that we are *bound by grace* to the cross with Christ?

To be united in the likeness of His death and resurrection is to be crucified, or nailed, with Him!

‘I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and ... I live by the faith of the Son of God.’ Gal 2:20.

Do you see that Paul was referring to *discipleship*?

The first implication of being nailed with Christ is to have our *ear* nailed to the door of the house. This is because Christ is the Door.

Do you see the point? If you want to come up from the death, or from being asleep to being awake, you have to be joined to Christ, who is coming up from the death of our sin.

That means that you have to be nailed to the cross, which is the yoke that we are joined to by grace.

The first evidence of us being crucified with Christ is that *our ear is pierced through and nailed to Him!*

That is to have a ‘circumcised’ ear - an ear that is open, or awake, or back from the death of our own understanding.

Love for our household

‘But if a servant plainly says [are you a servant of Christ, a servant of God?], ‘I love my master, I love my wife, and I love my children; I will not go out free.’ Exo 21:5.

Do you love your wife, husbands? Do you love your children? Do you love Christ as your Master?

Well, what is your confession? Is it that your life is your own to do whatever you want?

Or, are you saying, ‘No, I will not go free; *I will be nailed to Him?*’ That is the expression of *love* for your household.

This is such a precious Scripture that belongs to those who are receiving the blessing of their inheritance.

If you love your family and love Christ your Master, your confession, not drawn by anyone else, the expression of your faith, will be, ‘I will not go free. This is where I belong. This is where I serve. I will not go free!’

In the parable, his master had not demanded this from him. In fact, this was said at the end of his obligatory service when he was allowed to go free. He was under no compulsion. No-one had taken dominion over his faith.

He himself said, ‘No, I love my master, and I love my wife and my children; the blessing that belongs to our household is only found if we do not go free from this house.’

Connected to the stewards, the doorkeepers, of God’s house

So what happened? The Master, who is Jesus Himself, would bring him to the judges.

Who are the ‘judges’? It is those who are set over His house; the stewards of the house.

Do you see that if you are going to be nailed to Christ, the Door, you have to have a connection to those who are the judges in the house?

It is Jesus, Himself, who brings you to them. If you have a problem with them, you are saying to the Master, ‘I will not go with You.’

‘Then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door [the door is Christ], or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl [which is like a nail]; and he shall serve him forever.’ Exo 21:6.

That is being a 'priest to our God and Saviour forever'. That is discipleship.

That is wonderful! That is where you are yoked with Christ. The beginning point is a pierced-through ear, which is coming up from the death of your own understanding, able to hear the treasure which is the riches of the word of the wisdom of God coming down from heaven.

It is *the word of the will of God* for your life.

Jesus said, 'I am the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.' Joh 10:9.

To 'find pasture' means that you are going to be *fed*.

To be 'joined to the Door' is to be connected in fellowship with the doorkeepers, who are also co-crucified with Christ. In fact, this is the foundation of their ministry as presbyters.

Like Paul, they minister the word of the cross because of their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Their testimony, like Paul's, is that Christ is publicly 'portrayed as crucified among those who hear the word'.

That is because they are joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. And, as they are ministering *from* that fellowship, Christ is being publicly portrayed as crucified.

Do you see that Christ can only be publicly portrayed as crucified if the one who is proclaiming Him has been nailed to the cross with Him?

The work of doorkeepers is to ensure that the sheep of Christ's sheepfold are able to hear His voice, which is His word. They are *fed* in due season.

Remember that this is the apostles' doctrine. It is the word of present truth.

'It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.' Mar 13:34.

He is setting these doorkeepers at the entrance of the house to watch.

'To him [that is, to Jesus] the doorkeeper opens, so that the sheep hear His [Jesus] voice [t the sheep hear Jesus' voice because the doorkeeper

opened the door to Him?]; and he calls his own sheep *by name* [that name is your sonship; that's your inheritance] and leads them out.' Joh 10:3.

The doorkeepers are opening the door to Christ so that He can speak His word to every person, calling them to be yoked with Him.

He leads them out as those who are yoked with Him, so that they can do their priestly work.

The Spirit Himself enables them to abide with Christ so that they need no-one to teach them how to priest themselves as a living sacrifice.

That simply means that no-one is compelling them to or defining for them their participation.

Rather, there is a context for their participation and, by the Spirit, they say that this is where they belong and this is where they make offering.

No-one is teaching that except the Spirit, who is teaching it as they abide with Christ and learn how to priest themselves.

His mercies are new every morning – our ear awakened

The awakening of our ear morning by morning is 'the mercies of God' which are new every morning.

I love this point. Remember that He said that He awakens my ear 'morning by morning'. What else is new morning by morning? It is the mercies of God!

The awakening of our ear morning by morning is the mercies of God that are new every morning.

It is the application of the water and the blood. Remember that these are the two elements that came from Christ's side after He had been lifted up and His heart had been pierced by the soldier's spear.

It is the application of water and blood in our lives, which has been ministered to us from the communion meal; it is actually the *word* through *the ministry of the Holy Spirit*.

He is awakening us morning by morning, so being awake is being *connected to mercy*. Being awakened in this manner is the reality of repentance and faith as foundations in our lives.

We awake from the death of our own way when we hear the word and turn in response to the Lord.

We let go of what lies behind us and press forward, by faith, to what lies ahead in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Liberty to participate in fellowship

What does it 'look like' to have our ear nailed to the door of the sheepfold as disciples?

Does it mean that we have lost all initiative and all control? Not at all. Remember that Paul said to the Corinthians that no-one takes dominion over our faith.

It means that we have complete liberty to offer ourselves; to *present* ourselves.

To have our ear nailed to the door of the sheepfold as disciples means that, by faith, we are *given to* the fourfold foundations of fellowship that are established by the word of God, and are stewarded by the presbytery.

Remember that *their* word, which *is* the word of Christ that they have been given to proclaim, establishes the ground of our fellowship, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

And that ground of fellowship has four dimensions to it: the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers.

If we are joined to Christ, and have had our ear nailed to the Door so that we can hear what the Father is saying to us, by faith, we will *participate* in that fellowship.

This is the context in which we *present ourselves*, as priests, to priest ourselves as a living sacrifice.

'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [of worship].' Rom 12:1.

This is a *fellowship* reality.

Discipleship – our connection to the body of Christ

Here is another key point. A priest functions in a temple.

You can't be a priest outside a temple, can you? This means that we have no discipleship or priestly work outside of the fellowship of the body of Christ, which is the church.

'Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.' Eph 2:19.

Are you a member of the household of God? Of course that is true, and we can testify to that.

'Having been *built on* [what?] *the foundation of the apostles and prophets* [this is the word of present truth that coming from those Scriptures by the Spirit], Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone.' Eph 2:20.

'In whom the whole building, being fitted together [this is the Father placing every person as He so desires], grows into a holy temple for the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.' Eph 2:21-22.

This means that *priesting ourselves* (We have to 'priest' in the temple, don't we?) requires a *practical and committed connection* to the body of Christ where the Father has placed us.

A closed ear – the disobedient

'The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away.' Isa 50:5.

Obviously, Christ was not disobedient to the Father. He was not rebellious; nor did He turn away.

Likewise, if we are those whose ears have been opened by the Father as we are crucified with Christ, we must not be rebellious or turn away from the word and the fellowship from which it proceeds.

The 'rebellious' simply means people who are 'disobedient'. They have rebelled against a direction. This is the direction of Christ Himself.

The rebellious are those who are disobedient to Christ and to the messengers whom He sends. They are 'prickly' towards the presbytery and the word that they proclaim.

They maintain the right to reinterpretation of the word, and to scepticism, as though that demeanour of being sceptical is a way of assuring their own security.

Obviously, if you do that, you are endeavouring to save your own life.

By the means of maintaining the right to reinterpretation of the word and scepticism, they keep themselves at a *distance* from the presbytery.

So, obviously, their ears are not nailed to the Door, which is Christ, and to the doorkeepers who are at the Door.

They keep themselves at a distance from the presbytery and have qualified (or, conditional engagement with) the four foundations of fellowship in the church.

If that is our demeanour, we are unable to have 'hands laid on us'.

This means that we cannot be set apart, or commended, for a priestly work within the context of the body of Christ.

In this regard, we recall the words of David.

'The sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands.' 2Sa 23:6.

Do you see that where Jesus was saying, 'I was not rebellious nor did I turn away', He was saying that He wasn't 'prickly'?

It meant that hands could be laid on Him, and He could be set apart for His priestly work by God the Father.

If we are not being rebellious and are not turning away, we too are not 'thorny' - which means that hands can be laid on us. No-one wants to lay hands on a prickle, do they? All that they will get is pain.

When hands can be laid on us, we can be *commended*, set apart for, engaged in, a priestly work in a temple, which is His body.

Another 'conversation'

Generally, these ones are unable to speak a word to the weary. That's because they are weary themselves, isn't it?

But they often have much to say. These ones entertain and promote an alternative conversation to the one that is enabled by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ.

This conversation will be critical, encompassing corruption in the name of love. It is inclusive of all manner of practices.

These ones will be agitated, deceitful, destructive, speaking evil of the presbytery.

A few sessions ago, I talked about 'keeping our heart with all diligence' and 'putting perverse lips away from us'.

The putting away of perverse lips, or deceit, from your mouth is not just words from your own mouth; it actually means not *engaging* in these deceitful conversations.

So, when you start to hear it, you can testify of your connection to Christ, which is a word to the weary.

But you are not badgering a person. We share our testimony and we leave people with the accountability for their own hearing of that.

Do you see the point? 'Putting away deceit' is putting it out of our own mouth. But it is also disengaging from a conversation that is not the conversation of faith.

Daily fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings

The next element of the discipleship is, 'I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.' Isa 50:6.

This refers to *daily fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ*.

Remember that this passage refers to where He was being chastened with rods in the court of Caiaphas, and where His beard was being plucked out (and whatever the equivalent is if you don't have a beard).

'I did not hide My face from shame and spitting'.

We are not *ashamed* of the gospel. Don't be ashamed of your testimony or from the reviling that happens when you stand in your testimony.

Daily fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ is fundamental to discipleship.

As Jesus said, 'If anyone desires to come after Me [as a disciple], let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me'. Mat 16:24.

The nature of discipleship

What does a disciple 'look like'?

Discipleship belongs to *every individual*.

However, we are also to be discipleship *houses*. This is a beautiful point. It's not only referring to every individual.

And, *children*, this belongs to you too to be a disciple.

But it also belongs to us as households. We are to be discipleship households. That's what we read about the ear being pierced, where it says that if you love your master, your wife and your children, then you will do this.

The blessing that we are obtaining through discipleship, as we are yoked with Christ, belongs to every family through Christ.

Do you see the point? We are discipleship houses because, as disciples, we are obtaining the blessing that *God promised to every family*.

Practically, discipleship is a commitment individually, and as households, to the four foundations or graces of fellowship: the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers.

The demeanour of faith

Our discipleship is not demonstrated through our *compliance* to a program as though we've just come under obligation. Rather, it is through our demeanour, which is the demeanour of faith.

The demeanour of faith is obvious and impossible to feign.

When your back is being struck and your beard is being plucked out, and you are getting spat at and humiliated, it is very hard to feign faith, isn't it?

We have to receive faith by hearing and, by faith, continue in the fellowship of the offering and sufferings of Christ where we are obtaining that resurrection life. We cannot feign resurrection life.

What does the demeanour of faith 'look like'?

It looks like a person who *participates* with *gladness* and *simplicity of heart*. This was evident with the early disciples.

Eating with gladness and simplicity of faith

'They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.' Act 2:42.

'So continuing daily [remember that this is 'ears awakened morning by morning'] with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.' Act 2:46.

That 'eating of the food' is hospitality from house to house; but it is also the food of the *communion*. It is the *word* that we are partaking of for life.

And how are we 'eating' it? Happily, with gladness and simplicity of heart.

We are putting away all of the complex engagements that we have with the word at times.

These complexities get us into all sorts of stress; but, once we turn from them, they are gone instantly, because they are part of a delusion.

Our conduct and conversation

'Praising God and having favour with all the people.' Act 2:47.

Then we have the testimony of those who are part of the presbytery who are disciples themselves.

'Our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted [this is our speech, by faith] ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom *but by the grace of God*, and more abundantly toward you. 2Co 1:12.