

What manner of people ought we to be?

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Notes prepared in fellowship with Victor Hall for the communion ministry, 20 Sept 2020

Speaking of the coming day of the Lord, the apostle Peter declared, 'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.' 2Pe 3:10-11.

As we consider the season that we are living in, there is an urgency in the Spirit for us to understand how we are to walk as those who are blameless before Him. In every generation, those who live by the faith of the Son of God are able to overcome the world and to live without fault before the Lord. We read in the book of Revelation that we overcome by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by laying down our lives to the death. Rev 12:11. In this present time, the Lord is restoring His lampstand churches by the word that He is proclaiming through messengers in His right hand. However, as we heard last week, we are quickly approaching the time for the saints to receive and possess the kingdom of God on earth. At this time, the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, and there will be great revival among all the nations of the earth. As this season draws near, we must be diligent to present ourselves for fellowship in His offering so that our conscience can be cleansed, and we can acceptably serve the living God. Heb 9:14.

Chosen in Him to be holy and blameless

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul plainly identified what manner of people we should be. He explained that we have been chosen, in Christ, from before the foundation of the world, to be *holy and blameless*. He wrote, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.' Eph 1:3-4. The apostle Peter drew our attention to the same imperative in his first epistle, writing, 'But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy".' 1Pe 1:15-16. Writing to the Philippian believers, Paul exhorted them to be '*blameless* and harmless children of God, *without fault* in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation'. Php 2:15.

To be 'blameless', or without fault, does not refer to the sinless perfection that is ours in the new heavens and new earth. Rather, to walk as those who are blameless means that we are overcoming Satan and the world as we journey each day in fellowship with Christ. In our meditation today, we will consider how Christ has *already* overcome by the seven wounding events of His offering journey. As we are joined to the fellowship of this offering, His blood is sprinkled on our hearts, and His life is given to us to be our life. This miraculous transaction establishes believers in every generation as holy and blameless before the Lord.

Joined to Christ's overcoming through seven wounding events

Christ overcame Satan and the world through His offering journey from Gethsemane to the cross. As Christ 'priested' Himself as a living sacrifice, His precious blood was shed through seven wounding events. It was sprinkled on Him for the atonement of our sins; and through every wound He was *overcoming* sin, death, the world, and principalities and powers. Christ, as the Son of Man, journeyed in full faith, strengthened by the Holy Spirit to accomplish our redemption and to endure the circumcision that we needed. His circumcision was for us and was necessary in order that self-centeredness could be cut from our lives. We will briefly summarise the seven wounding events of the cross and identify the specific aspects of overcoming that we attain as we journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering.

Christ's offering journey began in Gethsemane where *the sin of our wilful self-centeredness was overcome* as He prayed, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42. We have no capacity in our flesh to pray this prayer. And yet, as we join Christ in the fellowship of His prayer, His obedience is transferred to us; and the *temptation to live by self-determination is overcome in us*. We participate with Christ in this way by praying in the Spirit. By this means, we are receiving Christ's capacity for obedience, and are able to walk according to the will of the Father each day.

The second wounding event suffered by Christ was His 'bruising for our iniquities'. As Jesus endured this circumcising pain, He was *overcoming the self-motivated love and ideals* that reside within our heart, which are not expressions of the love of God. As it was for the disciple Peter, our hearts can be circumcised from this fleshly propensity, and we can receive from Christ His faith-righteousness that works by the love of God. In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul testified of his desire to be delivered from his own righteousness to 'that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith'. Php 3:9.

As Christ was beaten with rods in the presence of the high priest, He was being 'chastised for our peace'. Isa 53:5. He was disciplined at the Father's hand so that we could become partakers of His holiness and begin to demonstrate the peaceable fruits of righteousness that belong to firstfruits Christians. As those who are living by the faith of the Son of God, we are able to set our mind on participating in this element of Christ's overcoming, and to know the joy of becoming a son of God. This doesn't mean that our experiences will necessarily be pleasant. As Paul reminded us, 'Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.' Heb 12:11. It is through our fellowship in this third wounding event that we find *the capacity to live as a disciple of Christ*. For the joy of our sonship, which is the peaceable fruit of righteousness, we continue by faith in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. We are enabled to live obediently as a son of God, bearing the fruits of righteousness that come through Jesus. Php 1:11.

The many and varied *personality flaws that exist within mankind were overcome* in Christ as He was 'scourged' with the cat o' nine tails under the direction of Pilate. The blood that flowed from this wounding event brings healing and deliverance from these frailties, which are the consequence of pursuing identity projections rather than our sanctification as a son of God. For some, these frailties manifest as a propensity toward anxiety and depression. Others may have a predisposition toward laziness and a lack of motivation,

or a tendency to compulsive or driven behaviors. Regardless of the specific nature of these frailties, the apostle Paul described them as 'lameness', and noted the need for each of us to find healing and recovery through the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Heb 12:12-13. As we walk each day with Christ, we are joined to this overcoming and are able to live as the son whom He named us to be. For this reason, Paul exhorted us to 'not despise the chastening of the Lord nor to be discouraged when we are rebuked by Him. For whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives'. Heb 12:5-6.

As Christ's head was wounded by the 'crown of thorns', He was *overcoming our pride and projections*. The apostle John identified these fallen modes, and the exercise of our fleshly wisdom, as 'the pride of life'. 1Jn 2:16. As we are joined to this particular aspect of Christ's circumcision, the pride we have in our own abilities and strength is being overcome, and we are being sustained, instead, by Christ's strength. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to frustrate the activities that we pursue in the strength of our own capacity. Like Paul, we must learn that His grace is sufficient for us, and His strength is made perfect in weakness. 2Co 12:9. This strength comes from the resurrection life of Christ that is in His blood.

Christ was 'pierced through for our transgressions' by the nails that fastened His hands and feet to the cross. Isa 53:5. Through this wounding event, He *overcame every self-sourced activity we engage in that we believe defines* who we are, or who we would like to be. This includes all the 'good works' that spring from our self-righteousness. These good works are not the will of the Father. Rather, they are based in fleshly wisdom that is from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The apostle James taught that this 'wisdom' is earthly, sensual and demonic. Jas 3:15. As we journey with Christ, we are joined to this overcoming and are able to put off the dead works of the flesh that are motivated by our other law.

Finally, after Christ had breathed His last, a spear was thrust into His heart. This seventh and final wound opened the way for the sons of men to join the fellowship of Christ's offering. Significantly, Paul identified that it was the sprinkling of Christ's blood *upon the heart that recovers a person to their predestination as a son of God* and grants them a *participation in His priestly ministry*. Heb 10:19-22. It was for this purpose that Christ was set forth, before the eyes of all, as a mercy seat. Rom 3:21. As we are joined heart to heart with Christ, the Mercy Seat, and our hearts are sprinkled by His blood, our sin is being removed and we are receiving His life. It is *exanastasis*, which is the resurrection life of Christ in our mortal bodies, that enables us to overcome. This process is called the 'new and living way'.

The blood of Christ cleanses our conscience so that the motivations of our life are not sourced in our own perspective of what is good and evil. Heb 9:14. Instead, we are able to live by 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. Rom 8:1-2. Our mandate to serve in this way is symbolised in the Scriptures as 'priestly garments'. We are able to keep our garments white, as they are washed in the blood of the Lamb. The book of Revelation identifies overcomers who live according to this way as having 'washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'. Rev 7:14. These ones are delivered from the coming judgements of God on the kingdom of man, and are enabled to overcome through their ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Rev 7:15-16.

Noah, Daniel and Job – blameless in their generation

Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord declared, ‘Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. Even *if* these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver *only* themselves by their righteousness.’ Eze 14:13-14. The Lord identified Noah, Daniel and Job as ones who would escape the coming judgement because they were righteous, or *blameless*, in their generation. As we identified earlier, to be ‘blameless’ is to be joined to the timeless provision of Christ’s offering on the cross, through which He overcame the world. It is helpful to consider the example of these three men, and the specific points of overcoming that were realised by each one.

Noah overcame the world

The apostle Peter described Noah as ‘a preacher of righteousness’, and noted that he escaped the devastating flood that had come ‘on the world of the ungodly’. 2Pe 2:5. In describing him this way, Peter was identifying that Noah had been found ‘blameless’ in the midst of his own crooked and perverse generation and had *overcome the world* and its destruction. Significantly, Paul identified that it was *by faith* that Noah prepared the ark for the saving of his household, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Heb 11:7. In the same way, the Lord is preserving us in the midst of our generation as we join Him through baptism and our ongoing fellowship in the communion meal. 1Pe 3:21. By receiving and believing God’s word, Noah received the faith of the Son of God and was connected to the fellowship of Christ’s once-for-all offering. Through this fellowship, he was joined to Christ’s overcoming and was established as holy and blameless before the Lord.

Job overcame Satan

The book of Job recorded the Lord’s testimony concerning Job to Satan: ‘Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause”.’ Job 2:3. This is an amazing commendation that Job received from the Lord! Satan presumed that Job would forsake his integrity at the point where his life was under threat. He said to God, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’ Job 2:4-5.

In response to Job’s experience of intense suffering, his wife said, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ Job 2:9. Job’s refusal to *blame God* demonstrated his *overcoming of the Devil and his schemes*. He said, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ Job 2:10. Job responded to his experience of suffering by worshipping God. He said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’ Job 1:21. This response of offering worship demonstrates Job’s connection to the one offering of Christ.

The experiences of Job at the hand of Satan became for him a very tangible fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. The devastation, humiliation and pain he experienced became, by faith, part of his participation in Christ’s offering and sufferings. Through these events, Job was able to testify of the illumination that he had received, and to cry out to the Lord

for mercy. In response to the word of the Lord, Job declared, 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore, I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.' Job 42:5-6. Concerning the perseverance of Job, James noted that the end intended by the Lord was to *show His mercy and compassion*. Jas 5:11. By this mercy, Job was able to join the fellowship of Christ's offering, and so *overcome Satan*.

Daniel overcame the flesh

Concerning the prophet Daniel, the Scriptures recorded that no 'charge or fault' could be found in him, 'because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him'. Dan 6:4. Through his devotion to prayer, Daniel received the wisdom that is from above. As he continued in this fellowship of prayer, joined to the offering of Christ, he was enabled to *overcome the fleshly wisdom* that is from beneath, and to walk instead in simplicity and godly sincerity in the midst of his generation. 2Co 1:12. This wisdom that is from above is given freely to all who ask (by prayer), and is 'first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy'. Jas 3:17.

The fellowship of prayer is fundamental to overcoming the flesh and walking by the Spirit. Through prayer in the Spirit, a believer sets their mind on walking according to the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Paul taught us that it is the Holy Spirit who joins us to the fellowship of Christ's prayer. Rom 8:26. Through this fellowship, the blood that was sprinkled on Christ's body when He prayed by Eternal Spirit is sprinkled upon us. By this means, His life is becoming our life, and we are overcoming the propensity to walk by the flesh.

Walking each day in the fellowship of Christ's offering

As we summarised earlier in this paper, Christ overcame and was perfected through the seven wounding events of His offering journey that caused the shedding of His blood. In this way, He has become the author of eternal salvation to all who *obey His word*. Heb 5:9. Christ ministers this word to us as the bread and wine of communion. Heb 5:10. We apprehend these seven sprinklings through our ongoing fellowship in the communion meal.

The apostle Paul taught us that we eat the bread of communion in faith for our *ongoing* participation in His body. Furthermore, he explained that we drink the wine of communion, which is His blood, in faith for our *ongoing* participation in His offering. In this regard, we understand that the word and power of the New Covenant is applied to our lives *by the blood of Christ*. Paul said that by this one offering, 'He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified'. The life and overcoming that is multiplied through this offering is ministered by Christ to every son of God in the word of present truth at the communion table.

Jesus explained that as we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we abide in Him and receive eternal life. He said, 'Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.' Joh 6:54-56. It is in this context of abiding that we are established as 'holy and blameless' before Him. Eph 1:3-4. As we abide in Christ, we will have confidence, and will not be ashamed as the time of His appearing draws near. 1Jn 2:28. Jude encouraged us to diligence in relation to abiding in Christ, noting that, through this fellowship, we are kept

from stumbling and are presented as faultless before the Lord. Jud 1:24. Further to this he wrote, 'But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life'. Jud 1:20-21.

Because God is rich in mercy, we have the opportunity to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, and so, to be established in His overcoming. Eph 2:4-5. The Scriptures teach us that these mercies are new every morning. Lam 3:22-23. This means that as we engage in the provision of Christ's offering every day, we can walk as one who is *blameless before Him*. In this regard, the apostle Paul exhorted us, '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*. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Rom 12:1-2.

Conclusion

We began our meditation today with the question, 'What manner of people ought we to be?' The apostle Peter posed this question as he wrote concerning the ultimate conclusion of the old creation in judgement. As we consider this present age and give attention to what the Spirit is saying to the churches, the Lord is urging us to be firmly established in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Let us give heed to the encouragement of the apostle Peter, who wrote, 'Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless'. 2Pe 3:14.