

RECEIVING THE PRESBYTERY

Peter Hay, prepared for word ministry, 10 January 2021

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

Today we will continue to consider the nature of fellowship in the presbytery.

We will also look at how we receive the presbytery into our houses.

We have been considering the way in which fellowship *should* operate within a presbytery.

I would like to begin by discussing something of a troubling mode of, or approach to, fellowship in the presbytery and, indeed, to ministry in the church – the mode of *empowerment*.

Authority in the church – offering, not empowerment

‘Empowerment’ happens when a person *presumes* to exert authority *over* others or to exercise ministry initiatives because of their *connection* to a graced messenger or because of their membership of the presbytery.

When a person operates by empowerment, their confidence to give directions and to speak into the lives of others is because of their *proximity* to a graced messenger or because of the authority that they appropriate through their *association* with the presbytery.

They presume that operating within the presbytery gives them license to exercise authority or to give directions within the church.

Now, there *should be* direction and authority exercised in the church. We cannot ‘throw out’ the necessity for authority and direction given to the church. Christ said that this needs to happen – but it should *not* be by empowerment.

We need to understand that the exercise, or expression, of authority is *by offering*, not by empowerment.

That is our point as we begin this session today.

Those operating by empowerment cause injury

Those who operate in this ‘empowered’ mode endeavour to share what they perceive as power and authority with those to whom God *has* given authority and grace. They may also appropriate that perceived power to themselves.

They do this for the purpose of finding *themselves* and verifying their identity through influence in the church.

This is a *corrupt* way of relating in the church that, firstly, causes *injury* to those *who are to bring illumination* as *stars* in the right hand of Christ. This is an amazing principle!

It is easy to see that, also, if someone is exercising a corrupt mode of ministry in the church, those who are *receiving* their ‘ministry’ are subject to that corruption.

‘Cleaving with flattery’

The Scriptures explain how this principle of empowerment actually does injury to *the one whose authority is being misappropriated*.

The prophet Daniel described this way of operating as ‘cleaving with flattery to those with understanding’.

He wrote, ‘And those of the people who understand shall instruct many [We have previously discussed how this describes the operation of a star, an illuminator.]; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering [This is their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, by which they *obtain* their understanding – the culture of offering.].’ Dan 11:33.

‘Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help [*exanastasis*]; but many shall join with them by *intrigue*.’ Dan 11:34.

That term, ‘join with them by intrigue’, literally means ‘*cleave to them with deceit*’.

‘And some of those of understanding shall fall [by this principle of ‘cleaving’], to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.’ Dan 11:35.

Loyalty is not obedience

Now, for those who operate by this principle of ‘empowerment’, their deception of those who have ascension gift grace among the presbytery is not deliberate, in the first instance.

They are *themselves* deceived and deluded in thinking that their *loyalty* to these graced ones, and their loyalty to the presbytery, is *fellowship*.

Now, of course, we *are* to be loyal!

But these ones are deceived in believing that their loyalty takes precedence over obedience.

This is the point! Loyalty is *not* obedience by faith.

The end of our obedience is in the hand of another

Obedience is demonstrated by *offering*. Offering is *revealing another*. Further, obedience is demonstrated by offering, where the *end* of our offering is *in the hand of another*.

This was Jesus' mode when He emptied Himself and came in the appearance of a man and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Php 2:5-8.

The reason that Paul connected this to the cross is that, when Christ was on the cross, the end of His death was *not in His own hand* – it was in the Father's hand.

This is what we mean by 'obedience'.

Obedience is not loyalty. Obedience is that we are *laying our lives down* to reveal *another*, and the end of our offering is *not in our own hand*. It is in the hand of another.

This means that if we have received a direction from someone, and are to reveal *them*, we will be motivated to '*lay back*' that initiative to the one from whom we have received it, to ensure that what we are revealing is what they have *asked for*.

In this way, it will be multiplied.

And the end of it is not in our own hand. It is not as though we say, 'This is as far as I will offer; this is what the offering will "look like".'

It is actually that we are *completely committed* to the end of our offering being in the hand of another, in exactly the same way that Christ's offering was in the hand of the Father.

True authority gives account

This means that we '*lay back*' what we receive to the one from whom we received it, *giving an account*.

A person who operates by empowerment, assumes authority and exercises authority, *without giving account* for that authority.

They simply misappropriate it, directing it towards others, and giving *no account back* to the one *from whom they have taken*. As a result, others are injured.

However, importantly, as we noted, the person who actually *is* accountable for caring for the sheep also *bears the consequence*. The person whose authority has been *misappropriated* is being injured by the '*cleaving with deceit*'.

Misappropriated authority - the deceit of projection

Those who operate by empowerment *presume* to take relational initiatives from the basis of their *delusion*, which is associated with their shame-based *projections*.

That is quite a mouthful! However, it means that the person, because they have a limited sense of themselves and their understanding, or are *projecting* to be something that they are not, gains a *sense of validity*, and their projection gains some 'substance' through connection to a graced messenger or through a position in the presbytery.

That projection covers the shame of their *self-definition*. This is idolatry, isn't it? It is the nakedness of their shame.

They presume to take initiatives that are motivated by these projections. The initiatives themselves give some sort of 'credence' to that projection, and are always directed toward others whom they consider to be *subordinate* to them. These initiatives are always directed *away from* where the authority of Christ *should* be expressed and *laid down*.

More often than not, the person *does not give an account back* to the presbytery. If they do, it is a carefully crafted statement that supports or *galvanises* their *projection*, an embellishment of the truth, to maintain the 'integrity' of their projection.

This is not Spirit and truth, is it?

It is certainly not *in one Spirit*; and it is certainly not *true*, because it is motivated by deceit – and that deceit is the *covering of a projection*.

The point is that they actually believe that their projection is *true*. The first point of deceit is that they *deceive themselves*.

They are deluded into thinking that their projection, and their loyalty to the presbytery, is *fellowship*, when it is not.

Hiding from the light to conceal corruption

This way of living is according to *the law of sin* and inevitably gives rise to *corruption*. There is simply no avoidance of it.

If we operate by that principle – which is actually the same principle by which *Satan* operates, which is why it is the law of sin – it gives rise to corruption.

Then, the deceit that has not been deliberate begins to *become* deliberate, in order for the person to *conceal* the corruption from the *fellowship of light* where that darkness can be made to flee away.

These ones endeavour to maintain their acceptable appearance in and among the presbytery or the church.

They love the *darkness* of their projection more than the light, because their deeds are evil. Joh 3:19. This is the principle of empowerment.

True authority and ministry is by offering in a fellowship

Now, it is *not* that there is no authority in the church or that overseers within the presbytery and the church should not give directions or exercise their ministry – either in the presbytery or in the local settings as a lamp expression.

There *should be* authority and there *should be* direction given to the church, because it *comes from Christ*.

However, this cannot be by *empowerment*; it has to be by *offering*.

Authority and ministry expression should be by *faith* – the faith that comes by hearing the word – through *offering*, in a *fellowship*.

Functioning by ‘empowerment’ is disobedience – answered by repentance

In this regard, there will be some men who are *supposed* to be overseers in a local setting, who choose – or confuse – empowerment over offering because of lameness, fear, laziness or blindness.

And there may be others in a presbytery, who also operate by empowerment, who should *not* actually be there *at all*. They are presuming, like *Satan*, to be something that they are not.

Those who *are* supposed to be overseers and elders in every place, who *choose* to operate by empowerment, not by offering, are actually *disobedient*.

They choose or confuse empowerment over offering because of *lameness* – ‘a lamp under a bed’ – of *fear*; of *laziness* – basic, relational laziness; they *will not* present themselves; or because of *blindness*.

We know that the answer to this is *repentance*.

When one turns to the Lord, the veil of our projections is taken away. 2Co 3:16.

How ‘empowerment’ operates

Now, when empowerment is the basis for a person’s engagement in the administration of the church, they will endeavour to impose upon *others* the direction that *they have received* from a person whom they consider to be ‘above them’ in the perceived ‘peck order’.

This is how empowerment operates. They *presume* to exercise authority or to give directions to people, which they have received from another. They view it as a ‘peck order’.

Remember that there *is* an *order of grace*, but it operates by *offering*.

The mode of empowerment in His administration is *not* by offering! The empowered person takes a direction, presuming that that direction now *belongs to them*, and gives that direction to *others*. They exercise that authority because of some perceived difference in *power*.

Their approach will be similar to the way in which worldly businesses or governments operate.

That is how they function, isn’t it? There are those who make the decisions in a committee – they set a policy. Then there are managers, who are responsible for executing that policy. Under managers, there are subordinates who actually implement the policy; and so on.

This is the way in which a worldly business or organisation operates; and Jesus said, ‘It is *not* to be like that among you.’

Authority as a servant, not a benefactor

Jesus said this to His disciples, who would be the twelve apostles, who were *the authority* of the church. He said that His authority has to function in a particular way.

‘Now there was also a dispute among them.’
Luk 22:24.

This is classic, isn't it! Wherever 'empowerment' operates, there will be all sorts of *comparisons* happening; and it will give rise to *disputes* and arguments over interpretations and 'who should be doing what'.

Often, this will manifest as 'demarcation disputes' over who is responsible for what.

This dispute occurred at the last supper. It is amazing – it occurred right in the middle of the most amazing offering of all history, both beforehand and afterwards!

‘Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.’

I don't know that they were simply arguing over, for example, who was the 'best disciple' after three years! I suspect that they were arguing about who the ones were to give *directions*. What was the order of authority?

‘And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles [going straight to the top!] exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors’. [So, each level of authority is a ‘benefacting’ action.]

“But not so among you; on the contrary [or we could say that it is completely *opposite*], he who is the greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves”.’ Luk 22:25-27.

True authority serves the table of the Lord, laying down its life

Jesus was demonstrating the way in which apostolic administration should function. It is by *servicing the table*, so that those who are eating and drinking of it are *joined to a fellowship*.

This was the table of the Lord. Jesus Himself served this table, enabling all those around it to *eat, drink and participate in the fellowship of the offering* that He was about to accomplish.

A person who *serves* is one who *speaks by faith*, aren't they?

‘Speaking’ is our *conversation* and our *conduct*. So, when Jesus said, ‘I am among you as One who

serves’, He was saying, ‘This is how I speak by faith.’

A person who *serves* is one who *speaks by faith*. This speech operates by *laying down our lives to reveal another*.

This is how Christ served, and *how He calls the overseers of His church to serve tables*.

Deliverance from immaturity; maintaining fellowship and obedience

An overseer or elder who is *not* established in *first love* as part of the presbytery will inevitably function as a ‘benefactor’ within the local congregation of which they are part. They cannot do anything else.

To serve as Christ served is *contrary to our fleshly thinking*; it is a *spiritual reality*. It is actually only possible *by the Holy Spirit*.

We must be delivered from our immature tendencies to ‘cleave to the messenger with deceit’.

The point is that we *all* will have this propensity, unless we are *joined* to that very *fellowship by which* we are ‘falling by sword, by flame, by captivity, by plundering’, so that that propensity to *projection* is being *removed from us*.

In fact, unless it is being removed from us, we will operate by *projection*. It will be the *default* way of ministering by the flesh.

Every human being who lives according to the flesh expresses a projection. They are not being who the Lord made them to be.

The important point, then, is that, while we must be *delivered* from our immature tendencies to ‘cleave to the messenger with deceit’, it is essential that we *maintain an easy dialogue* with our leaders and are *obedient to their directions*.

Connection with overseers – for ourselves or for obedience?

This is where we must have our *ears opened*, because the one who operates by empowerment maintains connection with overseers, or graced messengers, *so that* they can exercise authority *apart* from them!

On the other hand, if we are being *delivered* from this tendency, we will also *maintain a connection* with graced messengers in the presbytery and in

the church, but it will be *for the purpose of obedience by faith*.

We *do* need to *hear* their directions; and we *do* need to *be obedient* to their directions.

That is not the issue! The issue is whether we are *misappropriating* that connection for our *own self-centred benefit*.

We give our submission as an action of faith to those who watch for our souls

Highlighting the importance of maintaining an *easy dialogue* with our leaders and of *being obedient* to their instructions, Paul wrote to the Hebrews, 'Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive.' Heb 13:17.

Now, 'those who rule over us' are those whom the Father has set, or Christ has set, as *stewards over His house*.

Paul said, 'Obey those who rule over you [We are to *receive* their directions, aren't we?], and be submissive.'

To be 'submissive' means that we are *turned to them*, committed to *revealing them*.

'Submissive' does not mean that we have been *overpowered* by them. Rather, it is that we *give* our submission to them.

It is the complete opposite of the way in which we tend to think about submission - as being in some way 'overwhelmed'.

That is not it at all! We *give* our submission. This is *an action of faith*, isn't it?

'Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive [for what reason?], for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give an account.' Heb 13:17.

This is amazing, isn't it? When we go to the judgement seat, whom will Christ ask?

He will ask *those who were supposed to watch out for our souls*, so that *they* can give an account.

This is a highly important point!

An account given with grief or with joy

Paul continued, 'Let them do so *with joy*.' Heb 13:17.

What is joy the evidence of? Joy is the evidence of *new birth*, isn't it?

And it grows to *full joy* when we *grow up in Christ*.

'Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be [definitely] unprofitable for you.' Heb 13:17.

If overseers give an account of us with *grief*, it means that we were cleaving to them with deceit.

If they give an account of us with *joy*, it means that the mode of our engagement with them is *the mode of a son of God*.

It is the *mode of offering*, which is possible by the *life* of which we have been born.

Connection with presbytery through the obedience of faith working by love

So, we *are* to be *connected* to them; but we are *not* to be connected to them *through deceit*. We are turning from deceit *to the face of Christ*, to walk *in the truth*.

Our response to the directions of those who oversee in the presbytery and the church should be according to the *obedience of faith that works by love*.

Faith works by love, doesn't it? Gal 5:6.

We are hearing the word, obtaining faith; but that faith *operates by love*.

And faith working by love is the *culture of fellowship*.

True relational connection to the authority of Christ in the church

In this regard, we remember the words of Jesus to the disciples regarding *true friendship* and *true relational connection*.

This is 'getting down to some tin tacks' about what it will 'look like' to be *connected to the authority of Christ in the church*.

'As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.' Joh 15:9-10.

Jesus said that we are to 'abide in love'. How do we do that? We do it by *keeping Christ's commandments*.

'Just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.' Joh 15:10.

These words bring to the fore the truth that He was 'obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross'. Php 2:8.

‘These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you.’ Joh 15:11.

If leaders give an account of us ‘with joy’, they do so because Christ’s joy remains in us.

‘These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.’ Joh 15:11. Praise the Lord!

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.’ Joh 15:12-13.

The obedience of faith through offering

So, if you are loyal – and we all should be loyal – that loyalty will show itself as friendship that *lays down its life for another*.

It is not by trying to *find* our life through the exercise, or exertion, of authority that is *misappropriated* from another.

In this regard, Jesus said, ‘Greater love has no-one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.’ Joh 15:13-14.

A word is *proclaimed*, and *obedience* to that word manifests as *offering*.

This obedience will be, firstly, to ‘lay back’ to the one who has laid it down to us.

That then multiplies beyond that context of fellowship, to those for whom we are to care and among whom we are to serve.

This is how ministry functions. It does not operate by empowerment; it functions by *offering*, and offering is the obedience of faith.

Finding security through affirmation

Our submission and connection to overseers, which brings joy and not grief, is found when we are obedient to the word, both when the messenger is present and absent.

‘Therefore, my beloved.’ Php 2:12.

This was Paul’s statement just after he said, ‘You are to have the same mind as Christ, and be obedient in the same way that Jesus was obedient.’

That is how we *abide in love*.

Then he said, ‘Therefore, my beloved,’ to all those who are born of God and love like this.

‘Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure.’ Php 2:12-13.

This is the most amazing statement, because he addressed the issue of empowerment. The person who operates by empowerment is trying to find some sense of affirmation *through connection*.

Paul was saying, ‘You simply need to be obedient to my word, and to walk by faith, and you find your salvation through that work of obedience; not through my affirmation of you.’

A person who ‘cleaves to the messenger with deceit’ finds their security, their awareness of themselves, and the assurance of their salvation through the constant affirmation of those in authority.

They do not know this assurance in themselves. That is why they keep looking for affirmation and reflection.

Sometimes they are ‘up’, because the graced messenger is smiling at them; sometimes they are ‘down’, because there is a frown. It is completely outside of anything that is *birthed in their heart*.

The assurance of eternal life is something that we should *know*, because the Holy Spirit *bears witness with our spirit* that we are sons of God. Rom 8:16.

Having a good report among the elders

Now, we do need to have ‘a good report’ among the elders.

We are not to find our salvation or our sense of salvation through affirmation from our leaders.

We are to have a good report among the elders because they are to give an account for our souls – so they need to *know* us. And we need to give an account for the work, particularly the activities that we are doing as part of a deaconing administration, so that there is a good report.

However, our salvation is not dependent on affirmation. Salvation comes because we are *participating in the fellowship of offering*. That is where we find assurance. It is because we are ‘in the Holy Spirit’.

We do need to have a good report among the elders, because they are to give an account for our lives before God.

However, they should be able to give an account of what is established in us and demonstrated in Spirit and truth, rather than of what we project.

This is the distinction between joy and grief, which we have already noted.

Receiving the presbytery into our houses - watchmen

We will now move to discussing the manner in which we interface with the presbytery.

We have understood that there is *one* presbytery for the whole lampstand church, and yet the Lord has placed overseers and elders in every local congregation. They are bringing the light because of their fellowship in one Spirit with the presbytery.

The question is, 'How do we receive that presbytery into our houses?'

The first thing that we need to understand is who they are to us; and the Scriptures teach that they are *watchmen*. They are overseers, shepherds, watchmen.

We have just read Paul's exhortation to 'obey those who rule over us'. These are the overseers whom Christ sets over His house according to the will of the Father.

Paul said that we are to submit to them, because they watch out for our souls as those who give an account. They are overseers. 'Obey those who rule over you as those who watch for your souls.'

The work of watchmen

To make the obvious point, *overseers are watchmen*.

To understand the work of watchmen, let us now consider how the Lord addressed the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

Ezekiel and Jeremiah were prophets, and prophecy is one of the four ministry graces that belong to Christ. The Lord said to them, 'As prophets who are exercising this grace, I have made you the watchmen of Israel [or over Judah].'

'Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel.'" Eze 3:16-17.

The Lord is Yahweh; that is, Christ. Remember that the *fullness* of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily.

Jesus said to Ezekiel, 'I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.' Eze 3:17.

'I've set you as a watchman. Therefore, watchman, listen to what I'm saying to you and go and give that direction.'

So, if we want to know what the Lord Yahweh is saying to the church, we need to hear what the watchmen are speaking.

The sobering responsibility of watchmen

'When I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

'Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.' Eze 3:18-19.

That is quite a responsibility for a watchman!

The wicked are 'prickly' people, and sometimes warning them is a painful and unfruitful task that generates only 'prickles'.

But Jesus was saying to Ezekiel, 'If I have set you as a watchman and I have put in your mouth the word to speak to the wicked as a point of their salvation, and you don't speak it, they will definitely die in their wickedness, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.'

This is a sobering responsibility for a watchman.

Righteousness is not accrued

'Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.' Eze 3:20.

It is not as though we accrue 'a body of righteousness' that will just 'get us over the line' and, if we stumble, all that righteousness is as nothing.

If the overseer, or watchman, has not warned this one that the way in which they are walking is causing them to stumble, Jesus said, 'I will require their blood at your hand [as well].'

'Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.' Eze 3:21.

So, let's be in fellowship together as we hear what the Spirit is saying, so that we are all obtaining salvation.

The ancient path was prepared for us by the Father

Let us see what Jesus said to Jeremiah.

'Thus says the Lord [or 'Thus says Yahweh']:
"Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls". Jer 6:16.

Those 'old paths' are not our old doctrines. The old paths are the pathway of the Everlasting Covenant of God Himself, which was established when Jesus walked His offering journey.

That is why the Scriptures say that Jesus was 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. He was not slain twice.

The foundation of the world, or the ancient paths, or the means by which the Father's will for every individual was brought into being, happened at the cross and then was ministered by the Spirit to the whole of history.

You will need to talk and think about that; and, at some stage, we will discuss this further.

The ancient path is both the *path* that the Father has prepared for you, and the *works* that He has prepared for you.

It was established for every person through the offering of Jesus on the cross, who was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Thus says the Lord, 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk it; then you will find rest for your souls.' Jer 6:16.

'Rest for your soul' sounds like what Jesus said: 'Come and be yoked to Me and you will find rest for your soul.' Mat 11:29.

We know that the ancient path is the same path that Jesus walked, because He said that if we want that rest, we have to be yoked with Christ, and to walk with Him.

The word of the watchmen is like a trumpet, proclaiming His coming and our connection to His fellowship

'But they said, "We will not walk in it" [That sounds very rebellious]. Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, "Listen to the sound of the trumpet!" But they said, "We will not listen".' Jer 6:16-17.

The word of the watchmen is like the sound of a trumpet. This sound proclaims the coming of the Lord and our connection to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Jesus spoke about finding rest for our souls. He said, 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

'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 11:28-30.

We are yoked to Christ by hearing the message that is proclaimed by His watchmen, and by walking in the pathway that their word reveals.

This pathway is our *participation* in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Yoked to Christ in this fellowship, which is with the watchmen of the presbytery, we find rest for our souls.

The point is that these watchmen are watching out for our souls. They minister to us the word that will deliver us from our iniquity and see us established on the pathway of obedience that leads to eternal life.

It is good to give ear to what they are saying, because that is where our inheritance will be obtained.

Receiving the presbytery in our houses

So, how do we receive a presbyter, or the presbytery, into our houses?

The most basic and essential response is to *receive and believe the word* that is ministered in the local congregations in which God the Father has placed us.

We can see how important it is for the presbytery to be in one Spirit, so that the lamp light is not 'hidden under a basket' or 'under a bed'.

And we receive the presbytery into our houses by first, and most fundamentally, receiving what they say - receiving the word of those who are Christ's messengers.

We have to receive the word that is proclaimed by Christ's messengers as being the word of God, and not merely as the word of men.

'For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.' 1Th 2:13.

This is the mindset and the demeanour that we are to have as we interface with the word that is proclaimed by watchmen.

Receiving faith to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh

The evidence that we have received the presbytery will be our *response* to the word of God. Our response will be repentance and the obedience of faith.

Our desire will be to share with and testify to others of the application of this word in our life.

This commitment to fellowship demonstrates that we have received faith by hearing the word, and that we are continuing steadfastly in the four dimensions of grace that are foundational to fellowship in the body of Christ.

A word is *proclaimed*. When we *receive* that word, we receive capacity, which is faith, to *participate* in the very fellowship from which that word has proceeded.

That is, first, the fellowship of Yahweh, which is with the fellowship of the presbytery.

So, 'to receive the presbytery' into our houses is demonstrated when we participate by faith in these four dimensions of grace, because faith grants us 'an introduction into that grace in which we stand'. Rom 5:2.

We may think that the first point of receiving the presbytery into our houses is to have someone with a 'profile' come to visit us.

The *first* point is to open our heart and to receive the word of God that is being proclaimed by these ones.

The evidence that we have received it is that we demonstrate faith by continuing steadfastly in these four foundations.

The four dimensions of grace that are foundational to fellowship with the presbytery and with the Father and the Son, are the apostles' doctrine, the apostles' fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.

I want to reiterate the point that we *demonstrate* that we have received the presbytery in our houses when we join and participate - which means speaking by faith - in these four aspects of fellowship that are stewarded by the presbytery.

That is the most fundamental element.

Fellowship is an open-faced relationship

Now, if we endeavour to relate with the presbytery or a presbyter or an overseer or leader, but do not receive and believe the word, we are cleaving to them with deceit.

If we do not receive the word that has been proclaimed from the presbytery into our heart and into our house, we are cleaving to that person with deceit.

We are not expressing, by testimony, that word as faith in our heart. Rather, we are seeking to find ourself through that connection.

However, equally true, we cannot say, 'I'm just going to hear and receive what is being said, and I'm going to live by every word that is proceeding', without having a connection to them.'

Remember, we to present ourselves for fellowship. We cannot have one without the other.

We cannot say, 'I have a relationship with these ones, but I can take or leave the word.'

Neither can we say, 'I'm going to be fully committed and obedient to the word, but I don't need to speak to these people.'

Both of those are deceived responses.

Fellowship with the presbytery requires us to have an open-faced relationship with them in our houses.

We do need to invite the messenger into our house, not to check on us, but because we desire to make offering through testimony to them.

It is the initiative of love to meet and relate with one another. It is not a hierarchy; it is *fellowship*.

Honouring and receiving local leaders

Our motivation to converse by faith will also involve open and easy relationship with those whom the Lord has set as overseers and elders in our local setting.

We should be giving them honour and respect, but there is no sense of devolving to them our accountability for our life.

We are to accept that the Lord has appointed these ones to care for the sheep, and that we are 'sheep' who are hearing the word of the Lord, and are following the directions of Christ as we receive them.

We are open, easy and ready to receive their input into our life, because we know that they are those who see - they are watchmen.

Our motivation to converse by faith will also involve open and easy relationship with those whom the Lord has set as overseers and elders in our local setting, for God the Father sets every member in the body as He pleases.

It is no good wanting to have a Brisbane elder into your house, because he looks like a nice person, when you live in Sydney.

That is ridiculous, because there is an overseership and a leadership in Sydney, with whom the Lord has placed you.

We can apply that across every area in which we live. That is where we are to be laying our lives down for one another.

The apostle Paul called it a 'sphere', a relational sphere, that includes one or the other. 2Co 10:13.

As we have already noted, these ones are part of the presbytery that belongs to the whole lampstand church.

In conversation with these overseers in our local areas, we invite the presbytery into our house and join their fellowship.

We are not sheep if we are not known

We need to be known by those whom the Lord has established as carers in the church, because they are to give an account for our lives.

If we endeavour to come in and out of the congregation without being known by them, we are not a sheep.

I am unequivocal on that point.

If we endeavour to interface in the church without giving ourselves to be known, and without inviting that relationship into our house, we are not a sheep. We are something else in the flock, in the congregation, in which the Lord has placed us.

Jesus Himself said that. 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.' Joh 10:1.

The 'door' is Christ, and the 'doorkeepers' are those whom He has set over His house to guard it. They are the watchmen, who are watching what is coming in and out.

If we are not coming in through the Door, who is Christ - and the authority of Christ is in those whom He has set over His house - then we are not of the sheep.

Jesus said, 'If we don't enter the sheepfold by the door, but climb up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.' Joh 10:1-2.

Those who oversee the house are to ensure that Christ's word is coming into the sheepfold itself. This is why we need to hear what they are speaking.

The word grants faith for participation with Christ

'To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.' Joh 10:3.

Those who are the overseers, or the doorkeepers, do not intervene, or get in, between Christ leading His sheep.

However, Christ has access to the sheepfold because the doorkeepers are faithfully proclaiming His word.

The word that is proclaimed by messengers grants a person faith for participation, and that participation is with their Saviour, Christ Himself.

Wherever a leader intervenes between Christ and a person, and mediates that person's participation, that is *empowerment*. It is corruption.

'To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

'And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him [this is the ancient path], for they know his voice.

'Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.' Joh 10:3-5.

Receiving adjustment from watchmen

Presbyters 'take heed to themselves' by washing one another's feet.

In the same way that presbyters wash one another's feet, we must make ourselves available to receive these watchmen when they offer to speak to us to bring adjustment to our lives and families.

Those who are overseers will do this because they have heard what the Spirit is saying; not because of their own judgements or their own sense of entitlement.

They will be like Ezekiel and like Jeremiah, who spoke in obedience to a command that they had heard and received.

We are to invite this fellowship and discussion into our houses so that our culture can be washed from the filth of the flesh, and can be established in what is true, so that we can be fruitful.

In the same way that presbyters 'wash' one another, we must make ourselves available to receive these watchmen when they offer to speak to us and bring adjustment to our lives and families.

Paul brought our attention to this when he said, 'Be submissive to them for, they watch out for your souls.' Heb 13:17.

Washed by the word makes us adequate as priests

The washing of the water of the word is essential to our adequacy to 'priest' ourselves.

The word that is coming to wash us is the same word as that of the doorkeeper who opens the door to the Shepherd.

That washing makes us adequate to be able to priest ourselves in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, which is the way in which the Shepherd is leading us.

When we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the blood is being applied to our lives to sprinkle our conscience clean, and to grant to us His life as our life.

This is the fellowship of which we are to be part. We cannot have that fellowship with Christ without being washed by the water of the word.

Neither can we say, 'I'm being washed by the water of the word,' and then not walk in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, priesting ourselves as a living sacrifice.

This is true fellowship where the word, or command, of Christ is met by faith in those who hear it.

It is mixed with faith so that we may believe without fear and obtain the inheritance that has been promised to us.

Praise the Lord!