

BLAMELESS AND WITHOUT SPOT PART 3

Peter Hay, prepared for word ministry, 7 March 2021

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

In our last session, we began to consider the practical implications of walking before the Lord 'without spot and blameless' until His appearing. We will continue this focus in this session as we consider the daily reality of our baptism.

Blamelessness – a culture of life

Before we discuss baptism and its elements, and how it relates to the principle of blamelessness, I will make, and reiterate, a point that we have been making over these last couple of sessions: blamelessness is *a culture of life* that is only possible through fellowship in the offerings and sufferings of Christ. It is a culture.

It is not sinless perfection. We are not blameless through our best efforts to be righteous or acceptable to God or free from sin. In fact, to claim that we are free from sin means that we are not *of God*. So, it is obviously not that.

However, blamelessness is also not absolution from our sin because of our claim to the benefits of Christ's offering on the cross.

We can lean one way and seek to obtain blamelessness through the efforts of our flesh. Or, on the other hand, we can say that we know we cannot do that, so we are just blameless because Christ's blood was shed for us; and, whatever we do, irrespective of how we live, we are blameless before Him. That is complete nonsense. That is not what we mean by 'blamelessness'.

Blamelessness – the outcome of participation in His offering

Blamelessness is the daily, sanctifying outcome of our participation in Christ's offering, through which He accomplished our sinless perfection.

In His fellowship, we find deliverance and recovery from sin. Sin does happen. Blamelessness is not sinlessness; blamelessness is our being connected to a process by which we are changed and obtain what *He has already perfected for us*.

We are also recipients. On one hand, it is *deliverance and recovery from sin*; and on the other hand, we are *recipients of grace* for participation in the fulfilment of God's will as His son.

Blameless – a trait of a son of God

It is critical that we understand blamelessness because it is a trait of a son of God.

A blameless person is *born of the Spirit*. They are not a son of God who is trying to *achieve* blamelessness. Blamelessness is a trait, or characteristic, of a son of God.

Paul testified in his writings to the Philippians, saying that he laboured as a bond slave of Christ so that his hearers would become blameless or harmless, or pure children of God, or sons of God 'without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world'. Php 2:15.

Do you see the point? He connected harmless and blamelessness, with being a child of God. This is the key point: no-one inherits eternal life or has entry into heaven unless they are born of God. This was an imperative in the writings of the New Testament apostles, that we understand this principle of blamelessness.

All are crucified with Christ

We will reiterate a scriptural principle that we made over the last two sessions. We will keep talking about this because it is a key understanding that we need to obtain.

We are all crucified with Christ: the whole world has been crucified with Christ.

This was the outcome of the Father making the whole of humanity to be the body of Christ in Gethsemane, when Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath. The cup that Jesus received from the Father was a cup that every individual of mankind had already been made to drink.

All have drunk of God's fury

'For thus says the Lord God of Israel to me [to Jeremiah]: "Take this wine cup of fury [the wrath of God] from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them".' Jer 25:15-16.

The Lord sent Jeremiah to all the inhabitants of the earth to make them drink that cup. Jer 25:29. No-one escaped! It was not that he went to this nation

and that nation and this one; the Lord said that *all the inhabitants of the earth* are to drink this cup.

We know that the outcome of drinking this cup was a sword that was applied to the life of those who drank the cup, to cut them out and away from God, into a place of being forsaken.

Christ drank our cup of cursing

From the prophetic writings of Zechariah, we understand that when Jesus drank this cup, not only was it fellowship between the Lord Jesus and every person who had already drunk the cup, but also, when He drank the cup, the sword that was applied upon every person in God's judgement, was applied to Him. We know that it was applied upon Him because His body became *the corporate body of sin*.

“Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the man who is my companion,” says the Lord of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones.” Zec 13:7.

The sword of the Lord separates and gathers

That phrase, ‘turn My hand against the little ones’, can be equally translated as ‘turn My hand against them’ and as ‘will turn My hand on them’.

The amazing point about this, as we will demonstrate, is that it is the effect of a two-edged sword. He will turn His hand *against* something that does need to go out, and He will turn His hand also *towards* us to gather us to Himself. Both of those translations illustrate the point that He made.

“And it shall come to pass in all the land,” says the Lord, “that two thirds in it shall be cut off and die.” Zec 13:8.

That sounds like what happened to the scapegoat, doesn't it? The difference in the New Covenant is that when Jesus was made to be the scapegoat, we all went out with Him. That is what He is saying here.

‘Two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire.’ Zec 13:8-9.

The sword and suffering

The context of suffering is a sword that was applied to Jesus, resulting in a third of all those who are part of Him, being cut off. Those who are

not cut off and forgotten forever, are those who come into His name and are part of the new creation - but they do not escape suffering.

The very same sufferings that are causing something to be forsaken become a purifying fire upon that company of people so that they are brought to Himself and become His people. This is amazing, isn't it?

We are refined

‘I will bring one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested.’ Zec 13:9.

What is that saying? It is saying that they will be *recipients of the divine nature*. Everything in them that is not the divine nature will be cut off and burned. But everything that is of His life, which they receive in fellowship with Him, will be refined and multiplied as their eternal reward.

‘[I] will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them, I will say, “This is My people”; and each one will say, “The Lord is My God”.’ Zec 13:9.

This is the statement of the Everlasting Covenant throughout the Scriptures: ‘I will be God to them, and they will be My people.’

The Lord is my God

Now, the beautiful point about this is that each one saying, ‘The Lord is my God’, is evidence of their having received the love of God and the affection for Christ.

This is not the expression of some emotional attachment, although there will be affection. It is first and foremost the confession of the lordship of Christ.

The confession of the lordship of Christ is demonstrated as we follow in the way that He has pioneered for us. It is a commitment of faith, or an obedience of faith, to walk in the fellowship of His offering, obtaining what He has finished for us through His offering journey.

The two-edged sword and the sin offering

The point to note from this passage is that it highlights the two aspects of the sin offering that Christ simultaneously fulfilled at each stage of His offering journey.

One element was the 'scapegoat', by which He descended and took the whole of the old creation out.

And the second element was the 'Lord's goat', by which His blood was shed and He ascended, coming up from the death of sin and bringing a great company with Him.

These were the effects of a two-edged sword upon Him.

The scapegoat and the Lord's offering

In this regard, Zechariah proclaimed the Lord's command, 'Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd.' Zec 13:8.

There are two effects here. One is that people were cut off, dying, and forgotten.

The other effect, which is associated with the scapegoat, is a cutting that cuts people into His name. This is the Lord's goat, isn't it? The sprinkling of the blood of the Lord's goat went right into the most holy place, where His name is.

Both elements are revealed through the offering of the Lamb, and they are the effect of a sword that was applied to Christ and revealed the nature and fruit of His circumcision.

Circumcision

We need to understand what circumcision is. The Scriptures teach that physical circumcision, symbolically, served two purposes in relation to God.

First, it involved the cutting off and the removal of the flesh. A literal piece of flesh was cut off and put away. That was the first aspect of circumcision.

The second aspect of circumcision was that it signified a person's connection to God's covenant. The Lord came to Abraham and said, 'I am going to make an everlasting covenant with you and the sign of the covenant will be circumcision.' Gen 17:10-11.

The first action of the sword is to *cut something from* the flesh. The second edge of the sword brings circumcision, and cuts a person *into* God's covenant.

When they received circumcision, it identified them as belonging to the Lord and as a participant in His covenant purposes.

The circumcision of Christ

These are the two edges of the circumcision principle in Scripture, and we see these two elements in the circumcision of Christ.

The necessity for physical circumcision was ended when Christ abolished the Old Covenant and established the New Covenant, which is the covenant of the Spirit, through His offering on the cross.

Another way of thinking about it is that circumcision is no longer symbolic. There is now an actual circumcision that achieves an actual work. It is not representative of something; nor does it signify something.

Christ's circumcision *achieved* something. When someone believed that they could achieve that end through their own physical circumcision, Paul called it 'the mutilation'. It was a physical cut in the natural body, but it achieved no purpose at all, because Christ has come and revealed the real thing.

Christ's circumcision removes our flesh and the other law

Christ established a process through which the flesh, as a principle of life - our other law, the basis of the way in which we live and perceive our life - can be removed from our hearts.

Think about it this way. Physical circumcision changed nothing of the *heart*. It was representative of a fleshly way of living which, symbolically, needed to be put off. But it could not change the heart of anyone; whereas the circumcision of Christ established a process by which that other law, which is the principle of the flesh, can be removed from our heart. That is the first part.

Christ's circumcision brings to glory

The second part is that, through this process, we can be brought to glory as sons of God, in Him. There is a process from one degree of glory to another, by which this circumcision brings us to God.

Paul called this process 'the circumcision of Christ'. I hope that this is obvious, but Christ Himself did not need circumcision. Why is that? It is because He had no other law in His heart and in His identity.

The Father made Him to be sin for us

However, when He became the Head of the corporate body of sin - remember He was a Man, but was sinless and perfect, with no other law - the Father made Him the Head and gave Him authority over all flesh. In fact, Jesus confessed that as He prayed. Joh 17.

The Father made Him the Head of all flesh so that His body was full of sin and self-righteousness. That is amazing, isn't it?

When He became the Head of the corporate body of sin, circumcision by a sword that was awakened against Him was how all flesh was removed from Him and destroyed, as He died.

At the same time, eternal life was given and multiplied to become the life of all those who are called by His name as part of the new creation.

Everyone has the opportunity to respond to the call to come into His name and to become part of the new creation. Everyone does, but of course, not everyone *will*, so they go out holding on to the very thing that God wants to destroy, their flesh, their other law, and their sin.

We are *joined to the circumcision of Christ*. Here is a point: *everyone* is joined to the circumcision of Christ but, for us, where it delivers us from sin and brings us to God, we are joined to that process, or that outcome, of the circumcision of Christ through baptism. That is what I want to talk about today.

Baptism and circumcision

What does our baptism mean? This will expand our understanding of baptism in relation to the principle of Christ's offering. And you will see that walking in our baptism is how we walk blamelessly and without spot.

We are joined to circumcision through baptism. 'In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.' Col 2:11.

It is not physical circumcision, because you can, obviously, not circumcise a person without hands. This is a spiritual activity, or a spiritual work.

So, what is circumcision? It is putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ. It still involves a cut; it still means something put away; and it still connects a person to a covenant.

Faith of our baptism

We must join the circumcision of Christ. How? By being 'buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God [so faith is a key here], who raised Him from the dead.

'And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh [otherwise, you are taken out], He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all your trespasses.' Col 2:12-13. That is a beautiful statement, isn't it!

Joined to the new creation

Having understood what the circumcision of Christ is, we now join it through baptism; and we, who are dead in our trespasses and sins, are being made alive in Him.

When we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as a member of His new creation body - remember that there is a whole body called 'the body of sin' - in Gethsemane, there is a new creation body because of this circumcising activity of Christ.

Unless we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as a member of His new creation body, when we die, we will remain forsaken and forgotten by God in the place of cursing, where Christ has already taken the whole of the old creation.

Illumination for salvation

He has already *finished* this judgement on the whole world. And the whole world is already condemned.

Now, we are already in Christ and are part of the new creation. But, unless a person who does not know Christ is illuminated and turns to Him and receives the salvation that He has pioneered for them, they will remain forsaken and forgotten forever when they die. They will be in the lake of fire where He has already taken the old creation.

Participation in the full provision

Baptism into Christ is a believer's faith for participation in the full provision of Christ's offering; not just the *benefits*, but the full provision.

Remember, it is faith for participation in what has been taken out, recognising that we were taken out with Him; but it is also faith for participation in what has been brought back, or is being raised, or awakened, from the death of sin, with Him.

Baptism into Christ is a believer's faith for participation in the full provision of Christ's offering. It establishes a believer on the pathway of salvation that Christ has already perfected for them through His once for all offering.

Baptism as a daily walk

Baptism establishes us on a pathway on which we must continue to walk in the faith and understanding of the meaning of baptism. This is a pathway of faith.

Paul said, 'Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.' Heb 12:2.

We must understand that, as He journeyed along, He obtained the *knowledge* of our sonship, but He is also the Author and Perfecter of our faith. So, we are looking unto Jesus who, through His offering journey, has authored and perfected the faith.

And how do we obtain that faith? We obtain it by hearing His word.

'Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the *joy* that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

This is the throne before which we are to come with great boldness.

The word defines our journey and fellowship

The foundation of our journey, in fellowship with Christ, is the word!

We receive the word as light that shines from the face of Christ, through the ministry of His messengers.

Therefore, we need to 'look unto Jesus'. We do not see someone who has 'done a great job on our behalf'. We look into His face to see the light of the finished offering. It communicates the faith that He has authored and perfected for us, as well as the knowledge of our sonship and works that we are to accomplish in Him.

We receive the word of God as light that shines from the face of Christ through the ministry of His messengers, and we do this by looking unto Jesus. As we do this, we receive faith by hearing and receiving this word. Remember, He has perfected our faith, which is communicated to us through the word.

Faith speaks

What does it 'look like' to have obtained the faith that comes by hearing the word? We begin to *speak*. Having received the same spirit of faith, 'I believed and therefore I spoke'.

We exercise this faith by speaking, in *fellowship*. And, as we have said many times now – and I hope this is 'getting into our bones' – that 'speaking' is our conversation together. And it is our conduct. Both are equally true.

What does this 'look like' for our daily participation in the circumcision of Christ, remembering that our daily participation in the circumcision of Christ is the daily reality of our baptism.

Conformed to His death

There are two things that I want to look at which have to do with the two sides of the circumcising sword on Christ.

The first is *the fellowship of His sufferings*, and the second is what it means to be *conformed to His death*.

You may have put those together in your thinking and, of course, there is reality to that. But the fellowship of His sufferings is really *our* sufferings that Christ has come and experienced, and made to be His sufferings.

He experienced all those sufferings, and died, by the grace of God, making it His death, by which He then came up from the death of sin. That is the death that He died. We are to be conformed to *that* death if we are to be in the image of His likeness.

We have to understand the distinction here, because this is the two edges of the circumcising sword. Baptism is faith for participation in this whole provision.

The waters of baptism

You will know that, when you were baptised, you were immersed in water. The 'death' that many people associate with that is the physical death of Jesus when He left His natural body, His physical body, and went to the Father. That is *not* the death that we are joined to in baptism.

The resurrection is not, first and foremost, the resurrection that He touched in immortality. It is not the reality for us, because we are not immortal when we come out of the water.

However, we *are* joined to the fellowship of His sufferings, and we *are* conformed to His death; and we *do* obtain the resurrection life by which He was raised from the dead in His offering journey.

Waters of God's forgetfulness

We must understand what immersion represents. In the first instance, it does not represent Him going into the tomb.

Our immersion in the waters of baptism is our acknowledgement that *we are dying with Christ in the waters of judgement* that overflowed Him when He was completely forsaken in the land of cursing.

Over recent weeks, we have understood that the waters that went over His head, which came like a great flood up to His neck and then covered His head, were called 'the sea, or the waters, of God's forgetfulness'. We have also made the point that, when that happened, Jesus was cut off from the Father as 'the scapegoat', and was forsaken. 'The waters of God's forgetfulness' is the place of cursing, or forgetfulness.

They are the waters of judgement, into which *we* are immersed. So it is important that we understand the meaning of water in the context of baptism.

Immersion in the waters of baptism is our acknowledgement that *we are dying with Christ in the waters of judgement* that overflowed Him when He was completely forsaken in the land of cursing.

Baptism and the two-edged sword

This is the *first* side of the sword that was laid upon Christ. Baptism is the circumcision of Christ, and that circumcision has two sides to it.

The first side is the waters of judgement. It is immersion into the death by which He brought an end to the old creation. 'I have been *crucified* with Christ.'

This is the first side of the sword that was laid upon Christ and upon the whole of mankind, who were made 'the body of Christ'.

Baptism – it is no longer I who live

When we join the fellowship of His sufferings, which is this element of the circumcision of Christ, or this immersion under the water of judgement, nothing of ourselves is exempt from this element of our fellowship in Christ's sufferings.

Another way of saying this is that there is nothing 'good' in you and in me that does not need to *die* in those waters of judgement.

If we think that we have just a skerrick of goodness, and that we will be 'right' if we get rid of the little bit of flesh in us, we are damned.

We are saying, literally, that Jesus needed to go under the waters of judgement for everyone else, but that *we* are fine – as long as He took that bit of our own goodness from us.

No! When we are baptised and immersed, we are acknowledging that there is *nothing good* in us. We are going out with that old creation! We are being illuminated to the implication of our baptism.

Nothing of ourselves is exempt from this outcome of our fellowship in Christ's sufferings; nor is there anything in our life that is redeemable.

We might think, 'Yes, I can see how I go out with Christ; but there are some traits in me that God wants.' That is not true!

In truth, He wants us to live by *His* life, not by *our* life.

As Paul himself testified, 'I have been crucified', which means 'cursed'. 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.' Gal 3:13.

'I have been crucified [or cursed] with Christ. It is no longer I who live [nothing of my life is alive anymore; it is all gone!]' Gal 2:20.

This is the first confession, or acknowledgement, of someone who is immersed in that water of baptism.

Baptism - the fellowship of Christ's sufferings

We have to be joined, or conformed, to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. There are two elements of this joining.

First, we experience the fellowship of His sufferings in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit *when we hear the word*.

Second, in our day to day experience of suffering, we are conformed to the fellowship of His sufferings, acknowledging that we are *crucified with Christ*.

We will consider both of these elements.

Joined to His sufferings in response to the word

Let's consider, firstly, sufferings *because of the word*.

Think about a context in which there is a proclamation of the word – at church, or a young adults or teenagers meeting. As the word is preached to us, or proclaimed to us through body ministry, we may be *specifically convicted* of a particular sin, by the Holy Spirit.

This may be through a word of knowledge that the Spirit gives to a person to communicate; it may be in the proclamation of the word; or it may also be in our house to house fellowship. Remember that it was at an *agape* meal in a house that the apostle Paul addressed the apostle Peter – actually, on this very point.

As the word is shared, the Holy Spirit ‘hits’ your heart; you feel as though a goad has come and pierced your heart. And you are laid bare, exposed before Him to whom you must give an account.

Jesus has suffered the impact of our sin on others

As the Lord comes to us with ‘eyes as a flame of fire’, our heart is exposed before Him, and we are illuminated to see our sin, and its *effect on others*.

It is one thing to recognise that we are sinners – and really, we are idiots if we don’t recognise that, because that is the truth of the matter!

But it is in relation to the *impact* of our sin on *others* that illumination is needed, because *that pain* which we have caused to others is *the suffering of death* that Jesus has tasted for them.

When I sin against another person, they are in pain; but Jesus has *already suffered* that pain *with them*. He has tasted the suffering of death for *every person*, including the suffering of death caused by *my sin*.

This is how we can look on *Him* whom we have pierced, when the damage we have inflicted has been on our brothers and sisters.

Repentance without regret

Under the influence of grace and supplication, as we look on Him whom we have pierced, we begin to *mourn* for our sin. This is sorrow – or it should be – that leads to ‘repentance without regret’. 2Co 7:10.

The ‘without regret’ element connects with ‘the sea of God’s forgetfulness’.

If we regret something, it means that it has not been forgotten. It means that we are constantly

remembering it. It means that it has not ‘gone out’. We are holding on to it, either to ‘beat ourselves up’ in self-righteousness, or to try to excuse ourselves in self-righteousness. Either way, it has not ‘gone out’; or, to put it a better way, it has gone out, and *we are still with it*.

Through the word, the Holy Spirit connects us to the pathway of salvation that Jesus has pioneered

Paul made this point in his second letter to the Corinthians: ‘For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading to salvation*.’ 2Co 7:10.

I love this! It is ‘leading to salvation’! This means that this *point of recovery* for you and me, is part of the *pathway* of salvation that Jesus has *already pioneered*. Isn’t that amazing!

It is not that I touch salvation only when I feel that it is time for me to repent! It is that I *respond* when the *Holy Spirit* says, ‘*Today*, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart.’ Heb 3:15.

This is part of the pathway of salvation that Christ has *pioneered* for us, to which the Holy Spirit is *connecting* us.

This is how He is turning our *mourning* into *travail*. He is connecting it to *this journey*.

Repentance produced in us

Paul said, ‘Godly sorrow [by the Spirit of grace and supplication] *produces*.’ This is amazing! It is not that you have *in yourself* the capacity for repentance – something is *produced* in you.

Repentance is *granted* to us. ‘If perchance He grant them *repentance*.’ 2Ti 2:25.

Crucified with Christ – repentance without regret

‘For godly sorrow *produces* repentance leading to salvation [it is on the *pathway* of salvation], not to be regretted.’ 2Co 7:10.

As previously discussed, to regret something, is to keep remembering it. If we do that, we are denying that we are *crucified* with Christ. Gal 2:20.

When Paul was crucified with Christ, he was *completely submerged* in the sea of God’s forgetfulness, and was forsaken. This is what we want to happen to our sin; to our self-righteousness.

‘But the sorrow of the world produces death.’ 2Co 7:10.

The 'sorrow of the world' is regret, isn't it? Why does it produce death? It is because *we* go out with the thing that we are regretting.

Sin and self-righteousness submerged and forgotten; sanctification produced

Paul continued, 'For *observe* this very thing.' He was saying, 'Be *illuminated* to this.' To 'observe' we have to *see*, don't we?

'For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves [these are the works of faith], what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire [love], what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.' 2Co 7:11.

Now, this 'proving' is not you getting to the end of the matter and saying, 'Yep, I did it! I'm okay now!'

Rather, it is you *presenting* yourself as a *living sacrifice* in this context of mess; and the will of God, which is your sanctification, is being 'proven'. Rom 12:1-2.

Something is being delivered *from* you, and you are able to stand up in a *new way*, because something is *produced in you*.

Our repentance is without regret, because we are crucified with Christ. Our sin is forgotten as the self-righteousness within us, which brought forth the sin, is being taken away and forgotten. Circumcision is happening here, *by the word*, and self-righteousness is going out.

Our repentant response – grace capacity through fellowship in His sufferings

This does not mean that I am convicted by the word, and then simply say, 'Yes, I see that; but it's forgotten now.' It is going to be forgotten, but *not* simply because you say, 'I don't need to do anything about it.'

It is being forgotten because you are *joined* to the *fellowship* of *that pain*, by which you are obtaining *grace* for all these things that Paul listed.

You did not have these things before. They are now being *produced in you* – the capacity for 'clearing of yourself', diligence, indignation, fear, and the rest. They are not in you or me. This is the outcome of accepting that, yes, we are *dead* with Christ in this matter, and we are coming alive by this grace.

So, the process of putting off the flesh – *allowing this thing to be forgotten* – is fellowship in the sufferings of Christ.

Fellowship and reconciliation with those against whom we have sinned

What do 'the sufferings of Christ' 'look like' for us? It is *us applying ourselves* to fellowship with those against whom we have sinned.

There will be mess and trauma there, as we are illuminated to something, and need to go and *make reconciliation*. It is fellowship in His *sufferings by which* this has been *taken away*. And the capacity to do this is being *granted to us* as the *life of Christ* is being manifested in our body.

This process of 'putting off the flesh' is fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, as we apply ourselves to fellowship with those against whom we have sinned, as we make *restitution*.

There is a *cost*, isn't there! There is an *implication* of our sin that we *gladly* engage in – making restitution, where necessary or possible. This enables us to seek forgiveness and relational recovery.

Sometimes, however, we simply have to leave things, and walk with the consequences of them – the fruit of them.

Immersed in Christ's death – His own nature produced in us

Now, Paul said that these responses are *godly*, and are the evidence that something is produced in us – something of *God's own nature*. It is something of the divine nature that was not in us before, but is being *produced*.

It is not *of* ourselves; otherwise, our repentance would be a self-righteous endeavour. Rather, it reveals the 'life out of death' that becomes our possession, as we are conformed to Christ's death. We are now living by *Christ's life*, and this is the *second* side of the sword.

We do not have access to the *life*, which enables repentance and then assists us to get on with our sonship, *unless* we are joined to the *circumcision* that is bringing a death – bringing something to an end.

We are changing into His image

Now, this is an amazing point! As the other law is circumcised from us, we cease from experiencing the confrontation of Christ's eyes as a flame of fire.

When the word is proclaimed, and the Holy Spirit is convicting us, our heart is laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Heb 4:13.

What are those eyes like? They are like a *fiery flame*; eyes as 'a flame of fire'. Rev 1:14. And we feel the pain and the trauma of that, don't we?

However, as the other law is being *circumcised* from us, we cease from experiencing the *confrontation* of Christ's eyes as a flame of fire.

It is as though the reproach of His eyes is being 'rolled off us', as we put off the old man and his deeds. Col 3:9.

Of course, Christ's eyes are not changing! It is not that, as we put off the old man, His eyes 'soften'. They are still eyes as a flame of fire; but they no longer *confront* us, because the thing that wants to continue in our *shame* is actually *going*.

It is not Christ's eyes that are changing so that we can be more 'engaged' by them; rather, it is that *we are changing into His image!*

The 'fire of love' depicted by His eyes is becoming *our nature*, and describes *our desire* for fellowship in Spirit and truth. We are changing!

Fellowship in the sufferings of Christ in our daily walk

We have discussed our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, or our immersion in His death, *as a consequence of the word*.

We will now consider this same principle in relation to *our daily sufferings*.

These are our sufferings which result from time and chance; but there may also be, at times, the sufferings that are the result of our stupidity!

As we have previously noted, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings under the conditions of *time and chance*. These are our sufferings *as a consequence of God's judgement*, which became *Christ's sufferings*.

Suffering uncovers the principle of the flesh

In these times of difficulty, when we suffer or are under pressure, we may respond with reaction, anger, discontent, complaining; or we may seek to compensate ourselves for the suffering and pain that we are experiencing. This is all *sin*, isn't it?

If anyone says that they do not sin, they are a liar, and the truth is not in them. 1Jn 1:8. That is what happens under the *pressure of suffering*.

We may become discontented, sad, reactive, complaining, self-seeking, compensating, and the like. These responses reveal our self-righteous *expectations* of ourselves and of our lives. Under the pressure of suffering, our reactions demonstrate that we are living by the *principle of the flesh*. They are sin.

So, we are in trouble! We are supposed to be blameless; but, under pressure at work, for example, we may have had a bad reaction to our boss. We have heard that blamelessness is necessary for sonship – so am I no longer a son of God? No, that is not true.

The Holy Spirit prompts our turning to Christ's face – faith to join and be delivered

How are we to respond? What is the *connection* to the *offering and sufferings of Christ*, which indicates that we are being *delivered* from our sin?

The *Holy Spirit* sets Himself against the flesh and brings to our remembrance the things which *Christ has spoken*, so that we are able to *turn to Him* and to respond to our circumstances *in faith*.

I love this point! It is the *Holy Spirit* who is set against my flesh as it flares up. What does He do? Does He come and beat me? No. He brings to *my remembrance* the word that Jesus has spoken.

What is that word? It is the *light* that has shone from His face, revealing both the *knowledge of my sonship*, and the *faith* that He has perfected *for my participation* in His offering to *deal with this sin* – right there, as it is happening.

He brings to remembrance the things that Christ has spoken, so that we are able to *turn to Him* and to respond to our circumstances *in faith*.

When others sin against us

We know that, sometimes, our suffering may be according to time and chance; or because we have been silly, and caused ourselves trouble.

At other times, the suffering that we experience – our fellowship in Christ's offering – may be the impact of the sin of *others* upon us.

We have discussed being illuminated about *our sin* against a person; but, of course, we will be *sinned*

against. We will consider this element of suffering more closely.

We all experience pain as other people sin against us and cause us physical, emotional or psychological harm. Often, an apology is not forthcoming by those who caused this injury; and in the world, we just *rise up*.

Isn't it simply the human condition to *demand justice* in relation to sin against us? It emerges as a strong sense of what is *right*, and what is *wrong*.

As we have noted, we all experience pain as others sin against us, and their apology might not be forthcoming. They may not *care* or even be *aware* that they have hurt us!

And, sometimes, the pain that we feel is simply the violation of *our own law*.

We need to accept that some of the things that we are *offended* by, or which we think people are *judging* us for, or are sin against us, are really our *own self-righteous view* of them, and of ourselves, and of the way that we think we *should* be treated.

The painful 'injustice' may be simply in our own head, according to our self-righteous *perspective* of good and evil.

Our delivering faith response – I am crucified with Christ

As we experience these sufferings – irrespective of whether they be the sufferings associated with time and chance or the sufferings of others' sin against us – the Holy Spirit *helps us to respond by faith*.

Our confession of faith is a literal confession. It is the confession, 'I am crucified with Christ here'.

It is not the confession, 'This is unjust', although it may begin that way. The thief on the cross, who found salvation, began with blasphemy, didn't he? And we probably begin with reaction!

But the Spirit is bringing to remembrance the *word*, and is granting to us *faith*, so that our speech can *change*. It is a different conversation. It is the *speech of faith!*

What is that first speech? It is, 'I am crucified with Christ. This is the daily *walk in my baptism, today*.'

Our confession of faith is that we are crucified with Christ. As we turn in *this way* – so, there is a turning still happening – we are being *delivered* from our self-righteousness and sin.

We deserve to be crucified with Christ – self-righteous dealt with

If we accept that we are co-crucified with Christ, we accept that we *deserve* to be crucified with Him. We do not demand *justice*, do we?

This means that something is beginning to be *removed from us*.

We are being delivered from our self-righteousness and sin. We are able to forgive others by the grace of God, rather than as an expression of our own self-righteous 'benevolence'.

This is a beautiful point, isn't it? It is not that when someone sins against us, we, out of the 'generosity' of our own heart, say, 'We forgive you, brother', when, actually, inside, we are saying that merely because it makes *us* feel better.

If we are *dead with Christ* – co-crucified with Christ – we make no accusation against another, do we? The capacity to forgive them is *the grace of God*, by which we have found forgiveness, ourselves, as we *delight* in the reality that our self-righteousness is being dealt with.

It is much easier to forgive when we recognise how much we ourselves need to be forgiven.

The sufferings which were a judgement now train us to come as sons

The sufferings that we experience are commuted, or changed, to chastening.

Remember that we are suffering *under the judgement of God*. But when this illumination comes to us, these sufferings are *commuted to chastening*. They no longer *condemn* us to *separation* from God; these sufferings are now for the purpose of *training sons* to come to the Father.

These sufferings are commuted to chastening in Christ, as we stand in the *grace of fellowship with Him*.

Accepting the pain of His circumcision, by which our other law is removed

We receive our introduction by *faith* into the *grace* which is the *fellowship of His circumcision*, of His suffering.

This faith has come by hearing the word – the word which the Holy Spirit is now ministering to us, bringing to our remembrance.

If we have been truly illuminated, we will *accept the pain*. Being illuminated does not change the pain;

there is still pain with chastening. We will accept that the pain which we are experiencing is for *more* than just our discipline, or training.

The pain is part of the *cup of circumcision* to remove from us the *other law*, from which spring our reactions and sinful responses.

The pain is actually the mark that we have to *let something go* – particularly the judgements and expectations and responses that spring from our self-righteous law. We need to let them go!

Our recognition that this is a *circumcising action* is not *just* our connection to the sonship that we are to walk in. It is that, and that is glorious!

But we do actually have to *let something go*, as well. We have to *forget it*.

These are all our *judgements* about the ‘right’, or the ‘wrong’, or the ‘why’ of these things which are happening. We do need to *let go* of these self-righteous expectations and judgements *into the sea of God’s forgetfulness*.

Walking only by new mercies, new life, each day

And, this is why, at the end of each day, we need to ‘draw a line’ under our day. We need to say, ‘All of that – all the *good* and all the *bad* – is in the sea of God’s forgetfulness.’

This includes even our *righteousness*. If we live by the basis of ‘accumulated righteousness’, we are still *self-righteous*, even if our works were the works of our sonship. This is incredible!

We have to let that go, because, what happens in the morning? We receive *new mercies*. The mercies of God are new every morning! Lam 3:23.

This means that we are *not* walking *on the basis of our failures or our successes*; rather, we are engaging and *presenting ourselves* by *new mercies*. This means that where we are walking has to be *by new life*, doesn’t it?

Setting our mind on the Spirit – presenting ourselves each day a living sacrifice

The mercies of the Lord are new every morning. In the morning, by the mercies of God, we *present ourselves* for *fellowship* in the *offering and sufferings* of Christ, as living sacrifices. This is a *priestly work*, isn’t it? Rom 12:1.

The way that we *think* is very important here. How do you consider yourself? Do you consider yourself

crucified with Christ – not as a theological principle, but as a *reality* when you are suffering?

This is how the Spirit is leading us, and is what it means to ‘set our mind on the Spirit’. Rom 8:5. We find that we are progressively being transformed, as our minds are being renewed to think *spiritually*. Rom 12: 2.

Thinking spiritually

What does ‘thinking spiritually’ ‘look like’?

It means that I think, ‘I am crucified with Christ’. Gal 2:20.

It means that I ‘think it not strange’ when I experience a ‘fiery trial’. 1Pe 4:12.

It means that I have the mind of Christ, which is not grasping for equality, but is a *commitment to obedience*, even the obedience that was ‘the death of the cross’. Php 2:5-8.

This is a *transformed* mind.

There is the other side of this, which is ‘being conformed to His death’, and we will pick this up in our next session.

Maturing through the process of the fellowship of His sufferings

As we continue in this *process* of the *fellowship of His sufferings*, our other law and our self-righteousness should be *progressively going* from us.

This does not mean that we will cease from suffering because we are *conformed* to the fellowship of Christ’s offering and His sufferings.

It *does* mean that the *nature* and *effect* of that offering *changes*. It is no longer constantly ‘dealing with the flesh’ in us.

Remember that, on the other side of the circumcising knife, we are being *made alive to God*. As we are being made alive and mature, we are actually demonstrating the *excellencies of Christ*, as our self-righteousness is being dealt with.

Our conversation changes as our other law is removed

The mark of this maturity is that we are more circumspect in our speech. We will speak less into matters that have nothing to do with us, because we are not *motivated* by our *perspective* of what is right and wrong in a matter. This is childish, carnal behaviour. It is supposed to ‘go out’ in what the Lord has *taken out* in the waters of judgement.

The evidence that this is happening in our life is that we speak less into things that we have *no accountability* for. We become more circumspect in our speech, less reactive, more content in every circumstance of life.

As we mature, our suffering becomes for the salvation of another

The nature of our suffering, though, becomes purely *for the salvation of another*.

‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies [by the mercies of God, present your bodies - ‘the Father of mercies’] and the God of all comfort [the comfort that we receive in the fellowship of suffering], who comforts us in all our tribulation [so that you can get on and ‘do your stuff’, because you have to be rid of your self-righteousness], that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

‘For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us [we will not be delivered from them.], so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted [it is not just for our self-righteousness, because this is a mature person walking here], it is for *your* consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for *your* consolation and salvation.’
2Co 1: 3-6.

There is a lot to say about this - this is a beautiful reality. This is the mark of being part of the *covenant* purpose of God - that same capacity to minister Their life, one to another.

So, we do have to be conformed to the fellowship of His sufferings, because we do have ‘the flesh’; and we have been given seventy years to be delivered from this self-righteousness, in the circumcision of Christ.

But, as we are *progressively being delivered* from that way of living, in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings, we are becoming mature, or are growing up, in the capacity to *minister grace and life* to another. This is death working in us so that life may come to another. 2Co 4:12.

Praise the Lord! Let’s continue in this conversation. We will pick up this point in the week to come, and we are also going to discuss ‘blamelessness’ in the *agape* meal.