

THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Lachlan Perrin, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 19 June 2022
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Introduction

The last time we were in Melbourne was in 2019, also for an Easter seminar. We were scheduled to be here in 2020 and 2021 but, of course, that didn't eventuate. It was simply remarkable. I think you were the most locked-down city in the world - simply incredible; extra chastening for you all.

The irony of my subject hasn't escaped me because, after such a long period of lockdowns, checking in, restrictions and masks, my subject is 'freedom' this weekend - the freedom of choice!

We had an interesting run into this. We came out of Covid isolation the day before we were scheduled to fly down here. It was 'touch and go', because we were testing the last standing members of the family up until the day we came out of isolation.

The Lord could have very easily shut the door for us. However, praise the Lord, we didn't have to continue in isolation. We'd had 14 days of 'imprisonment' at home, and I was writing and meditating on 'freedom'!

I was reading Luke Chapter 9 this morning. Luke recounted how Jesus sent the twelve disciples out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to perform healing. Jesus said, 'Take nothing for your journey' and, thanks to Qantas, we have brought nothing on this journey.

I said to Mel, driving here, 'I'm sure there is a fairy tale or a kid's story about a seamstress, and she would, every night, from the same material, sew a different dress.'

I said to some of the brothers earlier, 'Tomorrow, you'll see me in a very similar looking shirt, but the lines will be horizontal, instead. And then, by Sunday, it may be short sleeve or some other amendment.'

So, we have brought nothing with us - no bag. We haven't brought a 'spare tunic' as Jesus said.

The Lord wants to minister healing,

However, in all seriousness, I do appreciate the way in which the Lord said, 'The kingdom of God will be proclaimed, and healing will come.' It is

sitting deeply in my heart that the Lord wants to minister 'healing' this weekend.

All of the jokes and irony aside, it is remarkable that, after such a long period of being 'locked down', the Lord has 'gathered us' after three years of not being able to meet.

The glorious freedom of choice that He has set for us, as sons of God

He wants us to understand, in a fresh way, the glorious freedom that He has set for us, that we are free to live in and to walk in, as the sons of God. We will press in and understand this subject this morning.

Covid is a good example here, because the freedom that we find in Christ has nothing to do with possessing 'the right' to do *what* we want, *when* we want, and *the way* we want it. That is not the kind of freedom that God has given to us.

The person who believes that freedom is the right to be self-defining is living according to the *lie* that Satan deceived Eve with, and then Adam 'bought into'.

The person who is fallen lives under the delusion that the resources that they require to manage and to prolong their life originate from themselves, or can be found from their own initiative. That is what Adam and Eve chose to do.

Freedom to exercise our mandate as His son, in fellowship

Adam thought, 'Yes, I can continue to rule my household, to rule over creation, to take dominion over it, without the necessity for fellowship with Yahweh.'

We know, of course, that that is not true. For all of that period of time, when he was daily partaking of the tree of life, and he was being endowed with grace and wisdom to exercise the mandate that Christ had given him, he kept all of creation in harmony.

The moment he severed his connection to fellowship as the source of his wisdom, and grace and capacity to exercise that mandate, creation was plunged into chaos.

That is the picture, for us, to do with the very *mandate of sonship* that the Lord has given us. We will have complete capacity to fulfil it, while we remain connected to the *agape* fellowship, that is at the tree of life.

This is our focal question this morning. How do we maintain the freedom to exercise that mandate of sonship that the Lord has for us?

Bondage brought by the fear of death

A person who makes decisions from the basis of the *fear of death* is motivated by the other law.

They believe that they are freely choosing what they want but, in truth, they are in bondage to a particular 'framework' of decision-making processes. They are unable to escape or to break out from that framework.

That is why all of the writers through the Scripture describe it as a 'bondage' - they are bound.

We will pick up a couple of these verses to highlight this.

'Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.' Heb 2:14.

'Therefore He says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men".' Eph 4:8.

In obedience, we can be delivered to freedom

Christ led us captive by 'recapturing' us, or capturing us back, from the enslavement of Satan.

The key point is that, when we *respond in obedience to Christ's initiative* toward us, He *delivers* us to freedom.

Another way in which we could explain this is that the dimension of freedom which Yahweh intended for mankind to know and exercise was lost in the Fall.

Nevertheless, freedom is fundamental to our creation as sons of men; and to our predestination as sons of God, in fellowship with Yahweh.

Freedom of choice is fundamental to predestination as a son of God

This is our first baseline point: freedom of choice is fundamental to your predestination as a son of God.

You are predestined to *sonship*, and you are predestined to *fellowship* with Yahweh.

In that context, we know freedom.

God has created us, and He has chosen sonship and fellowship for us in His house.

Freedom of choice is inherent in God's Everlasting Covenant purpose for mankind

The second baseline point is that freedom of choice is *inherent in God's Everlasting Covenant purpose for mankind*. Why is that?

It is because choice grants us the opportunity to exercise freedom. This was revealed in Adam.

We know that, under pressure, his response demonstrated that he had never chosen what God had chosen for him.

A day will come that will reveal whether you have chosen the Father's predestination for you

Whether you have chosen the Father's predestination for you will be revealed when you are under pressure.

I was reflecting on this point, and the parable of the great supper, where many were invited. One by one, they began listing their excuses. 'I've just bought five yokes of oxen.' 'I've just bought a plot of land.' 'I've just married a wife.' These various excuses came up. They asked to be excused from *agape* fellowship.

If we take a step back we see that, the Lord, in His mercy, is lifting up that parable for us in this season, saying, 'A day will come that will reveal the choice that you have *already* made.'

The urgency in the Spirit is for us to know, this weekend, whether we have chosen *what the Father has chosen for us* - which is sonship in His house.

We thank the Lord for His mercy to lift this up before us, in this season, to give us the opportunity to respond.

Adam's response demonstrated that he had *not* chosen what God had chosen for him. Then, having eaten from the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil, another law was established in the heart of mankind.

Hence, free choice - truly choosing without incumbrance - was lost.

Forgoing our presumed right for self-definition to lay hold of His sonship for us

Our only choice is whether we will forego our presumed right to determine our own life and destiny - which is the indication that we are still enslaved to sin - or whether we will lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of us - which is sonship as part of His body.

When we make this choice, we are *delivered into the glorious liberty*, or freedom, that belongs to the sons of God.

This is the freedom that delivers us from every imposition, every encumbrance, that imposes itself upon us expressing our sonship in Christ.

Connection to Christ at the tree of life - the capacity to express our sonship life

It is a remarkable point that, when our heart and our culture involves daily fellowship at the tree of life, we are receiving complete *capacity* to exercise *dominion* over the mandate that the Lord has for us.

When we are connected to Christ as the source of the wisdom and understanding, nothing can stop us expressing our sonship. That is a remarkable point. We are *fully equipped*. God has granted us 'all things' pertaining to the expression of sonship life.

We receive those things *at the tree of life*.

There are two concepts of freedom - the freedom of choice that Christ delivers us to; and the false freedom that Satan tells us that we can exercise if we are independent, self-choosing, self-determining, self-seeking.

Our freedom in Christ is not impeded by any restrictions of the world

We can think of it this way: the freedom that we find in Christ was not impeded, and was not taken away from us, on account of any Covid restriction. Simply let that thought settle on us.

The freedom that Christ has delivered us to by rescuing us from bondage was in no way taken from us, through any of the restrictions of Covid.

That is starting to communicate the dimension of freedom that we have found. For the acute season of lockdowns, we were not 'sheep without a shepherd'.

The word of God was not enchained; nor was the expression of our sonship.

The truth is, we had *works to do each day*. We still had the opportunity, without hindrance, to fulfil those works, and to progress from one degree of sonship glory to the next.

It would be true that, as we look back over the Covid season, we can say our growth was not restricted in any way. The truth is, we flourished! It was a fruitful season.

We did so freely, in Christ, responding in obedience to the word that He was speaking.

Agitation indicates self-determination

On the other hand, if Covid restrictions cause us to become agitated, and they cause us to feel locked-down within ourselves, that can be the very evidence of our flesh driving us to be *self-determining*.

The more acutely we feel that we are missing out, losing out, or are being denied something, the more pressure the fear of death is exerting upon us; the more overt is the fear of death within us.

Elohim and Yahweh Elohim

Now we will consider 'the image and likeness of God'.

In my recent study of this, there is something that I hadn't noticed before.

Moses wrote the book of Genesis. Throughout the first chapter, he referred to the Creator as 'God'. That is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is *plural*.

Moses was identifying the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being the Creator of the *heavens and earth*, and everything that is in them.

'In the beginning, God [*Elohim*] created the heavens and the earth.' Gen 1:1.

When Moses 'drilled down' a little further into the detail of man's creation, in Chapter 2, he specifically identified that it was 'the Lord God' who created *mankind*.

The Lord God is not merely *Elohim*; rather, He is *Yahweh Elohim*.

This distinction is important, because Moses was telling us that the creation and the naming of *man* were uniquely and specifically connected to the revelation and expression of God's own name - Yahweh *Elohim*.

The name Yahweh Elohim reveals who God is, and how God lives

Mankind's creation was special, because it was connected to that revelation of Yahweh *Elohim*'s name.

The identification of Yahweh *Elohim* as the Creator of man, signified Their Everlasting Covenant initiative and desire for mankind to be *born* of Their life, and to, indeed, become *participants* in Their fellowship.

The first time that the Lord revealed His name was to Moses, at the burning bush. The Lord was sending Moses to free His people from captivity in Egypt.

Moses said to the Lord, 'They may say to me, "What is the name? Who was the one that sent me to rescue you?" What shall I say to them?' 'God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The Lord [Yahweh], the God [*Elohim*] of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations".' Exo 3:15.

Our central point here is that the name Yahweh *Elohim* not only reveals *who* God is; it also reveals *how* God lives.

The revelation of Their name being implicit to our creation is saying that the revelation of *how They live* is implicit to our understanding of *how we are to live* in fellowship with Them.

Moses was clear to draw the attention of the Israelites to this point. He said, 'Hear, O Israel! Hear! Catch this point! 'Hear, O Israel! The LORD [Yahweh] is our God [*Elohim* - singular; plural], the Lord is one!' Deu 6:4.

What does this mean? This verse tells us that the individual names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are not expressed or known, *apart from* the one Spirit and one life of Yahweh.

In this regard, Yahweh, who is one, reveals the three unique identities of *Elohim*.

The command to appreciate the name Yahweh **Elohim**

I will bring a simple analogy to try to explain this point, but I'll give 'the punch line' now. Jesus said that the most important commandment of all is to *appreciate the name*, Yahweh *Elohim*.

The scribes came to Him and said, 'Teacher, what is the most important commandment of all?' Jesus began by saying, 'Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God [Yahweh *Elohim*], *the Lord is one!*' Mar 12:29.

That is how He began; He focused on that as the most important commandment to which we need to give attention.

When Jesus reminded those who were listening that the most important commandment of all is to appreciate the name Yahweh *Elohim*, He was reminding us that *mankind was created in the image and likeness of God*.

Living in one Spirit, and by Their one life, in order to express our unique name

Accordingly, man's *life*, and the unique *expression* that belongs to his name, requires him to *live in one Spirit* with the Lord; and *by Their one life*.

We are required to live *in* one Spirit with the Lord. And we are required to live *by* Their one life, in order for us to express the unique name and mandate that belongs to us.

I have always loved the analogy of a musical chord being played on the piano, to explain how the 'oneness' of God reveals Their diversity, and how Their diversity reveals Their oneness.

If I were to play a single note on the piano, we would appreciate, like a snapshot, a certain frequency of sound. The moment that I play two other notes with that first note - I'm now playing a triad; three notes - suddenly, we can identify a lot more about the first note that I played.

We might say, 'Oh, that's actually a major third in a major chord.' Or, we might equally say, 'That first note played was the tonic note, or the root note, in a minor chord.'

The point is that the two notes that were played reveal the unique nature of the first note.

This is true for each of those notes - that there's *one* chordal sound. Within that chordal sound, we can appreciate the uniqueness of each individual. However, without the uniqueness of each

individual, we can't appreciate the chordal sound. Do you see how this reveals both aspects?

Each note in the chord reveals a certain chordal sound. As we hear that chordal sound as a single picture, we are able to appreciate that, in this particular chord, that note is doing 'this' job; that note is doing 'that' job.

We could equally say, if we play with the terminology, 'When I laid down those other two notes in that chord, they revealed the first one'.

The fellowship and works of offering in oneness

Isn't this how fellowship and offering work?

It is as the Father and Son lay down Their lives, that the Holy Spirit is revealed.

And, as the Son and the Holy Spirit lay down Their lives, the Father is revealed.

On one hand, as each One contributes towards this *fellowship* of offering, we can appreciate one fellowship of offering. And, on the other hand, we can see the unique *work*, or role, of each member of the Godhead - just as we see the unique work, or role, of each note in that chord.

At the burning bush, Moses beheld the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim* as a fire of offering that neither consumed, nor required, fuel to continue burning.

As each Person of the Godhead lays down Their life in offering to reveal the other two, *the oneness of Yahweh is manifest*.

In the oneness of Yahweh, we are able to appreciate the uniqueness of each Person.

I'm taking a long time to establish that our *expression as a son of God* is completely tied to our *participation in fellowship*.

Our connection to the discussion of present truth

I believe that the Lord is focusing on this question and, this weekend, is raising the question again for all of us to consider.

'What is my *connection* to the discussion of *present truth*?'

As the morning was introduced, we have come to hear something *new*.

Our culture of response when we hear something new

But the Lord is also focusing on one step deeper than that.

'What is your *culture of response* when you hear something new?'

In this regard, we will consider the question of Adam's choice. If we were to draw on the scriptural principle that 'a day', to the Lord, is 'as one thousand years', we recognise that man was created on the sixth day.

If we consider the principle of the Passover lamb, we note that the Passover lamb was taken on the 10th day, and was sacrificed on the 14th.

Based on the 6th to the 10th days of creation, we could reasonably expect that Adam was in the garden for about 4 000 years before the Fall - when the lamb was taken.

In those 4 000 years, he was tending the garden, and he was maintaining harmony across God's creation. He exercised this dominion according to the wisdom and grace that he received daily, in fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim*, at the tree of life.

Adam's challenge to choose what God had chosen for him

Another way of saying this is that Adam was fulfilling the works that the Father had *chosen* for him to do, in the Father's house.

This is the key point. The 'fulfilment' of these works was not the indication that Adam had chosen what God had chosen for him.

We know that the Lord God had prepared Adam for the day that he would have to *make a choice*.

'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.' Gen 2:16.

That statement implied that a day would come where Adam would have to make a choice.

Would Adam choose the fellowship and life that the Father had established for him; or, when put under pressure, would he choose another way of life?

Choosing and prioritising another source of provision

We can think of choosing another way of life as believing in, or prioritising, another source of food, or another type of provision, so that we can be the person we think we need to be.

This is an important distinction. Adam's choice wasn't, firstly, whether he would exercise dominion over the creation. He had been doing that for close to 4 000 years. He had been fulfilling that work that the Father had predestined him to do.

That wasn't the first choice he had to make.

Adam's first choice was whether he would *believe and accept the call to be a son*, and to reveal the Father, through the work that he was doing in the garden.

The Father spoke to Adam from the basis of Adam's predestination. He was effectively saying to Adam, 'I will be a Father to you, and you will be to Me a son.'

In order to choose what the Father had chosen for him, Adam had to *believe* this word - that 'I will be your Father, and you will be as to Me a son.'

He had to believe that word. He had to *respond*, in course, by saying, 'You have offered me fatherhood. I will be Your son. And I will reveal You.'

This is the response and the *choice* that Adam had to make.

For some, I believe this weekend is an opportunity for you to respond to the Lord God in the same way. You need to run to the application of this point. It doesn't matter how long you've been in this church. It doesn't matter how well you have found a niche of participation and offering and service in various teams.

Fatherhood and motherhood in a lampstand church

Now, what do I mean by that? I know, by personal testimony, that the presbytery has the capacity to 'father' and to 'disciple'. There is a capacity of fatherhood and a capacity to make disciples, within a lampstand church.

It is entirely possible for us to recognise the wisdom that is ministered to us concerning our life and our name. Fatherhood and motherhood

can identify our name and our works in the Father's house. They can steer us in that direction, and they can establish us as a participant in a lampstand church.

Our personal response to God the Father

However, that does not mean that we have personally responded to God the Father, and said, 'I accept Your call to be Your son.'

Every parent knows this, because we train our children, saying, 'Every morning, we seek the Lord first, with devotions and with prayer.' And they may fulfil that aspect of their daily works, as small children; yet that does not equal them *choosing to follow the Lord all of their days*.

For some, this weekend, it may be the first time that you are truly *illuminated*. The Father is saying to you, 'Before anything else, I desire to be Your heavenly Father. And I desire for you to believe that, to accept it, to respond, and to say, "I am choosing Your fatherhood, and to be Your son".'

That must be established before any other area of participation; before anything 'runs' to the practicalities of being a member of a tangible church - that is, *our personal response to the Lord*.

The word ministers faith for us to be a son

And it is not a one-off response.

This is because the word of your sonship *continues* to unfold in time and space, as the word of present truth is proclaimed.

The moment that you cease from responding to that word, and from choosing that word, you are progressively becoming 'faithless', because it is *the word that ministers faith* for us to be sons.

The love of many will grow cold

Your choice will be revealed under pressure.

With soberness of spirit, we need to recognise that we are in the phase of history where 'the love of many will grow cold'. Mat 24:12.

What does it mean for 'the love of many to grow cold'; for *our* love to grow cold?

It means that we draw back from the freedom that Christ has delivered us to, and we become subject again to the yoke of slavery that Satan's lie and his false fatherhood established within us. Gal 5:1.

Satan's lie – that we can live independently of God; that we can be like God

Let us consider Satan's lie, and take a moment to understand this in a fresh way.

Satan's lie was not only that Adam and Eve could eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and, in that way, obtain the capacity to fulfil their mandate, without fellowship with the Lord God. That was not the only thing that he was lying about.

Satan's lie went one step further. He said that, if they did eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then they truly would be 'like God'. Gen 3:5.

Actually, Satan's lie was the accusation that the initiative of God the Father towards creation was done *independently* of the Son and the Spirit. Do you see that point?

Satan said, in effect, 'You do not need fellowship at the tree of life. You can receive that which is "good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise"; you can do it yourself. And, if you do it yourself, if you do it *independently*, you will be like God.' Gen 3:5-6.

The Father, Son and Spirit do nothing independently

The truth is that the Father laid down 'His fullness' to the Son. The Father did nothing of His own initiative.

When Christ came and ministered on the earth, He testified, equally, saying, 'I do nothing of My own initiative.' Joh 5:19. Joh 14:10.

And He said of the Holy Spirit, in effect, 'He will take from Me and will reveal something that is not of Himself.' Joh 16:14.

So, *the Father, Son and Spirit do nothing independently.*

Creation was the fruit, or the outcome, of Their *fellowship* together.

Satan's lie, however, was the accusation that God the Father used creation for the expression of His own identity, and the expression of His own life, apart from fellowship with Yahweh.

It was a lie, because the truth was that the Father had laid down His *fullness* to the Son. The Son was the full revelation of the Father, by the Spirit who gives life.

In the Father's house – obedience not independence

Satan asserted that Adam could have life and could give expression to his name, *without* the order of life that the order of headship multiplies and ministers.

Under the pressure applied by Eve, Adam chose to exercise dominion apart from relationship with God, as his Father.

This revealed that Adam viewed his household as being a separate entity from the house of the Father.

There is a very practical point. I believe that, today, the Lord is speaking to me and to the men around this point concerning the salvation of our families.

And the question is, 'Is our house like our own little kingdom – where we simply view that we are getting on and doing what we are doing?'

Or do we believe that the very life and the well-being of our house is completely dependent upon our initiative to *foster the conversation of faith* with our family, with our household?

Satan's lie is that we can take initiatives from the position of our independence. However, the truth is that there is no initiative outside of *obedience to our name*.

Surely, the initiatives that we take should be *initiatives in faith*. And *faith is ministered only in the fellowship of the word* – where the word of our *sonship* is proclaimed.

Any initiative that we take is actually an exercise of obedience to that word that has ministered faith to us.

There is no independence within the Godhead. There is no independent son of God.

The moment that we proceed that way, we have 'pulled out'. That is not the culture of the Father's house, at all.

The knowledge of death; and the death of 'the Lamb slain'

Before Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden, God revealed a different kind of death to them.

They had received the knowledge of death, having eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil. They did not possess that knowledge before the Fall.

Having eaten, they were now aware of this knowledge that God possessed – the knowledge of death.

However, they knew it *outside of fellowship with God*. They knew it as *judgement*, because there was now a curse upon them.

Before they were driven from the garden of Eden, God revealed a further kind of death to them. He killed an animal on their behalf, to signify the provision of ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’. Rev 13:8.

God provided recovery for Adam and Eve – the choice to join the offering of the Lamb

This death was for their *redemption*, and to provide them with *priestly garments*, in type, to make offering.

Through this convenient offering, Adam and Eve were atoned for. Amazingly, they were recovered to choose either death or the sonship that God had predestined for them. Isn’t that amazing!

The initiative of the Lord to sacrifice this animal for them – to make an offering – recovered them to the place where they could make a choice, freely.

‘Will I choose the Father’s house and the predestination He has for me; or will I choose death?’

To choose sonship, they were required, figuratively, to join the offering of the Lamb through participation, by offering, at the gate of the garden of Eden.

By choosing to participate in this ‘offering death’, their ‘cursed death’, under the judgement of God, became *for their sake* as they were progressively delivered from eternal death, and were restored to fellowship with God, and to the predestination that He had for them. Gen 3:17.

The choice for all – restoration to the Father’s house

Importantly, since Adam and Eve, that is the choice that *every* person has been required to make.

God has made provision of an offering *for us*.

If we will *join* the fellowship of that offering, the sufferings that we experience are now for our sake, as they deliver us from our iniquity; from our waywardness.

We are able to be restored to a having a part, and a place of participation, in the Father’s house.

It is amazing that that choice after the Fall has been the same choice that *every* person has been required to make throughout all the ages since Adam and Eve.

The recovery of *agape* fellowship

Restoration to fellowship, through fellowship, is the choice that *we* are required to make, in *our* day.

The Lord is restoring *agape* fellowship. Giving ourselves to participate in this work of recovery among us, at this very time, is what it means to choose God in your era; in your day.

Give yourself to the work of the recovery of *agape* fellowship!

Deliverance from loyalty to the gospels and doctrines of our past

I will read some of the statements in the Preface. Then I will conclude with a point around *standing firm in the freedom that we have received*.

The second paragraph on the very first page of the Preface: ‘Significantly, our entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God is not based on how we commence our Christian pilgrimage, *but on how we finish it*.

‘For this reason, it is most important that we are delivered from our loyalties to the ‘gospels’ and doctrinal understandings of our past. We must all respond with repentance and faith to what the Spirit is saying to us individually, as families, and as local churches, ‘today’, through the word of present truth. 2Pe 1:12.’

Paraphrasing the next couple of paragraphs, we see that Paul was the most eminent of the apostles, and he testified of his own potential to draw back from the pathway of salvation.

He said, in effect, ‘Therefore I run in such a way as not without aim [‘not with uncertainty’ in other translations]. I box in such a way as not beating the air. But I discipline my body and make it a slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself may not be disqualified [from sonship; from salvation].’ 1Co 9:26-27.

A person runs 'without aim', or 'with uncertainty', when their reception of God's word, which should be 'a lamp to their feet and a light to their path', is mediated, or filtered, by their enduring attachment to 'old gospels'. Psa 119:105.

These may be the gospels of their denominational heritage; or it may be beliefs that are based on their own personal interpretation of the Scriptures.

Our deliverance from any loyalty to the gospels and doctrines of our past will not be achieved through a self-righteous or an analytical exercise.

Rather, every time that the word of present truth is proclaimed, and you register 'a jarring' within yourself because it is clashing with some other theology that you already hold to, that is the Holy Spirit, in mercy, bringing that very point to the surface.

What does this 'look like'? It is when people say things such as, 'What we used to say is "this", "this", "this" and "this".' That is their response to the word of present truth – 'The way that we previously understood it is this way,' or 'The way that we have always interpreted that particular Scripture is "this way" or "that way".'

The *truth* is that those points of doctrinal or theological crisis have been *provoked* by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He is pressing us to not 'stall' in our faith; but to keep 'running the race' of present truth that is set before us.

The Lord is speaking today from heaven

Is it not true that, if the word of present truth does conflict, or jar, with something we have always held to, we can rejoice that this is the very evidence that He is speaking, today, from heaven?

As we have already heard this morning, we do not come to church to hear only what we have already held to.

We come to hear that which is *fresh*; that which is *new*.

When there is a crisis concerning the jarring in our previous understandings, *we rejoice!*

The Lord is speaking, today, from heaven. And we need to see to it that we 'do not refuse Him who is speaking'. Heb 12:25.

The viability of our fellowship is *agape* fellowship

Let us read again from the book on page 4, the second paragraph. 'In comparison with other denominations, our church movement has been far more inclusive of people's doctrinal traditions and varied religious perspectives. This has been an implication of past mergers, as well as of the diverse journeys of those whom the Spirit has led to this lampstand fellowship.

'However, the viability of our fellowship as a church is not found in our cultural or doctrinal commonalities; nor is a person's salvation assured by their religious heritage.

'In fact, endeavouring to encompass denominational diversity within the church, in the name of love, *is corruption*. We learn from Christ Himself that only *agape* fellowship in a lampstand church qualifies a person to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the New Jerusalem. Rev 2:4,7. Rev 2:2.'

Mourn for iniquity and be established in sanctification

Now, let us skip down two paragraphs, to the bottom of page 4. 'We are in the time of the great falling away from the church. Speaking of this season, Jesus said, "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness [or iniquity] will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

'For this reason, instead of validating and encompassing everyone's views and religious histories, which only promotes disharmony and oppression within a church, we must mourn for our iniquity so that we can be established in our sanctification.

'This is because *sanctification is our salvation*. As Paul declared, "God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ". 2Th 2:13-14.'

Christ set us free – do not be enslaved again

I would like to finish with one of the key verses in the book, from the book of Galatians.

Paul wrote, 'It was for freedom that *Christ set us free*; therefore *keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery*'. Gal 5:1.

In this verse, Paul highlighted three things.

First, he said that every person needs *Christ* to set them free – ‘It was for freedom that Christ set us free’. Every person needs to be set free so that they can freely choose God’s will for them.

Second, Paul warned that, having been set free by the word, and by the work of the cross, and having been born again by the Spirit of God as a son of God, as new creation, it is *possible to revert and become enslaved once again*.

That is why he said, ‘Do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.’

Keep standing firm by continuing obediently in His word

The third point that he raised was, ‘Therefore *keep standing firm*’.

The question is, ‘How do we keep standing firm?’

Jesus answered this question in the Gospel of John, where He discussed the nature of His own death.

‘As He said these things [speaking about His offering-death.], many came to believe in Him.’ Joh 8:30.

Many came to believe in Him as their Saviour. They believed in His capacity to atone for their sins, and to restore them to relationship with God.

‘So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed in Him, “If you *continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples*; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”.’ Joh 8:31.

‘Do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery but keep standing firm in the freedom to which Christ has delivered you.’

How do we keep standing firm?

It is by *continuing in the word as His disciples*, because that word of truth *sets us free*.

Believing in Jesus is only a starting point. As those who have been set free by Christ, our capacity to *keep standing firm* is made possible as we continue in His word.

As we continue in His word, we know what He is presently instructing us to do.

We know the truth of who God has called and chosen us to be, in every season and stage of life. Our *obedience* to that truth makes us free.

The Lord is restoring *agape* fellowship – do not stall

There is a call this weekend to consider your *connection to the discussion of present truth*, and your *culture of response*.

The Lord is restoring *agape* fellowship as a culture. Fellowship at the tree of life is what salvation ‘looks like’ for all of eternity.

The Lord does not want us to stall within the framework of religious beliefs that have brought us to where we are, today. I’ll say that again. The Lord does not want *you* to stall within the framework of religious beliefs that have brought *you* to where you are, today.

Because the Lord is continuing to speak present truth, it does not invalidate anything that the Lord has spoken to you in the past. It is important that we keep living according to those levels of faith which we have obtained.

But we cannot stall!

Do not be faithless in your latter years

As I waited on the Lord and prayed towards this weekend, I had a real burden for those of a generation older than me.

If we consider the account of Judas and Peter, it is a very good application of the point that I will make.

Judas had his own ideas of religious commitment. He had his theologies about it. He had his own perspective of what participation means.

All of those things were the foundations of his walk with the Lord in that season of the Lord’s ministry. He was part of those ‘following the Lamb wherever He goes’.

However, as early as the account recorded in the Gospel of John Chapter 6, we know that he did not receive Christ’s word about ‘eating His flesh and drinking His blood’. Joh 6:53-56. The Scriptures recorded that he did not believe that. Joh 6:60,61,64.

From that point of disbelief, he progressively became faithless.

At the last supper, Jesus said to Peter, 'Satan has desired to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith would not fail.' Luk 22:31-32.

Even though Peter had many issues – he was a zealot – he still knew that there was no other place he could go, because the Lord possessed and spoke the words of eternal life. Joh 6:68.

Unlike His prayer for Peter, Jesus did not pray for Judas. This tells us that he was not being sustained in his faith during the time that he was following the Lord.

He was progressively losing his faith until that final night when he was faithless.

The Lord is speaking to us this weekend because He does not want to see any of you, after a lifetime of confessing to walk with Him, to be found to be faithless in your latter years. The Lord does not want to see any one of you being faithless in your latter years.

He wants to deliver some from the zealous defence of theologies and doctrines, and from all of those things that you have used to build your religious 'position'.

He wants to *deliver* you, so that you can *hear* what He is saying, today.

Respond to what He is saying, today! Truly be 'found', and be part of this fellowship at the tree of life.