

BLAMELESS AND WITHOUT SPOT PART 2

Peter Hay, prepared for word ministry, 28 February 2021
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

In our session today, which is the second part of our subject on 'Walking without spot and blameless before the Lord', we will recap on some of the key points that we discussed in our last session. Then we will look forward to how we participate in this finished work from day to day.

We will look at it again in the coming week, because this is a cultural foundation that is necessary for entrance into, or citizenship of, the kingdom.

So, let us just recap all of the key points that we discussed in the last session. I will go through these reasonably quickly so that we can give the weight of our time to this content on *participation* in the finished work of Christ.

Two goats – one Lamb

In our last session, we took time to understand how Christ, through His offering on the cross, fulfilled the Day of Atonement.

In doing so, He suffered, in full, the judgement of each one of us and accomplished our finished perfection. To arrive at that amazing jewel of a point, let us revisit some of the key points leading to it.

Under the Old Covenant, the two goats of the one sin offering were offered separately and *on behalf* of the people. One goat was taken as the Lord's goat, while the other was designated as the scapegoat, and it was cast by lot. These were two elements of the one sin offering.

The Lord's goat was to *atone* for the sins of the people and to *cleanse* the sanctuary and the altar. This happened through the sprinkling of the goat's blood seven times on the mercy seat, which was in the most holy place, and then seven times on the altar.

The scapegoat was then, symbolically, led out into the wilderness, taking the iniquities, transgressions and sins of the people, which were confessed on the head of the goat. They were taken out into the wilderness, which was a forsaken and cursed place.

Christ, the Lamb of God, was made a sin offering when the Father made the *whole* of mankind members of His body. It became the corporate body of sin in Gethsemane, of which He was the Head.

Through each wounding event, the Lord fulfilled both aspects of the sin offering and, most importantly, we were *all* joined to Him and made recipients of what He fulfilled through His offering.

We are to become the righteousness of God

This sin offering was not just done on our behalf - and no-one else could have done it - but He was taking us *with* Him, so that we would be recipients of everything that He achieved.

If we reject Him, we are recipients of the judgement that He fulfilled; but if we are found in Him, we become recipients of the righteousness that was revealed.

We are to *become* the righteousness of God in Christ through our fellowship in this offering journey.

Through each wounding event, the Lord fulfilled both aspects of the sin offering. Significantly, we were all joined to Him, and made recipients of what He fulfilled through this offering. It wasn't done merely on our behalf.

As the scapegoat, Christ experienced the suffering of death that belonged to every person under the judgement of God.

At each stage of His journey, He was being progressively taken out into the place of cursing and forgetfulness, and we were *all* going out with Him. This is a *huge point*: that no-one is absent from what was taken out, whether you are a believer or not.

Christ descended to the lowest point

Just because you are born into a Christian home does not mean that you are not part of that body with Christ that went out. All of us are going out.

Christ was *descending* as the Son of Man as He experienced our death. He was descending right down to the lowest point, even down below the

lake of fire; in fact, He *lights* it through His offering.

At the same time as He was descending - as He was journeying, He was being wounded and His blood was being shed - Jesus was progressively being made alive from the death of sin.

Through the sprinkling of His blood, His life was being multiplied and given to become our life. Furthermore, He was learning the obedience of our sonship by fulfilling the works that belong to our names as sons of God, in Him.

He ascended as the Son of Man

This was His ascending as the Son of Man, revealing His death, which He died by the grace of God.

As He was *descending*, He was dying our death by the grace of God, and was making it His death.

By this same grace, He was *ascending*, and fulfilling all righteousness at every point on His offering journey.

This progressive fulfilment was happening all the way until the final wound. When He declared, '*It is finished!*', He had suffered the judgement because of sin that belongs to every person, and He had accomplished the sinless perfection of each person's sonship.

As the Son of Man, He had fulfilled all things, and the Day of Atonement was fulfilled.

Christ was made an offering and also priested Himself

Now we will talk about how we interface with this fulfilment of the Day of Atonement, given that we know that we sin every day.

Although Christ was made to be a sin offering by the Father, He priested Himself as a living sacrifice. The Father made Him an offering for sin, but Christ *priested Himself* as that offering. He was both offering and priest.

He priested Himself as a living sacrifice because He was designated by the Father as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

The order of Melchizedek just means that *type* of priesthood. It was not according to the order of the Levitical priesthood; it was a different priesthood.

'So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." [that is obviously the Father, because only the Father can call Jesus His Son].

'As He [the Father] also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"; who, in the days of His flesh, 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, 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, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek".' Heb 5:5-10.

At the end of this journey, having fulfilled and perfected all of our sonship, He was called High Priest by God, according to the order of Melchizedek.

This means that Christ was *progressively* glorified as High Priest by God the Father through the process that He endured; through the journey which He travelled.

This progressive glorification as High Priest, or expression of His high-priestly work, happened through the wounding events that Jesus experienced in the days of His flesh. That is what we have just read in the book of Hebrews.

Seven priestly attributes correspond to His seven wounds

When Jesus 'offered up prayers and supplications' to God, Paul was specifically referring here to the offering of Christ, or the journey of Christ, which commenced with His first wound in Gethsemane as He prayed, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done.'

This progressive glorification was happening in the days of His flesh, as He was praying.

When John the apostle saw Jesus on the Lord's Day, he was praying in the Spirit. He described seven priestly attributes, or dispositions, with which Christ had been glorified as High Priest. Rev 1:14-16.

Each priestly attribute corresponded with a wound. John listed these in the book of Revelation to correspond with the order of His

wounds. Seven wounds and seven glorifications, or attributes, of His priesthood are mentioned there.

That is important, because our participation in His finished work is what He priests to us; and He priests it to us through these attributes.

It is important that we recognise this, because if the attributes come from the wounds, the outcome of Him priesting that way is our *connection* to the wounds.

Christ ministers the finished work of the Day of Atonement

The other thing that John noted was that Christ, the Son of Man, was dressed in the particular garments that the high priest wore on the Day of Atonement.

He had the white linen garment with a gold sash, marking Him as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. These are the garments that the high priest wore on the Day of Atonement.

Many people presume that means that the Day of Atonement is not finished, and that we are still waiting for its conclusion. That would be contrary to what Paul taught, and it would also mean that when He said it was finished, it wasn't actually finished; and we know that is not true either.

So, what does it mean that He is still in the high-priestly garments that are associated with the work of the Day of Atonement? The significance of this point is that Christ is now ministering the finished Day of Atonement to us through His priestly ministry as Melchizedek.

It means that the work that He has finished, through the Day of Atonement, and marked by the garment that would be worn by the High Priest on that day, He is now ministering to us through the seven priestly attributes that He was glorified with, through each wounding event.

As He priests to us in that manner, we are joined to those wounding events through which we obtain what He has already perfected for us. How does He do this?

Christ priests to us our participation through intercession

Paul made it clear that Jesus is priesting this participation by *making intercession for us*.

Remember that Christ was glorified as a High Priest by the Father in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications. He began this in Gethsemane, but the reality of His journey is that He continued to pray at every wounding event. It was not just prayer in Gethsemane; the whole journey was a journey of prayer.

We know this because, in the Old Covenant, the high priest sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat under the cloud of incense that had mixed with the *Shekinah*.

So, if there are seven sprinklings, that cloud, or prayer, is moving with Christ. As He prays and makes intercession for us, we have our participation in those wounding events where He is praying.

Paul stated, 'But He [Jesus], because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God [the Father] through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.' Heb 7:24-25.

This is how He is priesting our participation to us. This is the prayer that Jesus prayed throughout His offering journey.

His prayer reveals His desire for us to obtain what He perfected for each of us through our participation in the fellowship of His offering.

Perfected forever but still being sanctified

This is the key - Jesus is *continually* making intercession for us, because He desires that we obtain what He perfected for each of us through His offering. And He wants us to attain it *through fellowship in His offering*.

Prayer is a conversation; it is *fellowship*. Through fellowship, we can be delivered from our sin and can fulfil the will of God, in Him.

'For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are *being* sanctified.' Heb 10:14.

This highlights the reality that the Day of Atonement is already finished; for by that one offering, He has *already perfected forever* those who are being sanctified.

So, how can you be perfect if you need to be sanctified?

It is that He has already perfected your sonship for you through that offering journey, and now He is praying to the Father so that you will be joined with Him, be delivered from your sin and your self-centredness, and will obtain the sonship that He has finished for you.

Our connection to that fellowship is how we are 'blameless and without spot until His appearing', so that when we see Him, face to face, we will be like Him.

We are being changed from glory to glory, into the image of His sonship, through this process of intercession that He forever makes for us, in view of our connection to what He achieved for each of us in each of these wounding steps.

Christ brought an end to the old creation, and perfected our sonship

When Paul was illuminated to the *glory* of this fellowship, he counted every other aspect of his natural life and expression as 'refuse', in comparison.

This passage really lit up to me what Paul meant by 'counting all things as loss'. He actually identified himself with Christ and, in fellowship with Him, those things are lost, forsaken, forgotten.

'But what things were gain to me.'

These are the things that we accrue for ourselves in our life, through which we gain some sense of validity, or that we use to endeavour to verify our identity. This is what Adam and Even did in the Fall. It is seeking another image, and then we clothe this image with projection, to communicate who we want to be and who we want others to think we are.

That is 'everything that is gain to me' – it could be through religious activity, through wealth, through sporting prowess, through beauty. There are many things that it could be. That is why Paul said, 'Whatever things are gain to me.'

And that is what we need to consider too. What are those things that we consider to be gain to us, through which we build some sense of security and identity?

'But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count *all* things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Php 3:7-8.

When Jesus was making His journey, He was doing both things. He was bringing an old creation to its conclusion; to its finish; to forgetfulness. And He was *perfecting the knowledge of the glory of your sonship*. Both things were happening.

Paul was saying, 'I am joined to that. And I am counting everything that was to gain to me previously, by which my identity had some meaning, as *loss*, because I am going out *lost with Him*. At the same time, I am doing this so that I might obtain the knowledge that Christ learned for me through His offering journey.'

Do you see how plainly Paul said this? He said, 'Yet indeed I also count all things loss [in what has gone out and been lost or forsaken] for the excellence [the excellence of the virtues of Christ's life] of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my Lord*.'

The confession of the lordship of Christ is paramount here. It is actually the evidence that the love of God has been poured into your heart by the Holy Spirit so that you can confess Him as Lord.

Counting all things as loss to gain Christ

'Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish [as nothing, as dung, as everything that needs to be forsaken and cursed – for what reason?], that I may gain [gaining is the thing that Christ obtained by grace] Christ and be found in Him [not be found with the body of sin that has been forsaken; being found in Him, the new creation], not having my own righteousness, which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

'That I may *know* Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means [or, through *every* means that are happening as I am journeying with Him], I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.' Php 3:8-11.

That is resurrection life in my mortal body *now* so that I attain to *anastasis* in the new heavens and earth. This is what it means to 'journey with Christ'.

This is how you walk blamelessly and without spot. It has nothing to do with you being sinless; it has everything to do with *what you are counting as loss*, and what you desire to gain.

And how do you get it? You receive it by *knowing Him* and the *power* of His resurrection, the *fellowship* of His sufferings, and by being *conformed* to His death. That's it!

Meeting Christ face to face

We will consider how we are delivered from our own way, so that we walk without spot and are blameless before Him until His coming.

We can do this for every one of Christ's priestly attributes, but I want to focus on the seventh attribute today, where John observed Christ's countenance.

'His countenance [which means 'His face'] was like the sun shining in its strength.' Rev 1:16.

The light was shining from Christ's face. Now, if you are to know Him - Paul said, 'that I may know Him' - what is the fundamental thing that you will need to do?

You need to meet Christ face to face, eye to eye. And what will you see when you look into the face of Christ? You will see *light* coming from His face. This is the fundamental knowledge that He learned, and that He is communicating, or ministering, to you. He learned it from the Father, who is the source of light.

Christ's 'countenance like the sun' is the priestly attribute which Jesus was glorified with when His blood was sprinkled a seventh time.

The final attribute that John listed, the seventh one, is His face, or His countenance, which was 'like the sun shining in its strength'.

The final wound in Christ's journey was when the soldier pierced His side, and blood and water began to flow from His heart.

So we can connect what was happening when Christ's side was pierced, with the light that shines from His face.

Paul said that the effect of this wound in His pierced side was that a way was opened for every person, through the veil of Christ's flesh, into the most holy place of Yahweh's fellowship to be where They are. You can live there!

The way into the most holy place has been opened

We could never go in there because we were sinful, and you and I know that we still sin, yet Paul said that the way has been opened for us to go there now!

So go there boldly, but don't go presumptuously. How do we go boldly, which means by faith, and not in the presumption of our self-righteousness?

'Therefore, brethren, having the boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God [because He is now priesting to us access to this fellowship].

'Let us *draw near* with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled.'

Don't recoil from the face that shines like the sun and exposes your heart, because that is what our other law, our natural fleshly man, will want to do. Paul said, 'Don't draw back as that light is shining.'

Jesus was sprinkled, so you have to be connected to Him. You have to be where He is; where He is praying. The Holy Spirit helps us to join where He is praying. He helps us in our weaknesses, because we don't know how to pray as we ought. And He prays, or makes intercession, for us, joining us to where Christ is praying.

'Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience [from judging according to our knowledge of good and evil] and our bodies washed with pure water [of the word].' Heb 10:19-23.

The finished offering of Christ is both judgement and perfection

His light is now shining like the sun because the offering was completely finished; so, what is shining from Him is shining from His finished offering.

We note the connection between receiving the light of the finished offering of Christ that shines from His face, *and our* entrance into the most holy place of the true temple.

Obviously, if a light is shining, we are supposed to walk *in that light*.

The light that shines from the face of Christ is the light of the finished work of Christ, both in judgement and in our sinless perfection as sons of God.

We need to accept that the finished offering of Christ is both of those elements. It is not only the knowledge of our sonship; it is the knowledge of the finished work, including our judgement.

He came to know that, because He experienced what our judgement would be. So it is the light of the finished work of Christ, both in judgement and in our sinless perfection as sons of God.

Receiving the light shining from His face

How is the light shining from His face? We know that *the word is a light*, and Jesus Himself was *the Light that has come into the world*. Joh 1:9.

So, when Jesus comes to us, and light shines from His face, it occurs through the ministry of the word of the cross as it is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of graced messengers.

That is how we receive the light that shines from His face. And we *turn* our face to that light by giving our ear and our heart to *receive* what is being said.

His finished offering includes judgement and sinless perfection. So, as this light shines, it firsts *reveals the darkness of our own way*.

It has to reveal this darkness, otherwise we would never be delivered from it. The more that the Lord illuminates this, the more the thought that He only paid the price for my sin is weak and inept, because it leaves me in my condition.

The fact that He has joined me to the process which He has perfected means that there is *hope*. A work is being done, and I can have great confidence, because it is *already finished*.

Let us draw near with a true heart

His word first reveals the darkness of our own way, which is under judgement. For this reason, at times, we initially find the word to be confronting when it comes to us. It 'jars' with us.

However, don't draw back. Rather, as Paul said, 'Let us *draw near with a true heart*.' What does a person with a true heart accept? They accept that they are a sinner. The apostle John said, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.'

To have 'a true heart' means that when we hear the word, we accept that what is being revealed is the *truth*. That should be a relief to us, because it means that we can be joined to the process by which our sin can be taken away.

Walking in the light of the word that shines from His face

While it reveals the truth to us, it also reveals to us *the knowledge of the glory of our sonship* that Christ has perfected for us. And we are to walk in the light of that entire word; both the *judgement* and the *righteousness* of God. That is the 'light' in which we are to walk.

We know this passage well, but it shines in the light of this understanding. 'But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' 1Jn 1:7.

We see that to walk in the light enables us to have great boldness to enter the most holy place where Christ is. He is our Forerunner, and He is already there. Our sinless perfection is already there, and we are coming in to join Him, in order to obtain that. By what means? It is by walking in the light that shines from His face.

We are in Christ and are journeying with Him

The light enables us to have great boldness to enter the most holy place. 'Through the veil of His flesh' means that we are *in Him*, and are journeying *with Him*.

Paul said, 'It is a new and living way which He consecrated through the veil that is His flesh.' So, if we are walking in the light and coming through His flesh, it means that we are *in Him*.

And it means that where *He* is going, we are going with Him, no longer under the condition of having been joined to a body of sin. That body of sin is being taken away. We are now in Him and are coming up as new creation.

Our heart sprinkled with His blood and our body washed with water to serve Him

The blood that cleanses our heart as we walk in the light enables us to 'draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith', which we have received by hearing the word.

Our hearts are 'sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water' so that we can serve the living God.

This is a critical key. He has *finished*, or He has *learned*, the knowledge of our sonship, and He is teaching us that.

What, then, are we learning from Him? We are learning that we fulfil the works of our sonship by 'priesting' ourself as a living sacrifice to God the Father. We are learning from Him how to priest ourselves in this way.

Our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water so that we can *serve in this manner*; or, priest ourselves, as a daily presentation of ourselves, to be a living sacrifice, by the mercies of God.

Without spot and blameless – fulfilling His will; our sonship works

We serve Him by priesting ourselves as a living sacrifice *in the fellowship of Christ's offering*. By this means, we are fulfilling the will of the Father by doing the works of our sonship, in Christ.

This way of living is what it means to be 'without spot and blameless'. It doesn't mean that we are sinless, or perfect.

Rather, we are in a process through which we are being *progressively* changed, obtaining the sinless perfection that He *finished*.

Without spot and blameless – being transformed from our self-righteousness

Paul summarised it this way. 'But we all with *unveiled face*.' 2Co 3:18. This means that something – a veil – has been taken away. The veil is our *self-righteousness*, and we count it as loss in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

'We all with *unveiled face*, beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are being transformed.'

So we are receiving the light that is shining from His finished offering. We do not draw back; we draw near. And what do we draw near to? We draw near to *where He is*, which is where He prays.

This is in the *fellowship* of His body, which is on a journey; an offering journey.

As that happens, we are being 'transformed into the same image [that we receive from Him] from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord'.

How straightforward is that! How clear is that in terms of our participation in a *finished* work!

Learning the conversation of being without spot and blameless

We will have a first 'run' at this today, and next week we will discuss it again so that we become practised in the conversation of being 'without spot and blameless'.

Remember that the 'conversation' is our *conduct*. We need to take our time with it, and will discuss some of the practical implications of this for us.

With unveiled face, beholding Christ

Paul said, 'But we all, with unveiled face, *behold* in the mirror.' 2Co 3:18.

'Beholding' Christ in this way has a life-changing effect on the way in which we live our lives and, significantly, on the way that we relate with others, because our projections, the veils, are being *taken away*.

It means that we do not relate with one another through our projections to another's projections. We are being delivered from this way of relating.

Our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ

We will consider our approach to *suffering*, which can make a fundamental change to the way in which we live.

During the course of our life, we *will* experience sufferings, which are the consequence of God's judgement on *the whole world* because of disobedience, including our disobedience. Clearly, there was no suffering *before disobedience*.

Neither does the Lord give us suffering merely because He thinks that 'a dose' of it will be 'good' for us.

Suffering is the *evidence* of God's judgement on the world because of disobedience.

As those who have been illuminated to the word of the cross – and I pray that you are being illuminated by the word of the cross – our minds are being transformed so that we accept that our sufferings are our *fellowship in the sufferings of Christ*, because He has already suffered them.

Do you see that this is an understanding, or an *illumination*, that we come to?

It is not merely, or even, that I suffer because I have been 'bad'.

Nor is it that Christ has suffered and, because I participate in His sufferings, somehow that is doing some 'good' in me.

No; I am suffering what He has *already suffered* for me, and it is now a *fellowship* of suffering.

I now recognise that it is the *fellowship* of His sufferings, because He has made my sufferings to be *His*. This is understanding. This is illumination. This is 'lightning coming from a hand', if we will hear it and receive it. This is the fellowship of His sufferings.

We have looked at *knowing* Him and the *power* of His resurrection and the *fellowship* of His sufferings. As those who have been illuminated by the word of the cross, we accept that our sufferings are our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, because He has already experienced them by the grace of God.

We have been crucified, cursed, with Christ; delivered from self-righteousness

Accepting this reality demonstrates that we have been co-crucified, or cursed, *with* Christ. This was Paul's testimony. 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live.' Gal 2:20.

So, when you suffer, if you accept, by the faith and illumination that you have received, that the sufferings that you experience are the sufferings that He has *already* experienced and has made to be His own suffering, you are accepting that you are *cursed with Christ*.

That is a jarring thought to us, isn't it? We think, 'What does it mean that Christ was *cursed*? What does it mean that I am 'cursed with Christ'? I thought that being a Christian would take me *out* of the curse.'

What did Paul mean when he said, 'I have been crucified with Christ'? He was saying, 'I have been *cursed* with Christ.' We need to be clear on this. So, accepting this reality of our fellowship in His sufferings demonstrates that we have been co-crucified, or cursed, with Christ.

The point that we made at the beginning, and which we made at the last Bible study also, was that *the whole world was cursed with Christ and taken out with Him*.

Not only 'bad' people were taken out with Him; *everyone* was taken out with Him. Every person

has been crucified, or cursed, with Christ. However, not every person *accepts* this reality.

Importantly, the fundamental *connection* to the sufferings of Christ is that we *accept* them. It is that we recognise that what we are suffering is now our fellowship in His sufferings.

And we testify, 'I am co-crucified with Christ so that I can count all of my self-righteousness as *loss* in the place of forsakenness.'

That is how we are delivered from our self-righteousness. There is no other way. Any other attempt to find deliverance is self-righteous. We 'crucify' Him again.

Accepting the reality that we have been crucified with Christ

The focal point, then, is that *every* person has been crucified with Christ. However, not every person *accepts* this reality. Where was this most acutely and beautifully demonstrated?

It was when Jesus was on the cross, and two men were crucified with Him. Now, both thieves were, literally, crucified with Christ. Both of them could indeed have testified, like Paul, 'I am crucified with Christ, cursed with Him.'

However, their *responses* were not the same. Even though they were both part of that body of sin that was going out to the place of cursing, they had two different conversations; two different 'speeches'.

Retaining our self-righteousness; our judgement

Out of the heart of one thief was a speech of *self-righteousness*. In this regard, Paul said, in effect, 'That is what I want to be delivered from - a righteousness of my own.'

We may think, 'Well, he is a thief, how could he have been righteous anyway?' We will consider the nature of self-righteousness.

'Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If you are the Christ, save Yourself and us".' Luk 23:39.

Now, this was a *judgement*. Righteousness, particularly self-righteousness, is a judgement that we make regarding our acceptability according to God's Law or to some other law.

Now, this man made a judgement from his own law, saying, 'If you are "this", it will be

demonstrated by “this”. That was self-righteousness. It was a *judgement*.

He made a judgement about Christ, and a judgement about himself. What he said revealed what he *believed*. It revealed another ‘gospel’.

Now, I found this confronting, because I thought, ‘Some of the complaints that come from my mouth during the course of the day, at times demonstrate a different gospel. It is not the speech of faith.’

We thank the Lord that He is delivering us from this. But we do need to accept that we have other gospels, and that they will be demonstrated under the pressure of suffering.

This thief had another gospel. His gospel was that Christ should deliver him from his difficulties. Obviously, he did not acknowledge that he was crucified, or cursed, *with* Christ, because he said, ‘You can’t be Christ if we’re still up here. So I’m just cursed by myself; this is my own death.’

Illuminated by His blood to speak by faith

In contrast, the other thief spoke from a different motivation. Why was that? It was because he had been *illuminated* by the shedding of Christ’s blood. We may think, ‘That’s a bit strange; how can he be illuminated by His blood?’ However, we know this is so because Paul said that *Christ’s blood* ‘spoke better things than the blood of Abel’, who was a prophet.

A word was proclaimed in that suffering event. That word was that Christ’s blood was being spilt as a consequence of the suffering caused by our sin; and it *was* speaking.

Remember that the blood contains the life – and what is the life? It is *the light of men!*

So, His life proclaims light to us, and it grants faith to a hearer. A person who is illuminated then begins to *speak by that faith*.

This is what the second thief did. He spoke by faith about his circumstances, about his suffering – in our terms today, about his ‘car accident’, about his ‘sore leg’, about his ‘difficult situation at home or at work’, or wherever. The way in which he spoke and conducted himself in relation to his suffering began to *change*.

Illumination enables our connection to His offering fellowship

Remember that both thieves had blasphemed. For this thief, something had *changed* as a result of the blood. It affected his conversation and conduct, but it didn’t take him off the cross.

And when you are illuminated to this word, you will understand that His grace that comes to you enables your *connection* to that offering. It does not deliver you from it. You won’t even want it to. You will want to be *where He is!*

We read, ‘But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?”’

This is the acknowledgement that we suffer and He suffers with us; it is the *fellowship* of His sufferings.

‘And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward for our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom”.’ Luk 23:40-42.

This thief, like the apostle Paul, confessed, ‘I am crucified with Christ.’ How wonderful is that!

Both thieves were crucified with Him; one denied it and went out to everlasting darkness; the other went out with Christ, as well, but he was illuminated, joined Christ, and was remembered with Him in the new creation. This is the gospel that the Lord is revealing to us. This is a mystery that is being made known.

Being conformed to Christ’s death

The rebellious thief on the cross said, ‘Christ is not with me in my death.’ He said that it could not be Christ because, if it was, He would help him to escape the suffering of the cross.

The other thief suffered with Christ and, through illumination, was conformed to Christ’s death, no longer to his own death.

This man said, in effect, ‘No; I am crucified with Christ and I am suffering with Him.’ He was conformed to Christ’s death.

Today, do not harden your heart

And, because Christ’s death was the *ascending*, he was being raised to the inheritance of eternal life, in Paradise with Christ, on *that* day.

Jesus said, 'Today'. That is the same 'today' when we hear the word of the Lord that comes, saying, 'Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart to that point.'

In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, our self-righteousness, and the sin that it brings forth, is being removed from us as it is left in the sea of God's forgetfulness.

Reckoning ourselves dead, with Christ, to sin

This requires us to 'reckon ourselves dead with Christ'. 'Reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin.' Rom 6:11.

Was that not what the thief did? He said, in effect, 'I reckon that I am dying justly, and I reckon that He is dying with me. And I reckon that I am conformed now to His death. And, Lord, I reckon that I have a place in You.'

Now we reckon ourselves dead to sin, with Christ, and we leave it in the sea of God's forgetfulness. We are able to cease from our sin, and from the judgements that we make about ourselves and our lives, and about others.

This is a key point, because the *judgements* that we make *demonstrate our self-righteousness*.

So, as we are conformed to this death, we cease from sin. 'He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.' 1Pe 4:1.

We cease from sin but, in this, importantly and evidently, we are ceasing from the judgements that we make about ourselves. These are the judgements that cause us to create an image and projections.

We cease from the judgement of *our* life, whether we think that it is going well or badly; and we cease from our judgements about *others*.

One thief continued to judge. He said, 'If You are "this", then "this" will happen.' If we have these judgements and maintain them, it is evidence that we are denying that we are co-crucified with Christ.

And we are maintaining our self-righteousness, rather than letting it die with Christ in the place of cursing.

Ceasing from conflict; joined to the fellowship of His sufferings

These judgements, based on the self-righteous perspectives that are sourced from our other law, are the cause of conflict with our brethren.

My next point is that the *evidence* of being *joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings* is that we will *cease* from our conflicts, because conflicts arise from the judgements that we make, based on the desires of our flesh, or our other law. Jam 4:1-4.

Our contributions to these conflicts, our relational difficulties with one another, should progressively cease, because they are *going out into the sea of God's forgetfulness*, so that, 'as much as depends on you', you are able to 'live peaceably with all men'. Rom 12:18.

This does not mean that some relational difficulties will not continue, because another person with whom you are in conflict may not be touching this amazing salvation. They may still hate you and want to abuse you.

But you, being delivered from your judgements, and seeing this now as a fellowship in Christ's sufferings, which He has already suffered, are able to 'give your cheek to be hit'.

This is not through your own 'generous self-righteousness', because you are being delivered from that. Rather, it is because Christ suffered those wounds; and you are being changed into the image of His likeness.

Do you see that this is the amazing fruit of the fellowship of His sufferings? So you, 'as much as it depends on you, are able to live peaceably with all men'.

Even though there still may be relational difficulties, you do not incite them. In fact, as you are being abused by people, it will result in *blessing* coming to them. This is death working in you, and life to another.

So, each day, even though we may have sinned and have contributed to these conflicts, we obtain grace, through faith, to leave our self-righteousness, sin and messy relationships where they belong - with the body of death in the sea of God's forgetfulness.

Making relational recovery

And, as we come up from that with Christ on the 'shore' of the new creation, what is the evidence of

that? It is our ability to make *relational recovery*. It is grace to do the works of sonship that Christ has perfected for us.

What will those works be? They will be to *serve and care for one another*.

Gaining the excellence of Christ; His virtues; the likeness of His sonship

Having been conformed to Christ's death, we are *made alive in the likeness of His resurrection*. This is because we are living by Christ's life, which is becoming our life.

What is the evidence of this? The evidence of this transaction is that we are being *changed from glory to glory into the likeness of Christ's sonship*.

But what is the nature of Christ's sonship? It is His *excellencies*; 'the excellence of Christ'. It is the *virtues* of His life, which are becoming ours.

Paul said, 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life that I now live [Christ's life] I live by His faith.' Gal 2:20.

As we continue to receive His word, the *expression* of that life is revealed; the nature of Christ's life - His 'virtues', as the Scriptures call them. So, *the expression of our sonship is the virtues of Christ*.

Blameless, sanctified, fruitful in the knowledge of Christ

'But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 2Pe 1:5-9.

This means that you are receiving what He has perfected for you. It is becoming yours. This is you 'being blameless', or being sanctified, because He has already perfected that *knowledge* in you.

So, you are not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ - you are *becoming what He has already perfected*.

Looking into the face of Christ

'For he who lacks these things is short-sighted [they cannot and will not look into the face of

Christ; they cannot see], even to blindness.' 2Pe 1:9.

They have no way of *receiving* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

Do you see how amazing this passage is in connection with Paul's comments about looking into the face of Christ? It is straightforward, isn't it?

'For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.'

Compelled by His love to lay down our life

We are being delivered from the motivation to live for ourselves and, like Christ, are *compelled by love* to lay down our lives for others. These are the works of our sonship, which Christ has already perfected for us.

A practical example of this motivation is our desire to participate with our brethren in an *agape* meal. Why is that? It is because that is what *Jesus Himself desired*. His motivations and desires will become ours.

So, if you have a problem with meeting and relating with one another at an *agape* meal, you are not receiving the excellencies of Christ; you have not been conformed to His death.

I love this; this was Jesus' desire in relation to the first *agape* meal of the New Covenant. 'With fervent desire [fervent desire sounds like love, doesn't it?] I have desired to eat this Passover with you.' Luk 22:15.

His desire to eat the meal with them was not because the 'keeping' of that Passover meal mattered. Rather, it was *because He wanted to eat it with them*.

'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'

Likewise, those who are part of Christ's kingdom will desire to eat this meal with Him and with their fellow brethren in His body. That is, they will be motivated to share testimony with one another, and to pour out on the sacrifice and service of others.

