

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ABRAHAM PART I

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

Introduction

In our Bible study today, we are going to consider content that has been prepared towards Easter.

For our Easter gatherings, we have prepared two booklets to support our ongoing fellowship in the word. The first is called *The Seventy Weeks Prophecy* and the second is *The Blessing of Abraham in Families*.

Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to be considering content from the preface of the second booklet, *The Blessing of Abraham in Families*.

To preach another gospel is to be accursed

I will begin by making the point that, when Paul proclaimed his gospel and spoke of his gospel, he made it very clear that there is only *one gospel*.

That might seem like an obvious point to make; however, the reality is that, within Christendom, and also within our stream of churches, there have been many variations on the gospel that Paul taught.

Paul said that if anyone preaches a gospel other than what he preached, they are to be *accursed*.

He didn't mean that if we hear someone preach a gospel that's different from what Paul preached, we should say nasty things about them, and despise them and have nothing to do with them. He was not saying anything about *our* response to it.

He said that the *implication* of proclaiming a gospel that is other than what Paul proclaimed is that they remain cursed.

That means they are not joined to the process by which they are coming back from the dead with Christ, so they remain *separated from God* in 'the place of cursing'.

That's what it means to be 'accursed'. This means that they are not blameless.

We have spent a number of weeks looking at this subject of blamelessness and, as we continue to break it open, this is going to become increasingly significant and foundational to our understanding of how we *walk as sons of God*.

At the outset, the point is that if the gospel we are proclaiming or hearing is not the gospel which

Paul proclaimed, then we remain in the place of cursing, because we continue in blame.

That's what it means to be accursed. It means that we continue to walk in blame, or *not* blameless, before the Lord.

Even those established in the gospel can preach another word

A person who proclaims the gospel in this manner is not blameless, because the life that they are living is not fellowship in the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, most fundamentally, it means that He is not being revealed in them.

The apostle Paul said, 'But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.' Gal 1:8.

Now, that is a curious statement. Why would Paul, who preached the gospel, say that he may end up preaching another gospel?

That is exactly what happened to the apostle Peter. And Paul said that Peter was to be blamed, which meant that Peter, at that point, was accursed.

That is confronting, isn't it? The foundation of the church - 'on this rock I will build My church' - while he continued in a different gospel, was accursed.

Paul made a strong point here, that even those who *are* established in the gospel can turn again to another way, unless they continue in the fellowship to which the Lord has established them.

'As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

'For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.' Gal 1:9-10.

The way we hear the gospel affects the way we walk

Now, this is an important point. It is a trap that messengers who have been called to proclaim the

gospel can fall into, in that they draw back from proclaiming the cross of Christ because of its confrontational nature.

If you *are* called to proclaim the gospel, and you draw back from the word of truth because you desire to please men, you are accursed.

But it is equally true that if we *hear* the word, and fail to receive what is being proclaimed because the way it is being delivered, or who is delivering it, is not pleasing to us, then we are similarly accursed.

This is a significant and foundational subject that we need to embrace and understand, because it will affect the way in which we walk.

Paul said that he did not receive his gospel from men; nor did he acquire it through scholarship.

This is another interesting thing that Paul said because, prior to his conversion, that is exactly where his gospel came from. It was a tradition that he had received through his education and training, and he was strongly dedicated to that tradition.

He said that something had to break in on that, so that he was able to receive the word of truth. He said that he received the gospel of sonship from God, from the Father, through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Gal 1:11-12.

Knowing the lordship of Christ

On the road to Damascus, Paul met Jesus, face to face. That was where *the affection of Christ* was ministered to him. It made a breach on his heart, and he received that love.

The evidence of that love in him, then, was his confession of the lordship of Christ.

When Paul met the Lord face to face, he was illuminated to see that his works that were motivated by his zeal for God, which had come from his training, and his zeal for the covenant nation – remember, these are the children of Abraham according to genealogy – were *injuring Christ*. They were injuring the Lord.

As he was injuring the Lord, Jesus Himself said, ‘Saul, you are kicking the goad and you are causing injury to yourself. The more zealous you are, the more you are against the Lord who proclaimed the word to your fathers, and the more you are causing injury to yourself.’

He was kicking against the goad of the word of the cross, and was injuring himself.

He was *accursed*. He was going further and further out, and he was in a place of torment. As he went to Damascus, his state of mind was so unsettled that he breathed threats, and swore. Act 9:1-5.

This was similar to Peter on the night of His offering.

As the love of God was poured into his heart, Paul confessed Christ as Lord and asked, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Act 9:6.

This was a different statement from, ‘Yes, I’ve seen the Lord. I know what to do.’ This was the statement of someone who has touched the lordship of Christ.

‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ The Lord answered him, saying, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be *told* what you must do.’

The Old and the New Covenant is one gospel

The account in Acts Chapter 9 is slightly different from the account in Acts Chapter 22, where we read the testimony of what Paul heard from Ananias.

He particularly picked up on the fact that, having believed that he was zealous as a child of Abraham, he realised that he was persecuting the Lord who had already been preached to his father, Abraham.

So, in claiming to be of the heritage of Abraham, he was actually illegitimate – this is an amazing statement.

‘Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, “Brother Saul, receive your sight”.’ Act 22:12.

A messenger came and ministered to Saul the capacity for illumination. ‘And at that same hour I looked up at him.’ Saul humbled himself to receive the word of the gospel from a messenger sent to him – ‘I looked up at him’.

‘Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob] has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.’

‘For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.’ Act 22:12-15.

The God whom Paul presumed he was serving revealed to him the gospel that had been preached to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Can you see how significant this is? There is not a gospel for the Old Covenant and a gospel for the New Covenant. There is *one* gospel.

So, the gospel that Paul was teaching under the Old Covenant was absolutely accursed. That was the confrontation that occurred.

God would reveal His Son in Paul

The God whom Paul presumed he was serving revealed to him the gospel that had been preached to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Paul’s tradition and scholarship put him at odds with the very word that had been proclaimed to his fathers.

This was quite a confrontation of Paul’s religion, wouldn’t you agree? It wasn’t merely that he realised that there is a different way to walk. I think his very fundamental belief system was shaken to its core.

Paul testified that he came to understand that the Father was pleased to reveal His Son Jesus Christ in him. Gal 1:15-16. To believe this required *the faith of the Son of God*.

Now, just think about it for a moment.

Paul had grown up learning that he was a recipient of the blessing that belonged to Abraham, because he was in the lineage of Abraham, and because he kept the Law, the most fundamental element of which was ‘a nick in the flesh’.

Now, all of a sudden, not only did he realise that believing in this traditional way was cursing him; but, also, he heard that God the Father was pleased to reveal God’s own Son in him.

This required the faith of the Son of God to believe that the Creator of heaven and earth would reside in Paul; moreover, that He would reside there so that, as Paul spoke, Christ Himself would be revealed to his hearers.

The wonder and implications of this revelation absolutely ‘floored’ Paul.

He said that it took him three years to fully appreciate and embrace the implications of this call upon his life. Gal 1:18.

At the end of his three-year, individual journey with Christ, Paul went to Jerusalem and conferred with Peter, remaining there with him for fifteen days. He also met James, the Lord’s brother. It would have been an interesting discussion time, I would imagine.

After this, Paul went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, preaching the *faith* that he had once tried to destroy.

Paul, in receiving the gospel, received the faith of the Son of God to believe what the Father was saying to him, because Christ was now dwelling in his heart, *by that faith*. This is the faith that had been proclaimed to Abraham.

Now, the fruit of this ministry was that Paul’s hearers glorified God the Father, *in Paul*. Gal 1:24. The first aspect of the gospel that Paul was called to preach was that the Father would reveal His Son Jesus Christ, in him.

That was the first element that Paul understood, and Paul said that this was foundational to his preaching the gospel.

Christ dwelling in our heart by faith is foundational to preaching the gospel

This is another key in relation to a messenger of Christ. Unless Christ dwells in our heart by faith, we can give the most eloquent and integrated statement of theology, and it will *not* minister one element of the Spirit.

The most fundamental condition for the capacity to proclaim the gospel is *not* scholarship. It is that *Christ dwells in our heart by faith*.

We also do need to search the Scriptures, and to understand what the Scriptures are saying, by the Holy Spirit, but the ministry of Christ is because He is *in us*.

The stewardship of the mystery

Paul described the call to preach this gospel to the Gentiles as ‘stewardship’, through which the Son in him was revealed to his hearers. He called it ‘the stewardship of a mystery’.

‘I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the

church [he has understood the implications of Christ being revealed in him, that he might preach Christ to the Gentiles], of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God, which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

‘To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

‘Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.’ Col 1:24-28.

Paul did not around checking on their state of perfection, saying, ‘Oh, we need to fix this up, and we need to fix that up, so that you can be presented.’

He was fulfilling the word of God, which was Christ was being revealed in him, so that, as he preached that word, faith came to those who heard him.

By that faith, they were joined to the very *fellowship* that Paul was joined to, through which they were attaining the perfection that had already been accomplished for them by Christ.

That is what it means to ‘present every man perfect’. It means that Paul preached as one who was established in that very offering.

He ministered the grace and faith of that to those who would hear it, so that they would be joined to the very same process. They would walk blameless before the Lord.

Essential to this stewardship is our fellowship in His sufferings

Now, the word of God was fulfilled through Paul’s stewardship of the mystery; ‘the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God’. Col 1:25.

What was that word of God? That word was, ‘It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I may preach Him among the Gentiles.’ Gal 1:15-16.

That’s what Paul had first received, and the fulfilment of that word was ‘my stewardship of the mystery to you’.

Essential to this stewardship was Paul’s *fellowship in the sufferings of Christ*.

‘Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.’ Col 1:24.

Essential to this stewardship, through which the word of God was being fulfilled for their sake, was Paul’s fellowship in the sufferings of Christ.

This is true for *any messenger*, even Paul.

Paul said, ‘But even if we depart from this.’ ‘Any messenger who departs from this stewardship proclaims another gospel and is accursed.’ It doesn’t matter who you are.

That means Christ is not being revealed in them, because they are not coming back from the dead with Him.

The mystery of the gospel is Christ in you, the hope of glory

Paul stated that the mystery they are to steward, which has been hidden from ages and generations, is now being revealed and proclaimed among the Gentiles.

The mystery they are to steward so that Christ is publicly portrayed among their hearers, is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory. Col 1:27.

This is the mystery. This is the gospel of sonship.

Now, as a person hears this word, Christ is being revealed to them, and Christ is the Word. The Word came and appeared to Abraham and said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Abraham, I am your faith.’

So, as one in whom Christ is being revealed proclaims the word to their hearers, a person who hears this word *receives* the faith of the Son of God, because that is what is being revealed to them.

By this faith, they are enabled to believe for new birth. They are enabled to believe what Paul came to understand: that it *pleased the Father* for Christ to be revealed in them.

We need faith so that, by faith, Christ, who is the Seed of the Father, dwells in our heart. ‘That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith.’ Eph 3:17.

When we receive the Lord Jesus in this way, He becomes the hope of our glory. Paul said that the mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So, a messenger proclaims Christ; we receive faith to believe; and, by faith, Christ dwells in our heart, and He has become the hope of our glory.

Our glory is the expression of His life

'Glory' refers to the expression of life. It is what is seen, or evidenced, of a person's life.

Another way of saying it would be that we know that a person has life by the glory which they demonstrate.

It is not the glory of their own excellence, which the Scriptures call 'the glory of the flower of the field', which is glorious for a moment and then fades away.

It is *the glory of life eternal* birthed in them. The life that we are to express is the life of which we have been born as sons of God. It is not our own life that is being expressed, because we have been crucified with Christ and it is 'no longer I who live'. Gal 2:20.

The glory that we express is the glory of the life of which we have been *born*. In other words, 'the hope of glory' is the hope of growing up and fully attaining the sonship that the Father has predestined for us.

Christ has already perfected our sonship, making it a sure hope

Another foundational and key point is that *this hope is sure*.

It's not that I 'hope' it will come to pass, in that, if I follow all the instructions, then, by implication, it will happen.

It is *a sure hope* because Christ has *already* accomplished the perfection of our sonship.

In other words, the perfect Son dwells in your heart, and you are being changed into the likeness of His image from glory to glory.

That is why it is sure. It's not sure because we hope that we are going to get there.

It's sure because it is *already finished*, and He is granting to us a daily participation in the pathway that He has pioneered to get there, so that, as we walk with Him each day, *we are becoming* what has already been perfected, for He has perfected, forever, those who are being sanctified. Heb 10:14.

This is a sure hope because Christ has already perfected our sonship and has pioneered the pathway upon which we obtain what He has already accomplished.

That is why we have such certainty. It's because it is *already done*.

Paul called it 'a sure hope' because it is the certainty that, through fellowship in the offering of Christ, we are progressively becoming the sons of God whom the Father predestined us to be, in Christ.

Receiving an admonition from a messenger

Paul's most succinct statement of the gospel was expressed in Antioch, when he publicly rebuked the apostle Peter for his hypocrisy. This is a most amazing interaction.

Peter and Paul were involved in this interaction, in front of the church, at an *agape* meal. Paul's statement, made at the highpoint of this admonition to Peter, is the most exquisite and articulate summary of the entire gospel.

Paul publicly rebuked the apostle Peter for his hypocrisy. Can you imagine him standing and saying, 'Peter, you are a hypocrite'?

This is what Paul said of this interaction.

'Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I *withstood* him to his face [Isn't this the commitment of a messenger to come and meet us face to face? And he withstood him, so Paul's demeanour is one of an admonishment], *because he was to be blamed*.' Gal 2:11.

When Paul said that he was to be blamed, he was saying that Peter was *not* blameless before the Lord. And, if Peter was not blameless before the Lord, Peter was accused.

That is confronting, isn't it? This was Peter the apostle; this was the foundation, the man who proclaimed the Pentecost sermon. And Paul said, 'Peter, you are to be blamed. You are not coming back from the dead with Christ on this point.'

Paul noted that Peter would normally eat with the Gentiles. However, in the presence of certain men who came from James, Peter withdrew and separated himself from the Gentiles. Peter did this because he feared the Jews. Gal 2:12.

Now, what did Jesus say when He came to give faith to Abraham? 'Do not fear, Abram.' So, if

Peter was behaving in a way that was motivated by fear, what had he let go of?

He had let go of *the faith of the Son of God*, through which Christ dwelt in his heart. Peter did this because he feared the Jews, whom Paul described as 'the circumcision'.

These men claimed to be the heirs of God's promises to Abraham because of their genealogy, and because of their commitment to the cultural practices of the nation of Israel, including physical circumcision.

Our conduct can proclaim a different gospel

Now, for Peter to be blamed, it meant that he was accursed. This is an amazing point.

'But, even if we [we, as those who have been called to proclaim the gospel], or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.' Gal 1:8.

Through his conduct, which was a form of his speech, Peter was proclaiming a different gospel!

That's what Paul said. 'On the one hand, you're proclaiming Christ crucified. Except, when the Jews come, you are seeking to observe the Law as if there's some validity to that.'

So, he was preaching another gospel; and he was accursed.

Confrontations can be life-changing

The beautiful thing that I love about this - and some of you might find it a little confronting to think that Peter was in this dire situation - is that this confrontation had another *life-changing effect* on Peter.

We know that because we read it in Peter's own letters. We know that Peter received the admonition of Paul, because the word that Paul preached to him was in his heart and in his mouth.

The two writers of the New Testament who specifically mention 'blamelessness' are Paul and Peter. So, like Paul, blamelessness became a focus of Peter's ministry.

Furthermore, the love that had been poured into his heart as he received the light that shone from Christ's face, as he met Paul face to face, was evident in his own love and affection to Paul.

Paul went to Peter with the affection of Christ, and it came with a confrontation. But Peter received the admonition of Paul, because that word was now in his heart and in his mouth, and he testified of his affection for Paul.

Peter said, 'Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things [referring to the sufferings that are coming on the earth, which he described as 'birth pangs'], be diligent to be found in Him in peace [not with fear, in peace], without spot and blameless.' 2Pe 3:14.

Remember that Paul had said, 'You are to be blamed here, Peter.' Peter heard this, and that word was in his heart and in his mouth, and he was able to reveal that to his hearers.

'And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation - as also our beloved brother Paul [Peter received the affection of Christ from his beloved brother, Paul, and communicated that back as testimony], according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people *twist to their own destruction*, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.' 2Pe 3:15-16.

This is amazing - some twisted Paul's words and, as a result, were 'accursed'.

The messenger is to be blameless and walk in fellowship

This is an example of how the word which a messenger proclaims *remains* the message of Christ. It comes from *fellowship*.

The point that I want to draw on here is that a messenger is not a messenger because of perfection.

A messenger is *one* because of *blamelessness*.

Do you see why blamelessness is so fundamental to continuing in the way of the gospel? Peter was certainly not sinless, but he was joined to the process where he could hear and receive from his brother, turn and repent, and then begin to proclaim that very same word.

The key point is that a messenger can only walk blameless if they are part of a fellowship where they are themselves, hearing and receiving the word. They then turn and exemplify the very culture to which they are calling their hearers to

join. It comes from fellowship. It doesn't come from the *perfection* of a messenger.

However, if they are not joined to the process that they should be revealing through their ministry, they are preaching another gospel. They are accursed. John testified that this was the basis of his ministry as part of a presbytery.

He said, 'That which was from the beginning, which we've heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we've looked upon [repentance] and which our hands have handled, concerning the word of life, the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us; that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.'

John exhorted us that our capacity to proclaim this gospel is because we are *joined to a fellowship* in which that *gospel is effective* in our own lives.

The highpoint of Paul's admonition to Peter was this summary statement of the gospel. I think I've quoted this Scripture every week for the last couple of weeks – it's so alive with me that this is the highpoint of his ministry.

Building again according to the flesh

He said to Peter, 'For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.' Gal 2:18-21.

He said, in effect, 'So, Peter, you were joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings by which all that religious Jewish stuff was taken out. In fact, Peter, you were right there at the moment when it happened. You were right there where it was being destroyed. But you are building it again by observing those ordinances and practices.'

He declared, 'If you do that, you are a transgressor.' In other words, 'You are to be blamed, and you are accursed, and you are not living by resurrection life. You are seeking to attain the promises through something that has already been taken out.'

'If I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the Law died to the Law that I might live to God.'

It was the Law that put Christ on the cross. And the Law is putting me there with Christ as well. I am completely unable to fulfil the Law.

It is no longer I who live

However, when I recognise that, I recognise that I am dying with One who is dying with me and is coming back from that dead.

Instead of trying to fulfil the Law, I need to let it kill me so that I am dead with Christ, and I am confessing, 'It's no longer I who live' – because I *can't*.

'I, through the Law, died to the Law', so that I don't live by it anymore, *but* I now live to God. 'For I have been co-crucified with Christ.'

Crucified with Christ, we live by the faith of the Son of God

This is the amazing point. *Everyone* is dead with Him; but not everyone accepts that point.

The only ones who accept that point are those who forgo the right to attain life through their *own efforts*.

'I have been co-crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but *Christ lives in me*.'

It pleased the Father to reveal His Son in me! Do you rejoice that the Father is pleased to reveal His Son in you?

Well, then, *confess* that you have been crucified with Christ. 'But Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

I live by the faith that is being proclaimed to me every time that the word is spoken. This is the bread from heaven. I am living by every word that *proceeds from the mouth of God*.

Reproved for seeking to be perfected by keeping God's Law through the works of the flesh

'I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died in vain.'

We may think, 'There was no need for Him to do that; we merely need to try better, try harder.' Do you see that is complete nonsense?

Paul made a crucial point here. Having recounted this event to the Galatians, he then reproved the

whole Galatian church for seeking to be perfected by keeping God's Law. He called them 'foolish', and described their actions as 'the works of the flesh'.

I have been speaking about messengers who proclaim a gospel other than what Paul proclaimed. The proclaiming of the gospel is the *living* of it. It is not merely the theology of it. It is possible for us to proclaim the theology of it and still deny the need to die with Christ.

We have spoken about messengers but now we are talking about us, as *hearers* who 'latch on to' another gospel. Paul said, 'If you do that, you have been deceived in the same way that Eve was deceived by Satan.'

This is because the alternative gospels don't come from *Christ*.

Paul said that they were foolish. 'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you [cursed you] that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified [Saying, 'That happened when I preached the gospel to you.'])? This only I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?' Gal 3:1-3.

Now, of course, it couldn't have been the works of the Law, because they hadn't even heard the Law. How could they have received the Spirit by keeping the Law? They were absolute transgressors.

Paul was shaking them, saying, 'What a load of nonsense!' 'Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?' He was saying, 'You heard it from me as Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified when I proclaimed the gospel to you. Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect in the flesh?'

Deceived by another gospel that promises God's blessing

The Galatian Christians had been bewitched by the alternative gospel of those who asserted that engaging in certain practices, or sacraments, marked them as 'blessed with God's people'.

They were taught by false teachers that the most fundamental marker of identification with God's

covenant people was that the blessing belongs to Abraham and his children.

The question is, 'What makes you a child of Abraham?' These people were coming and saying, 'If you are to be a child of Abraham, you need to *assimilate* into the culture of His children, the Jews.'

They were taught by these false teachers that the most fundamental marker of identification with God's covenant people was physical circumcision; that 'a nick in the flesh' was the most basic connection to the covenant.

However, Paul said to the Galatians that if they were physically circumcised, Christ would profit them *nothing*.

He said that what Christ achieved when He rose from the dead, they would not be partakers of, if they went and got that nick in the flesh for the purpose of being connected to the covenant.

He exhorted them that if they were physically circumcised, 'Christ would profit them nothing'. Moreover, he said, 'If you go and do that to fulfil the Law, you are now under obligation to keep the entire Law - every single bit of it.'

He declared, 'If you fail on one bit, you come under the condemnation of it all.' He said that it is foolishness to believe that that is possible.

By pursuing righteousness through the Law, the Galatians demonstrated that they had been *deceived by another gospel*.

Looking into Christ's eyes and being convicted by the Spirit

You can see how easy it is, because we give our ear to what we think is appealing to our natural perspective. We have to allow the eyes of the Lord to pierce our heart, and the conviction of the Spirit to come to help us to know what we need to put off.

We need the Spirit to convict us of righteousness, which is to get on and do the works in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Trying to attain life through good works; denying that we are co-crucified with Christ

The Galatians demonstrated that they had been deceived by another gospel. As a consequence, they denied that they had been crucified with Christ.

This is the great irony. The more that we try to attain life through good works or through our own religion, the more we are denying that we are co-crucified with Christ; but the more we are actually *accursed*. We are *blind* - which is the outcome of foolishness - to this reality.

As a consequence, they were denying that they had been crucified with Christ. Moreover, they forsook the faith of the Son of God as their capacity to believe God's word and to live by His life. They were saying, 'We don't need the faith that comes by that word as long as we live in this manner.'

Sacramentalism - the deception that leads us to deviate from the path that Christ pioneered for us

Now, let's talk about us. We have given the Galatians 'a what for'; but what about us?

Most of us understand that we don't need physical circumcision; and that we don't need to keep making the offerings of the Old Covenant. If you are sacrificing pigeons, please stop.

So, what is our vulnerability to the works of the flesh that is a deception leading us to deviate from the pathway that Christ has pioneered for us?

To answer this question, we don't need to look much further than how the Lord has been addressing us in this present season, as He has come among us 'with eyes like a flame of fire'.

What has He come to address?

He has been addressing our sacramental communion practice - and we are all to blame.

The Lord has come to us with eyes as a flame of fire regarding our communion practice

I don't know about you but, as a presbytery, there has been repentance. For me, it has been a very personal response to the Lord; and it happened particularly when Luke Pomery spoke regarding the chastening of the Son.

When He comes, the Lord declares, 'I hate your deeds.'

When that word came, I didn't hear that as, 'You, as a church, I hate what you're doing with the communion.' Rather, I immediately felt the pang that my commitment to sacramentalism is what Jesus hated. Me and my practice were to blame.

Do you see that living that way was seeking to attain blessing through an activity of the flesh?

I was not receiving circumcision; and I was not trying to fulfil all the offerings of the Law.

However, *believing in the sacrament* was an alternative to the fellowship that He was calling us to. *That* is what it means to be 'blamed'.

He has come among us with eyes like a flame of fire. This has been a season in which the Lord has addressed our sacramental practices and perspectives, particularly in relation to the communion and our fellowship together.

As we give our understanding to *blamelessness*, which is the truth in opposition to the lie of sacramentalism, we will see that sacramentalism has many iterations. This is not only in church practice, but also in family practice, where there are certain activities which, if we engage in them, we believe that they endow us with the blessing that desire.

We presume that the way we are living is acceptable to God, confident in our own flesh

'The works of the flesh' include the confidence that we have in the *acceptability* of our own way.

This is the mindset that simply *presumes* that the way we are living is acceptable to God, as though *whatever* we are doing is acceptable to God because we are a believer and we are doing it. *That* is a work of the flesh. This is the confidence that we have in the *acceptability* of our own way.

Presenting ourselves by the mercies of God

I'm not saying now that we have to continuously question our own motives in every step that we take. Rather, it means that we need to *present ourselves by the mercies of God*, each day, *for fellowship in the sufferings of Christ*. It is by the mercies of God that are new every morning.

This is the confession of those who have been joined to what has gone out and has been forgotten the day before.

His mercies are new every morning, by which we *present ourselves* for fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings.

Making one judgement only – confessing that if Christ died for all, then we are dead with Him

That is how we walk and live; not by thinking that whatever we are doing 'is great'.

We say, every day, 'Lord, here I am; I am presenting myself to walk with You, today.'

This is *the fruit of the affection of Christ* being poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, as we meet the Lord and our brethren, face to face. There must be an ongoing receiving of those who are proclaiming Christ to us, because that is the faith by which we are going to live.

'It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me, and the life, which is the life of Christ by which I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

I live *from faith to faith*. That means that I have to continue to receive, *from word to word*.

As we meet the Lord and our brethren, face to face, and the affection of Christ is poured into our heart, we are compelled, or constrained.

The love of Christ Himself, is constraining us to make only *one* judgement; not the judgement that we are simply getting on with our life, and that our life is acceptable.

Rather, the love of Christ compels us, or constrains us, to make *one* judgement only. And what is that?

It is that if Christ died for all, then all are dead in Him.

It is wonderful that the love of God in us constrains us, or helps us, to make that confession – 'if one died for all, then all died in Him'. That is the same as saying, 'I have been co-crucified with Christ.'

That is the judgement - if Christ died for all, then we are dead with Him.

We have the sentence of death in us, so that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead

The *outcome* of this daily confession is that we cease from trusting in ourselves.

If we believe that we are simply getting on, and so we must be acceptable, who are we trusting in? Ourselves! And that is exactly what Paul testified. He said, 'Yes, we have the sentence of death in ourselves.' 2Co 1:9.

The sentence of death would be that, if one died for all, then all died. Would that not be the sentence of death?

We have the sentence of death in ourselves, for what purpose? It is so that we should *not trust in ourselves*, but in *God who raises the dead!*

Isn't that the outcome of being *conformed to His death*? That is the sentence of death that we want. We don't want the sentence of external exclusion, do we?

We want the sentence of *that* death; the death that He died, being conformed to His death, so 'that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead who delivered us from so great a death [That's a death that we do not come back from], and does deliver us'.

And this is an ongoing, daily reality for us. This is the mercies new every morning.

A person who is crucified with Christ *lives by the faith of the Son of God*. If a person does *not* live by the faith of the Son of God, Christ cannot dwell in their heart by faith.

We heard that the mystery is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. Paul said that Christ dwells in your heart *by faith*. If we do not *live* by faith, it means that Christ is not dwelling in our heart.

An heir of salvation and a child of Abraham because we live by the same faith that Abraham received

Do you see that that's the implication of our need to continue in the faith of the Son of God?

If we do not live by the faith of Christ, we are not an heir of the salvation proclaimed through Paul's gospel, because Abraham's children are all those who live by the same faith that he received.

So, you are not 'Abraham's child' because of genetic heritage; merely because of a shared mental assent. You are not a child of Abraham simply because you assimilate the practices of his sort of cultural heritage nation. You are a child of Abraham because you live by the same faith that he received; and, by that, Christ dwells in your heart.

What is that? It is *an exceedingly great reward!* Isn't that what the Lord said to Abraham? Don't be afraid, Abram; I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward!

That is the gospel which we are walking and living in as the children of Abraham. Paul asserted that Abraham's children, the true heirs of salvation, are not those who keep the Law or who maintain their sacramental practices, or simply walk in the presumption that their own way is good; but are those who were *of the same faith* as Abraham. Gal 3:7.

One gospel that every child of Abraham must receive and live by

When Paul spoke to the Galatians about the gospel that God had preached to Abraham, He showed him that it was the same gospel that he was preaching to them.

Paul said that the gospel that he was proclaiming, 'It pleased the Father to reveal His Son in me', is the very same gospel that Abraham received when the *word* of the Lord came to him and said, 'Do not fear, Abram; I am your shield [of faith,] your exceedingly great reward.'

It is not two separate gospels; it is *one* gospel which every child of Abraham must receive and live by.

Paul declared, 'And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by *faith* [not by physical circumcision nor by any other means], preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand.' Gal 3: 8-9.

Paul said that there is only one gospel. When he said that he preached 'the gospel' to Abraham beforehand, he was saying that the gospel he had received and proclaimed was that very same gospel.

'Saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." Then those who are of faith are *blessed with believing Abraham.*'

In our coming sessions, we will consider the life of Abraham. In particular, we will understand how the gospel impacted on his life and how he responded to that, and the nature of his interactions with the Lord by the faith that he received.

This is important because these are the steps of the faith that *we* are to walk in as the children of Abraham.