

# PRESENT YOURSELF FOR FELLOWSHIP

Peter Hay, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 28 November 2021

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## Introduction

Hello, everyone. In our last session, we considered the wonderful point that 'the kindness of God appears to those who, in response to the word of the cross, mourn alone *with godly sorrow*.

Paul taught that 'godly sorrow leads to repentance'. To the penitent, or repentant, hearer, the eyes of the Lord, which initially communicate His wrath and judgement on their disobedience, reveal to them 'the kindness of God', as they obtain the forgiveness of sins and are reconciled to Him.

The hearer receives faith to believe the word declaring that 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness', which is the beginning point of the gospel. From this message, the faith of God, which is the faith of the Son, becomes 'our' faith.

Having received that faith to believe the word declaring that God is Light and in Him is no darkness, God 'reckons' a person to be *righteous* and extends *friendship* towards them.

That is a summary of what we did in our last session. Now we will consider the next step that 'a friend of God' makes.

## Present yourselves a living sacrifice – by the prevenient grace of God

As the friend of God, the hearer then receives the messenger's exhortation to 'present themselves as a living sacrifice', in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

We will read a key passage, and it is one that we have considered in the past to be further along in 'the steps of salvation'.

We now understand that this passage is connected to *the prevenient grace of God*. So it still relates to the 'wayside ground' phase.

'I beseech you.' Rom 12:1.

There is a *messenger* – Paul, in this instance – who comes and calls to the friends of God; to the friends of the Lord.

And that word is, 'By the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not

be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Rom 12:1-2.

Now, this is quite a shift in our understanding of the waypoints of the gospel. We previously may have considered the presentation of ourselves in this manner to belong to those who are already born of God, and already joined to the body of Christ through baptism.

Certainly, sons of God, and those who are members of the body of Christ, *will* continue to present themselves as living sacrifices in the context of this fellowship.

## Connected to the fellowship of offering before being born of God

However, a person's 'connection' to the fellowship of offering is established *before they are born of God*.

Now, this does not only happen then, and then does not happen as you progress. Of course, that becomes your *whole life* once you are born of God, and baptised into, or established in, 'the house' of the Father, which is the body of Christ.

The point is that the connection to the fellowship of that offering happens *before* a person is born of God.

## Receiving the gift of righteousness; belonging to Him

We could ask, then, 'Well, how can you be in the house of the Son or the house of the Father, before you are born of God?'

Remember, this is a friend of God who has been 'reckoned' to be *righteous*. Because they have believed the word by the faith in the word, God has looked down and said, 'You are a son; you belong to Me.'

So we are, in fact, able to come into this fellowship because of 'the free gift' of righteousness. The free gift of righteousness is not a position; it's the identification that *we belong to Him because of believing*.

So a person's connection to the fellowship of offering is established before they are born of

God. They then present themselves as a living sacrifice in this fellowship of offering, by 'the mercies of God'.

The mercies of God are a feature of the prevenient grace of God, which highlights and substantiates the point that this joining of fellowship occurs in the wayside ground phase of salvation.

### **Our reasonable - of the word - service of worship**

Paul said that the presentation of oneself in this manner is their 'reasonable service of worship'. The word 'reasonable' literally means 'of the word'. So it should read, 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your [of the word] service'.

The implication of this is that a person does not present themselves simply because it makes logical sense to them. It is not the result of reasoning so that this is the next logical step that they think that they should take.

### **Presenting ourselves for service in obedience to the word**

Rather, the presentation of themselves for service is *obedience to the word*.

It is not sourced from themselves at all; their reasonable service is actually their obedience to the word 'service'.

It is the outcome of a word that causes them to present themselves.

Presenting themselves as a living sacrifice marks their *deliverance from* the worship of self-made idols, which is characteristic of those who live by the spirit of the world.

They are *delivered to* a service of worship, which they join through obedience to a word which comes from outside of themselves.

They are being delivered from slavery to a form of service because, remembering that, if you are a *slave*, you *serve* someone.

So it is *from* that form of service, *to* a form of service to which they've been delivered when a person is able to be *obedient from the heart*. That is what it means to 'present yourself as a living sacrifice', and for it be your 'reasonable service of worship'.

### **The fellowship of the ground of Christ's offering**

How does this happen? What are all the implications of presenting ourselves this way? What effect does it have on a hearer's life?

The fellowship to which the hearer is being invited is 'the ground of Christ's offering', which was revealed on Calvary - present your bodies a living sacrifice.

A sacrifice is an *offering*, isn't it? So it is the ground of Christ's offering revealed on Calvary.

### **Participants in the altar of offering**

And it is an 'altar' that a person is given the right to eat from. So there is an offering; it is sacrificed and placed on an altar.

The apostle Paul said that that altar is what we are eating from as those who are *participants* in the altar. We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. The presentation of ourselves is to the ground of Christ's offering, which is an altar that we are partaking from.

### **Eating from His table; the agape meal**

We are eating His flesh and drinking His blood. This is the context of the '*agape* meal'.

In simple terms, this is the hearer's invitation to participate in the *agape* meal of Yahweh, which is stewarded by the presbytery.

Having been called 'the friend of God', the next point is the Lord Himself saying, through His messengers, 'Come and eat at My table.' This table is stewarded by overseers whom He has placed over His house.

The presentation of ourselves as a living sacrifice is actually, first, our participation in the *agape* meal.

### **Coming near to fellowship - washed by the fountain for sin and uncleanness**

And the first implication for a person who presents themselves on the ground of this fellowship is not all 'the great works of service' that they find to do.

The first *connection* of a person to this ground, to this *agape* meal, is actually that they begin to be washed by 'the fountain for sin and uncleanness' that flowed from Christ's pierced side.

Remember, the fellowship to which you have been invited is the ground of Christ's offering,

revealed on Calvary. So, if you are 'coming near', drawing near, to that fellowship - that altar - to partake of the 'food' of Yahweh, which is the burnt offering, you are coming in proximity to Christ.

And the first effect of that is that you begin to be washed by the fountain for sin and uncleanness that *came from His finished offering*.

We learn this from the prophet Zechariah. 'I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication.' Zec 12:10.

We have been learning that the spirit of grace and supplication is a messenger proceeding from that fellowship in the spirit and power of Elijah. The spirit of grace and supplication is the word itself, which is coming, calling a person to 'look on Him whom they have pierced'.

'I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.'

We have considered what it means to not draw back at this point. A person who doesn't draw back is *obtaining faith*.

They are receiving and believing; and are being considered to be the friend of God. And they are now *joined* to this offering.

### **A fountain to 'cut off the names of idols'**

The next thing that they touch is what came from Christ's side.

'*In that day* [the same day that His side was pierced and they were caused to look on it.] a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. "It shall be in that day," [the same day] says the Lord of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land".' Zec 13:1-2.

The term 'names of the idols' is very important, because it connects with what we will cover in our next session on idolatry, to highlight that *idolatry* is actually *sourced in ourselves*. It is the projection of our self-naming.

So when we read, 'cut off the names of the idols', He was not saying, 'I am going to cut off Baal,

Astaroth; all the different types of named idols.' Rather, He's saying, 'I am going to cut off the propensity in you to *name yourself*, which is idolatry.'

'I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered, so you will not be continually agitated, and dwelling on what is your name, because you will be receiving a name that you are not the source of.

'I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirits to depart from the land.' 'The prophets' refers to an alternative word that affirms self-naming or affirms a person's idol, giving it 'voice' as though it actually speaks.

This may occur with friends. It might be acquaintances who are feeding into your self-projection. It might be engagement with the media.

Whatever it is, it's a 'prophetic' voice, affirming the veracity of an idol; a named idol.

And He will cut that off.

That prophetic voice is energised or has its power from unclean, or demonic, spirits, which He will also cause to depart from the land.

So, all we have to do is to *avail ourselves of the washing of our sin and uncleanness*. And the Lord Himself will deal with the idols - all the named idols - in the land.

He will help to deliver us from the prophetic voice that gives that idol substance, and will also deliver us from unclean spirits. That is an amazing provision!

### **Cleansing by blood and water**

The fountain for sin and uncleanness is the blood and water accompanying the spirit of grace and supplication that flowed from Christ's pierced side after the soldier thrust it into His side.

The point is that the spirit of grace and supplication is being *ministered by the word*. And, through that ministry, that blood and water is being applied to those who *draw near* to that fellowship.

Receiving the cleansing of these two elements is necessary for us to come to Christ to become a part of a 'kingdom of priests to His God and Father'.

It is fundamental to being born again, which we are not quite at yet.

It is also a necessary element of the consecration or the preparedness to become a 'priest' in the Father's house.

The repentant hearer is exhorted by the messengers of the presbytery to the fellowship in which this cleansing work can be effective in their life. The messenger is proclaiming the word. And that word is inviting them into fellowship, where it will actually have a cleansing, delivering work in a person's life.

In this regard, Paul said, 'Let us draw near.' Heb 10:22.

I love this, because he was a messenger, proclaiming the word, but he did not say, 'We are already there, and you need to come to us.'

Rather, he was saying, 'Come and join the fellowship; and "we" are drawing near to Him'. That is a beautiful point. That is the nature of the fellowship to which we are invited.

'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith [this is a person who has received faith, and are now believing the word], having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience [sprinkled with blood], and our bodies washed with pure water.'

So, what flowed from Jesus' side? It was blood and water. And the spirit of grace and supplication draws us to the fellowship where this blood and water, as a fountain for sin and uncleanness, is effective in our lives.

Now, a person's heart is sprinkled clean from an evil conscience 'by the blood of Christ' as they *walk in the light of the word*. That is straightforward, isn't it? We have to draw near, as Paul said, to have *our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*.

That is a conscience that bears witness to itself on the basis of the knowledge of good and evil, so we need to be delivered from that. It needs *cleansing by blood*.

### **Cleansing occurs as we walk in the light**

John, writing his first letter, declaring this fellowship from which the word is coming, and inviting us to join it, said, 'If you walk in the light of the word, you will have fellowship with one another, and that blood will cleanse you.'

That cleansing occurs as we walk in the light. 1Jn 1:7.

A person's body is washed with pure water by their receiving and devotionally applying the word to their life. We have to *hear* it.

But the washing of it is actually its *application* - its *devotional* application - and its implications for our lives.

The fountain for sin and uncleanness is effective in our life as we receive the word that is ministered in the context of a fellowship.

### **The word cleanses us as we are joined to His fellowship as we abide in Him**

This is what Jesus said to the disciples at the last supper. 'I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser.' Joh 15:1. He was referring to the connection to the body - this is the vine.

'I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes it away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it might bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I've spoken to you.' Joh 15:1-3.

I don't know about you, but that seems like a 'gear change'. He was referring to being 'joined to a vine'. He was referring to the work of a vinedresser to 'bring forth fruitfulness'.

And then, in the midst of this conversation, He said, 'You are already clean, because of the word I have spoken to you.'

The point is that the *word* is doing the cleansing, so long as we are *joined to His fellowship*. We have to *abide*. If a person is not abiding in that fellowship, they are not being cleansed by the word.

'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.' Joh 15:4.

So the water of the word, which is cleansing us; and the blood, which is sprinkling us from an evil conscience, require us to 'come near' - to *abide* in that fellowship.

### **You are already clean**

Jesus had already spoken to them. Remember, He said, 'You are already clean because of the word that I've spoken to you.'

And He said this at the *agape* meal, right at the end of His earthly ministry.

So the question is, ‘When were they made “already clean”?’

The word that Jesus had *already spoken* to the disciples, by which they were first made clean, was the call to ‘eat His flesh and drink His blood’.

How do we know this? Remember, He spoke about ‘abiding in Him, and He abiding in them’, and connecting that to being ‘clean because of the word’.

The first time He began to talk about this ‘abiding’ is in John Chapter 6, where He addressed the necessity to eat His flesh and drink His blood. And He specifically said, ‘If you participate in this *agape* meal, you will abide in Me and I will abide in you.’

That was where the word began to cleanse them.

He said, ‘He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood [this is a participation in Yahweh’s *agape* meal] abides in Me, and I in him.’ Joh 6:56.

And we have just read, ‘You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me and I in you.’ Joh 15.

John Chapter 6 was where He first said it, and that water of that word began to be applied to their lives.

### **The offence of the word**

‘When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you?”’ Joh 6:61.

This is why we have had to spend some time looking at how we respond to the word. And the point is that the word does bring offence.

This is the very word that came to cleanse them. It does bring offence, but they were not to *stumble* because of offence. ‘Does this offend you?’

The question is coming, which is amazing thing, because the question is, ‘Will you come and have a meal with Me? And when you do, I’m going to cleanse you from your sin and unrighteousness.’

But we *hear* it differently. We hear it from the perspective that is deluded; so we can’t quite see what He’s saying.

We have to allow the word to make a breach, and then answer the question, ‘Does this offend you?’

Then He said, ‘What then [If Me saying this to you offends you. And this is to bring cleansing in your life.] if you should see the Son of Man ascended, where He was before?’

That is where He is now. He has ascended to the right hand of the Father, and the seven stars are in His right hand. These are the stars through which He speaks to His church.

Jesus is saying, ‘If you are offended by Me saying this, you are going to struggle more when a messenger whom He sends from His hand to His church comes and says, “You have to be cleaned by the word I’m proclaiming to you”.’

We are not to be offended by Jesus saying it because, if we can’t get past that offence, we will most certainly not *receive* him whom He sends.

### **The word bringing cleansing as we receive and obey in faith**

But, of course, that’s not us, is it? The fact that you are watching this and are committed to fellowship is evidence that you are *drawing near*. We are not those who draw back, but we are ‘believing to the saving of our souls’.

‘What then if you should see the Son of Man ascended to where He was before? Joh 6:62.

This is the cleansing effect of the water; and of the blood, actually. ‘It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life.’ Joh 6:63.

This was the application of cleansing to them if they would simply receive what He was saying, and would abide with Him.

The amazing thing is that He said, ‘But there are some of you who do not believe.’ It was just proximity to the word that was causing this cleansing action to happen.

There was actually a ‘receiving of faith’, and an ‘obedience of faith’ that belongs to those who receive His word, which is Spirit and life.

And, as Jesus said, ‘“There are some of you who do not believe”. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.’

A new believer needs their whole body to be washed by the water of the word that calls them to eat and drink of Christ’s body and blood.

We are talking about *the pathway of salvation* through to fruitfulness on good ground. It is true that a new believer who has come on to this ground needs a full 'makeover'; they need a full wash 'from head to toe'.

### **Continuing to be washed; presenting ourselves; abiding in Him**

However, we also know that this fellowship to which we are being drawn - the *agape* meal - is what we continue in even after we have been washed, and we have been born again and baptised. But those foundations that are established on wayside ground still apply to us.

So we still have to *present ourselves* to be washed. Once we are born of God and established in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we *continue* to present ourselves to have our feet washed as part of the *agape* fellowship.

This is the point that Jesus was making to Peter. It is an important point that we need to take hold of.

It is not that we need to be washed from head to toe every time, but we most certainly need to have our feet washed. Jesus said that if we do not, we have no part with Him. We are not abiding.

Jesus answered him [and said], "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me". Joh 13:8.

So we know that to be clean is to be one who is abiding in Him, and He in them.

'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me [He was saying this to the disciples, who were not yet born of God.]. Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean".' Joh 13:8-11.

We have made the point that the first word on eating His flesh and drinking His blood, which is abiding in Him, is where, if they will not draw back in offence, they are being cleansed; their whole body is being cleansed.

### **Not believing the word; not being cleansed**

We know that Judas would not believe that word. Jesus said to him, 'But there are some of you who do not believe.' Joh 6:64.

If we do not believe the word, we are not being cleansed. So now, at the table, all of the disciples, with the exception of Judas, had been cleansed by the word to abide. But they still needed their feet washed so that they could have a part with Him.

But Judas, whose feet were not washed, was not clean; and he was a betrayer.

This is an important point to note. Uncleanness because of our rejection of the word calling us to join the *agape* meal leaves a person in their own iniquity.

Now, Judas thought he was doing the right thing. But he was deviating from the path, and the outcome was that he would cause injury and death to the innocent. He would shed innocent blood.

The point is that, if we are not made clean by allowing the fountain for sin and uncleanness to wash, firstly, our whole body, and then our feet, as a weekly reality, we can do nothing but be left in your own iniquity.

And even with the best intentions, we will deviate, and our iniquity will lead us to betrayal. That is what happened to Judas.

### **The fountain for sin and uncleanness brings healing**

The fountain for sin and uncleanness not only washes a person clean; it also brings *healing* to them.

And it is healing of the ravages of sin upon them. This is the effect of sin that has impacted upon a person emotionally, psychologically, and even physically. This is an amazing point!

It is not just cleaning the outside; it actually brings a restorative healing to their person.

### **Availing ourselves of the fountain for sin and uncleanness – receiving His invitation in faith and humility**

So, how do we avail ourselves of this fountain?

To be washed by the water of the word - either our whole bodies or our feet - the first thing that we must do is to *receive the invitation to come to the Lord's table*.

The point is that we cannot come in any form of presumption. It is a response of *faith*, acknowledging that there is an invitation to

'come to My table'. That is the first thing. That is humility.

The presumption that 'I am entitled to a place in the table' is different from the demeanour of a person who acknowledges, 'I have an invitation, and I am coming on the basis of that'.

So the first point is, how are you presenting yourself? Are you presenting yourself because of entitlement - or are you presenting yourself in obedience to an invitation?

We first must *receive* the invitation to the *agape* meal.

### **Availing ourselves of the fountain for sin and uncleanness – accepting washing for the fellowship of offering**

The second point is that we must 'accept that being washed is fundamental to our membership of the fellowship of offering on the ground of the presbytery'.

First, we accept that we 'need' to be washed.

And, second, we understand that our connection to fellowship *depends on being washed*.

### **Before we are washed**

So far, no washing has happened. All that has happened is that we have *responded* to an invitation, and we are 'oriented', or 'setting our mind', in a particular way, understanding our *need to be washed*, and accepting that this is fundamental to *abiding*.

Then we need to recognise that we need to be washed because *we have sin and do become unclean*.

And the final one is that, as we receive this word that is coming regarding the fellowship which is the *agape* meal, we then *apply the word devotionally* to our lives, and to one another in our houses.

So that's the implication of *drawing near to that fellowship*.

### **Rejecting His word makes us unclean**

Now, our uncleanness is caused by living according to Satan's lie. Remember, that which made Adam and Eve unclean was the fact that they listened to 'another word'. It is a word that makes a person unclean.

And, when they are unclean, they are subject to or are vulnerable to unclean spirits. It is not that we 'get an unclean spirit and then become unclean'.

Rather, it is that we *reject the word* and, because of our disobedience, we are subject to, or vulnerable to, unclean spirits.

### **The Lord will deliver us from the idols and unclean spirits in our lives**

The Lord Himself has declared that, as we are washed from our uncleanness, which is caused by living according to Satan's lie, or an alternative word, He will 'cut off the names of the idols from the land' - meaning from our lives. He said that 'they should no longer be remembered'.

He will also cause the 'prophets' - those who give voice to and affirm the idols of our heart - and the unclean spirits, which are energising this way of living, to 'depart from the land'.

This simply means that they no longer are able to afflict us unless we invite them into our lives. This is an amazing principle!

When the Lord delivers you from an unclean spirit, and your 'house' - your body - is made clean, if you do not proceed to receive what the Lord wants to be the source of, and expression of, your life, that uncleanness will come back, sevenfold.

It comes back worse, and your idolatry will be multiplied.

So, this principle of being delivered from idolatry is a great deliverance. But it is also very important to understand *how we move forward*.

Unclean spirits no longer afflict us *unless we entertain them again*. This means that we 'give ear' to the alternative conversation or the alternative word. Then we do not progress to new birth and baptism into Christ.

### **The Lord addresses idolatry in our lives**

Now, 'idolatry' is the worship of something. I'll give a brief definition, and we'll talk about it in our next session.

Idolatry is the worship of something that gives 'validity' to the projection of our self-made image.

Often, we think that idolatry is something outside of us that we worship. But, in reality, the reason why we worship that is because of something 'inside us'. It is a self-made image. And what we are worshipping outside of ourself is actually that we are looking at a mirror of the thing we want to become.

So, idolatry is the worship of something that gives 'validity' to the projection of our self-made image; 'our own name'. That is why the Lord said, 'I will cut off the "names" of the idols.'

In order to engage in our 'reasonable service of worship', or our 'obedient service of worship', we need to be delivered from any other form of worship. To do this reasonable service, we have to be delivered of an 'unreasonable' service; a 'disobedient' service.

This is why the Lord addresses idolatry in the convenient phase of salvation. That is why it is not after we are born; it is right at the beginning.

### **Deliverance from idolatry and unclean spirits**

I will finish this session by looking at the example of Elijah. We did mention this at the National Bible Seminar, but we need to take our time with it, because it is such a beautiful picture of 'the call of a messenger' in the spirit and power of Elijah. It was, literally, the man calling the people of the Lord to the altar, to the *agape* meal, where washing could occur. It was delivering them from a set of false 'gospels'.

And the *outcome* is the destruction of idolatry in the nation, and deliverance from an unclean spirit called Jezebel.

The prophet Elijah demonstrated this aspect of the messenger's ministry when he confronted the nation of Israel concerning their worship of Baals, under the influence of Jezebel.

Baal was the *idol*, and many prophets were 'giving voice' to the idol.

And there was *an unclean spirit*, typified by or embodied by Jezebel, who *empowered* those prophets to give that idol a voice.

This was an 'administration'. We are not to be part of *that* administration; we are to be part of the administration of the body of Christ.

'So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions?"' 1Ki 18:20.

Isn't that a word of the cross? It came as a sword in Elijah's hand. He was saying, 'There are two ways you can go here, people': 'If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.'

This is the word of the cross, which is a sword ministered by Elijah, bringing a division between those who are of faith - you cannot follow the Lord unless you obtain faith to believe and to walk in His way - and those who remain in the darkness of their idolatry.

The beautiful point is, he didn't say, 'Baal is nothing and God's everything.' All he said was, 'The word is: you have a *choice*'. There is faith to receive and to enter what is *true*; or a choice to condemn you to a *lie*.

So Elijah challenged the 450 prophets of Baal to sacrifice a bull and to call on the name of their gods to answer with fire. And Elijah committed to do the same, saying, 'The God who answers by fire, He is God.'

This is one of the great accounts of Scripture, isn't it? This is one of the best illustrations. We remember that Elijah let the prophets of Baal go first; to 'have a crack' at getting their god to create fire.

And he began to mock these false prophets, saying, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.' You can imagine that he was having an absolute 'field day'!

These people were jumping around, cutting themselves, screaming and crying. This is the energy of an unclean spirit; it is ridiculous. 'So they cried aloud, and they cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.'

This energy and this self-destructive fervour was the evidence that it was motivated or energised by *an unclean spirit*. Importantly, we note that wherever this energy occurs, even when we fellowship together, it is always an indicator that it is not of the Spirit, because the Spirit gives *life and peace*; not this agitation and the fervour that is stirred up.

### **Hearing the messenger; turning to come**

'Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me."' 1Ki 18:30. That is the same as John the apostle saying, 'This word which we proclaim to you, we do so, so that you will have fellowship with us.'

Elijah didn't say, 'Come near to God.' He didn't say, 'Come near to the altar.' He said, 'Come near to me.' We must hear the word of the messenger, which means *turning aside to come*.

"Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.'

Elijah was calling the people to *fellowship with him as a messenger of God*. Specifically, he was calling them to return to *the fellowship of offering*, symbolised by *the altar of the Lord*.

### **Our name from Christ**

'And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name".' 1Ki 18:31.

I love that. They are not named by the idols, which is an expression of their desire to name themselves. He was saying, 'Israel shall be your name'; that is, 'Stop naming yourself; you have a name from God, in Christ.'

### **The water of the word for cleansing**

'Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed [interesting that it uses that term 'seahs']. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood."

'Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.' 1Ki 18:32-3.

Now, this is the amazing point that we've come to understand. The water that Elijah poured on the altar was not merely to make the spectacle of God answering by fire more spectacular. He wasn't merely saying, 'I'm going to make it as hard as possible for this offering to be burnt up, to show you how amazing God's fire is.'

Rather, it represented 'the water of the word' that was for the cleansing of the people who had drawn near to that altar. That is beautiful, isn't it?

### **Messengers minister the blood and water of Christ's offering, by the word**

Remember, this was a sacrifice - a dead sacrifice - on that altar, and the water was pouring out all over it and flowing down the altar.

The point is that the messengers who are sent by God *minister the blood and water of Christ's finished offering through their preaching*.

### **Christ the Messenger answers by fire**

It is not yet Christ himself speaking. When He speaks, 'He answers by fire'.

It is a beautiful point that Elijah was ministering the word at this point. It brought cleansing to those who drew near so that they were ready to receive Him who will *answer by fire*.

And that fire shouldn't be intimidating; it should be now the place of their 'dwelling'.

### **The messenger ministers in obedience**

'And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice [the burnt offering], that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word".' 1Ki 18:36.

Elijah did not take this upon himself. He had been *sent*, and demonstrated obedience! That is why there was a ground that they could join.

### **Responding to His illumination on our idolatry**

'"Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

'Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!"' 1Ki 18:37-40.

When we give attention to idolatry and voices that are feeding our idolatry, and the Lord illuminates that to us, we must not let those words have access anymore.

Otherwise, the risk is it that comes back worse for us.

**Restored to fellowship; idols removed**

‘“Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.’

The outcome of this event was that the people were *restored to fellowship with the Lord*; and the *idols and the prophets were removed from ‘the land’*.

Moreover, the wicked influence of Jezebel, which was an evil spirit from Satan, was dealt a fatal blow ‘in the land’. In fact, that was when the proclamation of her demise was declared.

So we thank the Lord for the fellowship of the *agape* meal. And let us be encouraged that, as we come to the *agape* meal, which is *the context of fellowship and offering*, there is a ‘washing’ that we are to avail ourselves of, so that we can abide, and so that we can continue to walk in a way that is sanctified and pleasing to the Lord.