

Knowing these things
What manner of people
ought we to be?
2 Peter 3

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WHAT MANNER OF PEOPLE OUGHT WE TO BE

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Article I

A Remnant of the Spirit – Part I

David Hall

Introduction

The apostle John called us to examine the manner of love that the Father has given to us in Christ Jesus, that we should be called ‘the sons of God’. 1Jn 3:1. The prophet Malachi also spoke of the sons of God, calling them ‘godly seed’. Mal 2:15. God did not create Adam and Eve simply so that many sons of men could be born through procreation. His desire for ‘godly seed’ meant that He chose every identity whom He created, and predestined them to adoption as sons of God, in Christ. Eph 1:3-6. 1Pe 1:2.

The apostle Peter exhorted us that in these last days there would be scoffers who will come, wilfully forgetting the word of God, and that God’s judgement would soon follow. In the light of the flood of ungodliness that is coming from Satan against the sons of God, Peter asked us to understand what manner of persons we ought to be in holy

conduct and godliness, so that we may be diligent to be found in Christ in peace, without spot and blameless. 1Pe 4:4. 2Pe 3:11-14. God intends for His sons to be a godly seed, or offspring, born of God, and brought forth into covenant families. Because of this, we need to give attention to the culture of courtship, marriage and family in relation to bringing forth godly seed. All of these milestones depend on the joyful hope of parents who have the remnant of the Spirit, ministering and teaching the grace of life to their children.

A covenant marriage

As we discussed earlier, as sons of God, we are to be found in Christ 'without spot and blameless'. 2Pe 3:11-14. The dimension of grace that we refer to as 'a remnant of the Spirit' was first proclaimed under the Old Covenant to Abraham when the Lord came to him and said, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.' Gen 17:1. When we examine the account further, we see that the capacity to walk blamelessly before the Lord impacted them as individuals; it impacted their marriage and household, and it impacted their culture and conversation. For Abraham and Sarah, the remnant of the Spirit was an anointing of the Holy Spirit that would give grace to them so that their marriage could extend to become a house that would bring forth godly seed - sons of God.

Because we rejoice in participating in the New Covenant, the remnant of the Spirit given to a believing couple is not only an anointing, but is also a portion of the divine nature. Every person who is born of God receives the divine nature and is raised with Christ into heavenly places. 2Pe 1:3-4. Eph 2:17-22. Eph 6:11-13. (We will discuss this place of protection for individuals and families in the body of Christ in a subsequent article. Isa 52:8-12. Isa 58:5-10.) Further to this, through the Holy Spirit, sons of God are made one with the Lord and with other members of the body of Christ. 1Co 7:17. Eph 4:4.

It is important to note that when a Christian man and woman marry, the Lord makes them one, and gives them a remnant, or portion, of His Spirit. Mal 2:15. This portion of the Lord's Spirit is a dimension of the divine nature which is unique to their relationship in the covenant of marriage established by God. The remnant of the Spirit begins to be received during the bonding phase of courtship, and is the reason why a man and a woman can be made one and become heirs together of the grace of life, in marriage. Deu 6:4. 1Pe 3:7.

Further to this, the remnant of the Spirit is given to a married couple by the Lord because He seeks a 'godly seed'. Mal 2:15. Under the Old Covenant, Abraham and Sarah looked forward in faith, expressing their desire for a better country and a heavenly city that were prepared for them by God. They knew that, because they desired the adoption, they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. In the New Covenant, we have come to the place which the heroes of faith saw from afar. The apostle Paul declared, '*But you have come* to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.' Heb 12:22-24.

Walking blamelessly

Walking blamelessly is pivotal to individuals and families gaining an entry to the heavenly city. Abraham and Sarah provide an example to us of walking blamelessly. To walk blamelessly in our marriage needs two elements to be effective in our relationships. First, we need to accept the word which brings to us our name. This is a key understanding for us if we are to 'mourn alone'. We observe this element in the example of Abraham and Sarah when Yahweh placed a portion of His own name into each of their natural names. Yahweh named Abram, 'Abraham', and commanded Abraham (who now had the remnant of the Spirit) to call Sarai, 'Sarah', giving her the same portion of the name of Yahweh that was already in Abraham. This signified that they had received a portion, or a remnant, of the Spirit; and confirmed the order in which God's life comes to a family. This is the order of headship. 1Co 11:3. Eph 5:23. They had been made 'one Spirit'. It also signified that Abraham had redefined the basis of their marriage so that Sarah was now aligned to the name given to her by the Father and no longer sought to define her own identity and image. Indeed, the same was true for Abraham as he was aligned by Christ to his name and to the fellowship of the covenant.

This is a significant understanding for us, because it also marks the recovery of their marriage to the 'ground' of headship. How did they recover? Their response of faith to receive and to become aligned to their names given to them in the word of Yahweh meant that they received something that they did not have before. This was new to their

relationship as husband and wife. This is also true for us. Two Christians who marry do not automatically receive a remnant of the Spirit.

Before any practical consideration of maturity and capacity as indicators of marriageability for a person or couple who are testing their bond in courtship can occur, they must possess the capacity of the divine nature through being born of God and receiving the Spirit, so that they can be one Spirit with the body of Christ. Joh 3:6. However, this is not yet the remnant of the Spirit that God will give to a married couple. Rather, it is the foundation from which the couple in a courtship can test its bonding reality through the conversation of faith, as individuals who are joined to the body of Christ. They will appreciate the current family distinctions concerning the remnant of the Spirit, and their differences and similarities. If they commit to testing their bond toward marriage, the seriousness of their intent to leave father and mother and to cleave to another must include the responsible faith to receive a remnant of the Spirit. Their resulting bond in one Spirit, and then in one flesh in marriage, will have become the proven will of God.

The remnant of the Spirit is a unique portion of the divine nature given to each married couple so that they can cultivate the divine nature and bring forth children according to the Spirit. Without the remnant of the Spirit, two Christians who marry will be like Abram and Sarai, who did not have the capacity to bring forth children after the Spirit but, instead, defaulted through fleshly endeavours and brought forth a child after the flesh – Ishmael. Gal 4:22-28.

The second element to walking blamelessly was declared to Abraham in 'the covenant of circumcision'. Circumcision marked Abraham as one who walked according to the faith that he had received for a daily participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. He was to train his household in this way of faith through the relationship and life that he received in the word, in his fellowship with Yahweh. We see Yahweh bearing witness to the remnant of the Spirit working in Abraham's family when He spoke with Abraham and Sarah concerning their capacity to bring forth godly seed – Isaac. Yahweh said of Abraham, 'For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.' Gen 18:19.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering and travail, a Christian couple is made one as they put off the fallen ways of the flesh and avail

themselves of the life that is in His blood. Walking blamelessly in this manner marks them as being a household of faith and recipients of the blessing of Abraham – the promise of the Spirit through faith. Gal 3:14. When, through the Spirit, we apply ourselves to receive and implement the word which brings to us our name and work, we are obtaining our portion of the remnant of the Spirit. This portion is then also multiplied to our household as grace. Paul called this ‘the grace of life’, which a husband and wife inherit as sons of God, joined in one Spirit to be able to bring forth godly children after the Spirit. 1Pe 3:7.

The evidence that we are receiving the blessing of Abraham into our family, which is the promise of the Spirit, is that we receive and believe the word. This means that we will believe and speak the word which we receive from the face of Christ. 2Co 4:13. The point of our ‘speaking’ this conversation is that it expresses our faith to be connected to the offering by which Jesus was raised from the dead and we were raised with Him. This conversation is demonstrated in our homes from day to day, and is fundamental to the reformation of every marriage and household so that we are ‘blessed with believing Abraham’. We are ‘of the faith’; we are sons of Abraham; we are hearing and believing the word of faith; and it is translating through our conversation into practical righteousness in our families. Gal 3:5-9.

We are ‘blessed with believing Abraham’ because we join the blameless walk that he received, and in which he is instructing his children through the prophetic Scriptures. We receive the instruction and walk after its manner. This is an initiative to speak both as an individual and as a couple. However, we know that the recovery of a marriage ideally involves a conversation of faith that includes both husband and wife. However, it is not necessarily contingent on both husband and wife being believers, since the ‘conversation’ equally refers to our culture, or conduct. If there is no opportunity for one to speak with faith to their spouse concerning points of illumination and reformation that the Spirit is bringing to them, the transformed conduct of the one can still minister grace in a household, ensuring that the children are blessed and sanctified. However, this is true only if the children are brought up in the faith and culture of the believing parent. 1Co 7:14-16. 1Pe 3:1-2. Note that this letter was written to ‘the elect according to the foreknowledge of God’. Thus, he was instructing Christian people, who needed to recover their blameless walk. 1Pe 1:1-2.

Article 2

A Remnant of the Spirit – Part 2

David Hall

Corruption in marriage

When a man receives the initiative of the Spirit to walk blamelessly before the Lord, he must begin to speak by faith and to turn his face to Christ. When he does this, he can receive the light of the word that shines from the face of Christ through the ministry of His messengers.

To turn his face to Christ, he must eschew the corruption of his fleshly desire to find identity validation, affirmation or approval from any source other than the light of the word of Christ. A man's fallen default will be to look into the face of his wife in order to receive the fruit of the knowledge of the tree of good and evil. 1Co 7:32-34. This reveals that he has doubted the word of the Father through the Son, which was calling him to continue in fellowship and to have the patience of faith. He has denied the order of headship. He has ceased from his portion of the

offering of Christ and has cast away his confidence and his reward, instead, looking into a mirror other than the face of Christ. Heb 10:35.

As it was with Adam and Eve, a man's wife can become his 'mirror' and an alternative to the word of Christ through the Spirit. More than this, she can become 'the face of God' to him. This was Satan's word to Eve, 'You will become like God'. What does this look like? In order to know himself and obtain some sense of security concerning his identity and confidence for the day, he seeks her reflections about how he is living, and her observations about life and family progress. All of this false wisdom, assessment and direction, affirmation, and adjustments toward him are nothing more than his wife's desire to control her husband and to form a family culture according to her own desire, or 'image'.

The masculine desire for validation and the feminine desire for control will often manifest conflict as the result of their agendas being incompatible. Further to this, the Holy Spirit resists their fleshly endeavours to produce a righteousness of their own. Gal 5:17. At times, a man may become angry at his wife's assessments, judgements and expectations toward him. This may result in outbursts of wrath, or anger, from the man or, alternatively, his withdrawal and silence. These responses are evidence of his desire to exert dominion in their marriage. Gen 3:16. The reactions in both husband and wife reveal that they are bereft of the grace of life because of their disconnection from Christ.

Recovering marriages

As we discussed above, the conversation of faith is the way to recover our marriages to the covenant of Yahweh. In relation to recovery, Zechariah taught that, in our day (the days since the cross of Christ), there will be a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. While this principle has been addressed in other notes, it is important that we register the instruction from the prophet that every individual and every family must receive the spirit of grace and supplication in the word spoken to them from Christ, and must look at how they have pierced Christ – and grieve for Him alone. This means that they become accountable for their own abuse of Christ and its impact in His fellowship, and in their own family. This applies to every husband and wife (note that it is the marriage issue that will become a fatherhood/motherhood issue regarding culture) and family (including the children). It is important to note that, often, the reformation of a marriage is not appropriately communicated as

repentance to the children of the family so that the family culture can be properly mourned and repented of, which involves change. Zec 12:10-14.

In a marriage there will be certain hallmarks that we can describe as a basic 'roadmap' to the reformation of marriages. We can examine the repentance of a husband and wife as individuals mourning alone, because of the teaching that Zechariah prophesied to us.

For a husband

Upon hearing the word and turning his face to Christ, a man's first response is to speak by the faith of the Son of God, which comes by hearing the word. The first context for this conversation is with his knee bowed to the headship of Christ, and lifting holy hands without wrath and doubting. 1Ti 2:8.

'Lifting holy hands' demonstrates that a man is being sanctified (made holy) to his name, within his house, as he submits to the lordship of Christ and the word that Christ is speaking to him. This is the word of the Scriptures prophetically declaring how he is to walk before the LORD and to be blameless, and how to command his children and household after him. Gen 18:17-19. Because his focus is on the word that Christ is speaking to him, he is no longer drawn by the desires and provocations of his wife. His conversation is altogether with the word of Christ; thus, his every argument toward his wife and her reactions is brought to nothing. Because he is now receiving the word from Christ, he no longer lacks confidence concerning the pathway forward for himself, his wife, and their children. He has been delivered from the doubt that caused him to seek direction from his wife.

Now that the man has joined the conversation of faith, the blessing of the Spirit is again active toward and in him, and he is able to love his wife with the love of Christ. This means that he can lay down his life for her in the same way as Christ laid down His life for the church, nourishing and cherishing her as his own body. Eph 5:25-29. This means, firstly, that he will apply himself to the word of faith that he is receiving as light from the face of Christ. This will nourish his sonship, showing also that he loves and cherishes his own participation as a son of the Father. He is receiving Christ as 'an exceedingly great reward', and he appreciates the reality that this is a great treasure. Gen 15:1.

When a man gives himself to speak with his wife about the word which he is hearing, he demonstrates the love of Christ that has been given to

him, for her. He is nourishing and cherishing her as his own body, speaking also about aspects of their relational mode that need to be put off. His love for her is the love of Christ, sanctifying and cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word in this daily discussion based in the word that proclaims the culture of God's covenant. Knowing that blamelessness is our connection to the finished work of Christ, he knows that as he walks in the light of that finished offering, the mess of his family has already been dealt with. He and his wife can be cleansed from all unrighteousness through the blood of Jesus, and can become the righteousness of God in Him.

For a wife

A wife will apply herself to recover her marriage by also appropriating, or laying hold of, their unique portion of the remnant of the Spirit. The apostle Peter described this, saying, 'Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.' 1Pe 3:3-4. Instead of multiplying the culture of her marriage and family in her own desired image, she will multiply the culture of godliness in her house, without a word. The gentle and quiet spirit is a portion of the divine nature that is uniquely hers as grace for her role as a wife in her marriage and as a mother in her house. 'The hidden person of the heart' is the acceptance and appreciation of her name; and 'the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit' is the remnant of the Spirit with which she is to adorn, or dress, herself so that, without a word, or through her conduct, that word multiplies as faith in her children. This is the heritage of faith that she has been given as a daughter of Sarah.

Implications for divine nature in marriage and children

It is important to note that this commitment to sanctification and cleansing is necessary in the cultivation of the divine nature in our children. Why? Through this conversation, which is displayed in the culture of their lives and marriage, a man and wife can appropriate the unique portion of the remnant of the Spirit that God is giving them to bring forth a godly seed.

If we do not walk in the light of the word that is coming and calling us into blameless fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, we do

not receive the remnant of the Spirit, and will be unable to multiply the grace of life to our children.

However, we rejoice that when we are walking blamelessly in the fellowship of Christ's finished offering, a married couple becomes a New Covenant household. A child who is conceived in this household is a son of God even *before* they are brought forth from their mother's womb through natural labour. This is because, at the point of conception, a new, natural identity with a biological body is formed. Because their parents are part of the bride of Christ, the Father births this new identity as His own son by the incorruptible seed, through the word of God which abides forever. 1Pe 1:23.

We note in the paragraph above that in the mother's womb, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are active in the process of this child being born of the Spirit of God. The Father sends His Word, who is the Son, and so the child is born again. However, we recognise that, because it is the Spirit who gives life, the Holy Spirit is the seed of the new birth. Through the Spirit, the life of the Father becomes the life of a son of God, in the womb. While the fullness of that life dwells in the Son, the Holy Spirit takes of what is His and gives it to a son of God, in the womb, thus giving him the life of the Father that is resident in the Son. Joh 16:14. The life that the Spirit gives is the divine nature.

So it is that walking blamelessly and investing in the divine nature through the remnant of the Spirit, which multiplies the grace of life to all of the family, even in the womb, is making them to be children of the covenant. Of course, it is essential that as they grow older, and their parents grow older, there is a continued initiative of husband and wife, who are also father and mother, to walk blamelessly and, through the remnant of the Spirit, to invest in multiplying the grace of life to the whole family, because He seeks a godly seed. Mal 2:15.

Article 3

Oppression from unclean spirits

Luke Pomery

Introduction

When a person is oppressed by an unclean spirit, their ability to *see*, *enter* and *participate* in the kingdom of God is hindered. However, a pathway of recovery is available for their deliverance. The Scriptures teach that a person is delivered from oppression only when they receive the gospel preached, as ones who have become poor in spirit; and when they have an ongoing personal connection to Christ's offering and sufferings.

Isa 35:4-6. Mar 9:28-29. Isa 58:6. Jesus testified, saying 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to *preach the gospel to the poor* ... [and] to set at liberty those who are *oppressed*.' Luk 4:18-19.

The distinction between clean and unclean

The mandate to preach the gospel to the poor has been entrusted, by Christ, to the presbyteries that are restored to His right hand. Mar 16:15. Rev 1:20. Rev 2:1. As part of this charge, the messengers of Christ teach

the distinction between 'cleanness' and 'uncleanness'. The Lord stated through the prophet Ezekiel, 'And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between *the unclean* and *the clean*.' Ezk 44:23. A person is *clean* through their obedience to the word of Christ. Joh 15:3. And as we shall consider, it is a person's *uncleanness* that makes them vulnerable to spiritual oppression.

We are *unclean* if we reject the word of Christ, and give our ear to an alternative word and conversation. The Scriptures liken this alternative conversation to 'mixed wine'. Pro 23:30. Its intoxicating effect hinders our ability to distinguish between what is clean and what is unclean. Lev 10:9-10. This was exemplified when Eve was cunningly enticed by Satan to engage in a discussion with him. Gen 3:1. In this conversation, Satan questioned God's integrity and the validity of His word. He proposed another reality. Eve was quickly deceived by Satan's alternative word. Gen 3:4-5. Gal 1:6. In turn, Adam also rejected his relationship with Yahweh, and embraced Satan's lie. Gen 3:6.

By engaging in this alternative dialogue, and subsequently believing 'a different gospel', Adam and Eve became *unclean*. 2Co 11:4. They were joined to *another table* with its associated false worship, or idolatry. The apostle Paul described this as 'a table of demons'. 1Co 10:21. Adam and Eve became idolaters because they were now living according to 'a worthless doctrine'. Jer 10:8. Instead of giving glory to Yahweh, they worshipped that which they now perceived as good, pleasant and desirable, according to their other law. Gen 3:6. The apostle Paul taught that 'no *unclean* person, who is an *idolater*, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God'. Eph 5:5.

The effect of unclean spirits

As we have just discussed, a person is unclean because they have turned aside from obedience and submission to Christ. Outside of their obedience to the headship of Christ, every person is inevitably subjected to *oppression* by unclean spirits. The apostle John explained that we are either motivated by the Spirit of God to confess that Jesus is Lord or we are subject to the many spirits that are in the world. 1Jn 4:2-3. 1Co 12:3. We recall the occasion when Jesus directly rebuked some of His disciples, stating, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.' Luk 9:55. Clearly, at this point, their motivations had not come from the Spirit of God but, rather, from some other spirit.

The Scriptures refer to demons, along with their particular influence upon an individual or family, as 'familiar and unclean spirits'. Luk 4:33. Specifically, they are angels who have fallen from their proper abode through disobedience, and have been reserved for judgement in the lake of fire. Jud 1:6. 2Pe 2:4. These demons, or unclean spirits, are under the rulership of Satan. Mat 12:26. While the Lord's angels are *ministering spirits* sent forth by God to uphold the heirs of salvation, demons are *spirits of wickedness* who oppress and defraud a person of their sonship inheritance. Heb 1:14. Eph 6:12. This oppressive influence is manifest to varying degrees within each person who belongs to the world. 1Jn 5:19. However, as the time of the end draws near, this oppression and torment will continue to be heightened, sending people insane. 1Ti 4:1. Jer 50:38.

The apostle Paul further explained that all those who are oppressed by unclean spirits are invariably governed, or ruled, by *the spirit of Satan*, who is the chief unclean spirit. Eph 2:2-3. For this same reason, Jesus said to the Jews, 'You are of your father the Devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.' Joh 8:44. Remarkably, at this, the Jews accused Jesus of being demon-possessed and endeavoured to stone Him. Joh 8:48,59.

As discussed earlier, *oppression* by unclean spirits means that a person is robbed, or defrauded, of the inheritance of their sonship. Furthermore, in addition to being oppressed, a person can become *possessed by a demon* if they give themselves over to the unclean spirit which is oppressing them. In this, they believe that the only way to obtain the desires of their 'other law' is to interface with, and to be loyal to, the unclean and familiar spirit. The identity, or spirit, of such a person then becomes *inhabited by* that unclean spirit. That is, there is no longer any distinction between the expression of that person's identity and the expression of that unclean spirit. It was for this reason that the Lord instructed the children of Israel to not fraternise with familiar and unclean spirits. Lev 19:31. We note also that, in this manner, at the last supper, *Satan entered*, or possessed, the spirit of Judas. Joh 13:27.

Ultimately, all those who live by the spirit and fatherhood of Satan *belong to Babylon*. In Scripture, 'Babylon' refers to the ruling principle that has continuously characterised all seven of the world kingdoms. Jesus explained that Babylon is 'a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every unclean spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird'. Rev 18:2. An 'unclean bird' specifically refers to those who belong to the *synagogue of Satan*; that is, those who, through their alternative *religious* gospels, seek to rob a person of the word of their sonship. Gen 15:11. Rev 3:9.

Markers of spiritual oppression

The Scriptures give many examples of the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual distress that can result from oppression by unclean spirits. Some physical sickness is simply our participation in the sufferings of Christ, given to us for the glory of God. Joh 9:2-3. Joh 11:40. Col 1:24. However, other symptoms can be markers of spiritual oppression. They helpfully indicate where a person has not been relationally obedient to Christ. We recall that the apostle Paul explained that many in the church are weak, sick, and spiritually asleep because they are participating in the *agape* meal in an unworthy manner. 1Co 11:29-30. *Spiritual oppression* causes a person to become weak, sick and to spiritually sleep.

The Scriptures list various markers of spiritual oppression. These markers include being mute, blind, deaf, lame, paralysed, lying, distressed, self-harming, suicidal, self-pitying, violent towards others, angry, homosexual, immoral, abusive in speech, devouring, given to divination, rebellious, mad or insane. Notably, many of these various markers have both *physical* and *spiritual* manifestations. We will consider three different examples.

A mute spirit - we recall that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was physically unable to speak. This muteness was the judgement of God upon him, due to his unbelief. Luk 1:18-20. Also, we note those who were mute and demon-possessed, whom Jesus healed. Mat 9:32-33. In both of these examples, there was a *physical* manifestation of muteness. However, a person who is *spiritually* mute is someone who is unable or unwilling to speak by faith according to their sanctification. 2Co 4:13. They are hindered in their proper participation in the *agape* meal because of this spiritual condition.

A backbiting tongue - abusive or malicious speech is also an indication of spiritual oppression. Pro 25:23. This is seen in a person's demand for family members to serve their agenda; their rejection of their own accountability; their emotive reactions whereby they claim that they are being vilified for their choices; and their accusation that family members do not care for them. Jesus helpfully demonstrated that we are to have no engagement or argument with this kind of dialogue. Mar 1:23-25.

A devouring spirit - when energised by a familiar spirit, the desire of fallen man can be exacerbated to unimaginable degrees. A graphic example of this, in Scripture, was a woman of Samaria who was among those who were under assault from a Syrian king. Because of her

demonically empowered desire for survival, this woman cooked and ate her own son in order to sustain her own life. 2Ki 6:28-29.

The redefinition of 'normal'

Modern medicine has created definitions, or labels, for certain conditions which are, in truth, merely the result of *spiritual oppression*. For example, many psychosomatic or psychological illnesses may simply be what the Scriptures define as being spiritually oppressed, or demon possessed. These illnesses may have physical, emotional or mental symptoms, yet the causes for these conditions are not fully understood in the medical realm. An ongoing pursuit for medical clarity and alternative treatments for these ailments only serves to heighten a person's blindness to the spiritual cause of their sickness. The underlying spiritual cause may be as straightforward as their rebellion. 1Sa 15:23.

Matters which are clearly spiritual in nature can easily become *redefined* as 'normal' by medicine, the media, education, society and family members. As a result, we can make excuses for this spiritual oppression in our lives or in the lives of others. This redefinition of what is considered 'normal', by the media and society, can cause us to become desensitised to the spiritual and oppressive nature of these matters and, in turn, to become callous, and immune to the dealings of the Lord. We can falsely believe that we need to placate and accommodate dysfunction that is actually spiritually induced, even where it is causing damage to ourselves and to others. 2Co 11:20.

Instead of remaining free from these oppressive dynamics, some people *serve* them, thinking that this is the 'good Christian thing to do'. However, the Lord teaches us a most fundamental principle: something which is unclean *cannot* be 'made clean' by merely *coming into contact with, or being associated with, something clean*. Hag 2:12-13. On the contrary, the reverse is true. Such an encounter causes the one who *was* clean to become unclean! On this issue, Jesus taught, 'No-one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love [*agape*] the other, or else he will be loyal [cleave] to the one and despise the other.' Mat 6:24. There are only two options: either we are cleansed from familiar spirits so that we can love the Lord, or we cleave to familiar spirits and, in turn, despise the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. This is the simplicity of the choice that is put before us. Deu 30:19.

Article 4

Cleansing our families from unclean spirits

Luke Pomery

Introduction

In order to walk blamelessly before the Lord, it is necessary for every family to be delivered from familiar and unclean spirits. This has implications for every one of us. Oppression from unclean spirits results from uncleanness, and also from dysfunctional relationships within the family and within the church. As a result of this dysfunction, individual family members can be deceived, as Eve was, *away from* the simplicity of obedience to Christ. 2Co 11:3. These ones are then vulnerable to spiritual oppression through their lack of obedience and submission to Christ.

Oppression by familiar and unclean spirits causes a household to be figuratively consumed to its very foundations. The prophet Zechariah wrote, '[The curse] shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones'. Zec 5:4. Identifying one expression of this principle, Solomon explained that a foolish woman who is empowered by

an unclean spirit can destroy her whole household. Pro 14:1. In contrast, a house should be built upon *wisdom*, established by *understanding* and filled by *knowledge*. Pro 24:3-4.

The ministry of Elijah

A household's deliverance from unclean spirits is dependent upon the recovery of relational order within the family and within the church. Through His word, the Lord *teaches us how to relate* with Him and within our family. This particular ministry initiative is described in Scripture as 'the ministry of Elijah'. The prophet Malachi described the outcome of this prophetic ministry when he wrote, 'Behold, I will *send you Elijah the prophet* before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and *the hearts of the children to their fathers*, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.' Mal 4:5-6.

This prophetic ministry began with John the Baptist and continues in every generation through the presbytery of a lampstand church. The angel of the Lord said, concerning John the Baptist, 'He will also go before Him [Jesus] in the *spirit and power of Elijah*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' Luk 1:17. 'The wisdom of the just' is the word of the cross. The word of the cross pierces our heart, and exposes our motivations which have caused our relational dystrophy.

The prophet Malachi described two outcomes to the word that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah. Those who receive this ministry will be enabled by the spirit of grace and supplication to look upon Christ whom they have pierced. Zec 12:10. As they mourn for the injury that they have caused to Christ and to their brethren, they are blessed with the capacity to repent and to seek relational reconciliation. In contrast, if the word that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah is refused, this one shall be 'struck with a curse'. Mal 4:6. Becoming oppressed by unclean spirits is how the curse is exacerbated within a person's life as judgement upon them.

Joined to Christ's offering

It would be an error to reject the word of the cross and, instead, to seek for a church 'leader' to take authority over an unclean spirit within our own life or within the lives of our family, through the action of 'exorcism'. Jesus helpfully explained that seeking power over unclean

spirits in this manner only results in *further* oppression. Mat 12:43-45. This is because, in these instances, the individual has not sought to be cleansed of their uncleanness and relational dystrophy which caused their oppression in the first place! In contrast, they are endeavouring to preserve their current cultural 'normality' without repentance. Even though they might 'tidy their practices' in various ways, inevitably, over time, their spiritual oppression will become more severe than it was beforehand.

The truth is that the fellowship of Christ's offering is the only way in which we can be delivered from unclean spirits. As the prophet Zechariah stated, 'In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.' Zec 13:1. Through the prophet, the Lord went on to explain that walking in the fellowship of Christ's offering causes the names of the idols to be cut off; those who teach false doctrines to depart; and sons of God to be set free from oppression by unclean spirits. Zec 13:2.

When the word of Christ exposes the spiritual oppression within our families, our first response should be to ask, seek and knock in relation to Christ's initiative to meet us. Mat 7:7-8. *Asking* involves praying in the secret place in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, Son and Father. Rom 8:26-27. We *ask* for the Father's will to be done in our lives. Mat 6:10. *Seeking* involves finding understanding regarding our unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Php 3:10. In this regard, we *seek* to take up our cross daily. Luk 9:23. *Knocking* involves entreating fellowship in the light of the word with those who minister the gospel. 1Jn 1:3,7. We *knock* by participating in the *agape* meal, both publicly and from house to house. Rev 3:20.

Deliverance from unclean spirits

In truth, the *accountability* for finding cleansing from familiar and unclean spirits within our family belongs with every individual. The psalmist testified, 'How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.' Psa 119:9. The word of Christ brings to light specific spiritual oppressions to which a family has been subjected; and also reveals the thoughts and intents of our hearts. The apostle Paul wrote, 'Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both *bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.*' 1Co 4:5. We will consider both of these elements further.

First, how does the Lord 'bring to light the hidden things of darkness'? Prior to the word of Christ bringing illumination to us, the spiritual oppression within our family will remain *hidden* from our understanding. This is because these dynamics are so *familiar* to us. The apostle Peter described these familiar ways as the 'aimless conduct [which we have] received by tradition from [our] forefathers'. 1Pe 1:18.

Accordingly, where possible, it will be necessary to walk in the light of Christ's word in fellowship with our parents and grandparents - this is because we have grown up under the 'traditions' which we have received from them. Importantly, this is not a 'finger-pointing exercise' by which we apportion blame. Isa 58:9. Rather, it is a fellowship exercise, together as a family, for the purpose of processing the dysfunctional ways of relating which have made us vulnerable to spiritual oppression. Then each *individual* needs to renounce these familiar spirits so that they are no longer loyal to them. 2Co 4:2.

Second, the word of Christ also exposes the thoughts and motivations of our hearts. Heb 4:12. It reveals our accountability for living according to, or under, the dysfunctional relationships that resulted in oppression. The apostle Paul explained that coming under the dominion of unclean spirits is the result of presenting our faculties as instruments of unrighteousness. Rom 6:13-14. The motivations of our heart are exposed so that we can mourn alone for our relational dystrophy. Zec 12:12-14. As we mourn, we are blessed with the capacity to repent of our sin and uncleanness. By faith, we are able to obey from the heart the word of our sonship, and to submit to the lordship of Christ. Rom 6:16-17.

The bonding phase of courtship

During the bonding phase of a courtship, a man and woman are able to obtain '*the remnant of the Spirit*' from the Father, through their submission to Christ. Mal 2:15. Importantly, this portion of the Spirit is unique to them as a couple. It is not received from the household of either of their parents, nor from the leader who is providing them with marriage counsel. Rather, it is *the word of the messenger* that enables them to receive a remnant of the Spirit within their forming relationship. This portion of the Lord's Spirit enables them to be joined together in one Spirit and, also, to uniquely express the divine nature as a couple.

This bonding season necessitates that the man and the woman put away their childish, or carnal, ways of thinking and relating. 1Co 13:11. The foremost aspect of carnality that will be expressed within their

relationship is *the man's desire to rule over* his future wife and family, and *the woman's desire to embrace* her future husband and family. Gen 3:16. Appropriating the remnant of the Spirit and being joined to the circumcision of Christ enables them to put off these fallen desires which would inevitably cause relational dystrophy within the marriage relationship. Col 2:11. For this reason, the man seeks the Lord during this season of bonding to know how to take a wife 'in sanctification and honour'. 1Th 4:4. The woman seeks the Lord so that she may submit to her husband in the Spirit of Christ. 1Pe 3:1-4.

The specific cultural practices which they are forsaking are being 'forgotten' through their fellowship in the cross of Christ. Accordingly, the culture of their future house is being progressively defined through the knowledge of the specific cultures which they are leaving behind, and also by the culture of the divine nature which they are apprehending together. Php 3:13.

Importantly, during the bonding phase, the couple will need to be delivered from the *familiar and unclean spirits* that are evident within their family history and upbringing. As discussed earlier, this requires a season of fellowship with their families and with the messenger so that their loyalty to familiar spirits can be both unmasked and forsaken. They will need to renounce their former loyalties to these spiritual dynamics so that the oppression of these familiar and unclean spirits is not brought into their own marriage culture. 2Co 4:2.

If they fail to give due attention to this matter, through devotional connection to Christ, the 'curse' that is associated with this spiritual oppression will be *multiplied* once they make covenant before the Lord. However, if they *do* give due attention to this matter, a man's submission to Christ, and a woman's submission to her husband, will enable the blessing of Abraham to be multiplied within their household. Eph 5:22-29. Gal 3:14.

Conclusion

While we are submitted to Jesus as our Lord and Master, we are not under the dominion of unclean spirits. Rom 6:14. Rom 14:9. 1Ti 6:15. Furthermore, it is only by *the Holy Spirit* that we are able to submit ourselves to Jesus as our Lord. 1Co 12:3. *The lordship of Christ* is expressed through *the order of headship*, which connects every individual to God the Father. 1Co 11:3.

WHAT MANNER OF PEOPLE OUGHT WE TO BE

By faith, we can daily present our 'members' as instruments of righteousness to serve Christ our Lord, as His slave. Luk 17:10. Rom 6:13. It is this culture of faith-obedience that is effective in delivering an individual from the dominion of familiar spirits, even if their family remains oppressed. Rom 6:22. Sincere love of their family will be expressed through their obedience to the truth of their sonship. 1Pe 1:22.

Article 5

Courtship overview

David Hall

'For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.' Eph 5:30-33.

The Scripture above suggests to us that there are definitive personal and corporate milestones in the process of a courtship and marriage. While not an exhaustive list, it will be for us a framework around which we can build an overview understanding of the courtship process. To do this we need to discuss the process of leaving father and mother, being joined to another, and becoming one flesh.

Leaving father and mother

We discussed in a previous article that God's intention in making a man and woman 'one' was because He seeks a godly seed. Mal 2:15. Through procreation, mankind was to multiply sons of men who would be sons of

God. As the generations matured, they would each, in turn, leave father and mother and begin their own family. As we have discussed, a remnant of the Spirit is essential to the establishment of a Christian marriage; however, the reason why the remnant was given was because 'He seeks a godly seed'. This highlights to us the truth that the children in a family are also sharers in the remnant of the Spirit, which is ministered to them from the face of Christ in the presbytery, to their family. 1Pe 3:7.

Godly parents are committed to bringing forth godly sons and daughters. Accordingly, they instruct their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord through the example of their conversation and conduct. They first express their commitment of faith to the Lord and to the body of Christ when they dedicate, or set apart, their children to the Lord - for He seeks a godly seed. A key consideration for a covenant family is that this is also a commitment to support the growth and maturation of the child so that, when they come of age, they are properly able to leave father and mother and to receive the talent, or gift, of God; either to be married or unmarried. 1Co 7:7. Eph 4:7. Mat 25:15. Mat 19:12.

Dedications and baptisms are times of great joy, love and commitment to the Lord within the body of Christ. Baptism, in particular, is a milestone of growth in the remnant of the Spirit, for the whole family, because a child (somewhere around seven years of age) hears the call of Christ in their life to become a member in particular of the body of Christ. We may also observe that, at seven years old, the child is now 'a member in particular' who, with an uncomplicated confession of faith, recognises the need for their own submission to the lordship of Christ, and for the submission of their family to the body of Christ. 1Co 11:3. Eph 5:23-33. It is startling to think that this is also an indication that the child is 'leaving father and mother'. However, as Jesus did, they fellowship with the presbytery, but then also go home and submit themselves to their parents. Luk 2:46-52.

The milestones discussed above are evidence that the remnant of the Spirit is being nurtured in the children of a covenant family. This is possible only because of the effective mutual fellowship of the headship of the church and the headship of the home. (The headship of the home being received from, and submitted to, the word of the presbytery). The family culture is true to the word of God and to its gift of faith and grace through obedience in conversation and conduct. For this reason, there is no confusion in the house. Their 'yes' is 'yes' and their 'no' is 'no'. Mat 5:37. This connection of the family to the headship and word of

Christ that comes from the presbytery is also a protection for them in the heavenly places in Christ. Eph 1:3-23. Paul, probably referring to a time of persecution or even to the destruction of Jerusalem, wrote to the Corinthian church, giving such a word of protection concerning marriage, family and courtship to equip them for what he called 'the present stress', for 'the time is short'. 1Co 7:26,29. This is also very applicable for our day, and not a temporary instruction as some commentators have argued. We have also discussed in another article how Moses and his family were protected in heavenly places because they were a covenant household and had raised their son in the covenant until he was of age. Heb 11:23 KJV.

An important observation is that the fellowship of the family with the presbytery produces a conversation of faith that is taught to the children through the nurture and admonition of the Lord. As they grow older, the simplicity of their testimony to the obedience of faith allows them to personally join this conversation of faith and so receive the grace of life that comes to them from the presbytery.

This is important, because it is the key marker of their marriageability. The adult children are able to be 'met' and are marriageable because they have a remnant of the Spirit in their households, which is manifest as 'the grace of life'. By faith, they are able to stand in grace, and to know and express their identity. Rom 5:2. Because they are of age and able to enter a courting relationship, they are no longer under the headship, or remnant of the Spirit, protection of the house of their father or mother. They are, themselves, receiving a remnant of the Spirit from the word of the presbytery. They are no longer children, receiving the multiplication of the grace of life from their parents, but are receiving for themselves a remnant of the Spirit in the preached word. So we see that the remnant of the Spirit is not resident in the house, but in the *word* coming to the person.

For this marriageability to have developed, the conversation of faith, and its offering fellowship, must also have been established in the son or daughter. This is an important consideration, because we have said that the young person, male or female, is of age and able to work, buy a house, pay taxes, and court another because they have a remnant of the Spirit themselves. However, the headship of Christ has not been 'outgrown' and, because the home is also subject to Christ, they will be finding and learning to fellowship in the headship of Christ as an adult son or daughter in the home.

Being joined to his wife

Paul highlighted this in the book of Corinthians. 1Co 7:34-38. He exhorted the families in Corinth through the example of a man with his daughter, regarding their fellowship about whether courtship was viable for her. His reason for addressing the content in this manner is so that courting couples will profit (or increase) in what is proper, or 'well-formed'. 1Co 7:35. 'Well-formed', or proper, is the description of someone who is learning to overcome Satan who is waiting to devour the sons of God. 'Well-formed' also describes a person who has the divine nature, which is the remnant of the Spirit, and so is joined to Christ and His body. They are physically, emotionally and practically ready for courtship. They have put off childish, or carnal, ways, which include fantasy, or teenage romantic expectations, and other ways that might empower their desire for identity verification. Thus, they are simply walking in the name and works that were prepared for them before the world began and ordained for them in their mother's womb. Gal 1:15.

This is an example of two young people learning to walk blamelessly together. They have, individually, applied themselves to the divine nature, and now, having come of age, have faith to test their capacity for the remnant of the Spirit together. Because of their obedience to the presbytery word coming to them, their respect of the divine nature in each other, and their regard for the unique name of the other, they are receiving a unique expression of the remnant of the Spirit which will join them. This prepares them to become a corporate, one-flesh expression of the remnant of the Spirit.

The courtship dialogue pertaining to a son's or a daughter's choice of the other belongs to the family, and is supported by presbytery instruction and fellowship with the couple and with the family. As such, the dialogue of the family and the presbytery should be in harmony. It is not a clash of 'headships', but is *one headship* coming from God the Father, for He seeks a godly seed. We note here that the father helps his daughter to process her choice of the suitor and of the relationship that he is offering. Her father does not 'process' their relationship.

The apostle Paul highlighted the honouring of headship and fatherhood in the home when he addressed a man concerning his daughter regarding courtship and marriage. He firstly highlighted the reluctance of the man to let his daughter leave her family, and to cleave to another. 1Co 7:36. This highlights the reality that the 'headship' of the home is being adjusted, through the fellowship of the presbytery, to a better

appreciation of the age and stage, and the faith of the daughter. We read that if she is of age – ‘past the flower of her youth’ – ‘and thus it must be’ – she desires to be joined to this man, having proven their fellowship in a remnant of the Spirit – he is not making a mistake to let them marry.

Note here that we are saying that a couple is joined in one Spirit before becoming one flesh. Proving the capacity for a remnant of the Spirit to join them as a couple is what it means to ‘test their bond’ during the final months of a courtship. This means that they will arrive on their wedding day already possessing a remnant of the Spirit and able to covenant before Christ and the church to become one flesh.

On the other hand, if a father, through steadfast fellowship with his daughter, finds that she has not found such fellowship with the suitor in the remnant of the Spirit, and she does not want to proceed – ‘having no necessity’ – her father is under no obligation because of her ‘steadfast’ testimony. 1Co 7:37-38. If he desires to protect her from injury (‘keep her’) he does well. So, he who gives his daughter in marriage does well, and he who doesn’t give his daughter does better. Both fellowship endeavours between presbytery, father and daughter, have achieved effective first-love outcomes because of the remnant of the Spirit fellowship between the presbytery and the family.

Article 6

The nature and warfare of the generation of the last hour – Part I

Conflict and protection

Michael Fox

The hour of testing

In His letter to the presbytery of the church in Philadelphia, Jesus said, 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.' Rev 3:10. The time that Jesus was referring to is 'the time of the end', which is also referred to in the Scriptures as 'the last hour'. 1Jn 2:18. This hour of testing will commence with the opening of the seals and will conclude with the resurrection of the righteous, who will reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years. Rev 6:1. Rev 20:6.

This will be a time of intense conflict and warfare, which no man can avoid. Though the entire generation of this last hour will experience tribulation on the earth, Satan will direct his attack most fiercely towards those who 'keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ'. Rev 12:17. This is because his focus is on devouring all of the sons of God, who have been born with the divine nature. Rev 12:4. 1Pe 5:8.

In Chapter 12 of the book of Revelation, this conflict is described as a dragon standing before a woman who is about to give birth, so that when she gives birth he might devour her child. Satan is 'the great dragon' and 'the serpent of old', and the woman is 'the church, the bride of Christ'. The child to whom she gives birth is called a 'man-child'. Rev 12:5. We would all acknowledge that we have known very little about this 'man-child'. In this season, however, we rejoice that the Lord is granting us great insight as to its meaning. It is not a new or mysterious incarnation as many have speculated. The man-child is *the manifestation of the sons of God with the divine nature!* They are sons of God who will be brought forth from the travailing ministry of the church, which is the bride of Christ. These sons of God will be protected from being devoured by Satan because they will be in the temple of God, having been 'caught up to God and to His throne'. Rev 12:5.

Satan and the man-child

The events depicted in this scene have a specific application for the days in which we live. However, it also reveals the nature of the warfare that has been true in every generation. Beginning with the very first family, we note that Satan sought to devour Cain, and the Lord called Cain to overcome him. Gen 4:7.

Moses is another helpful example of a man-child. At the time of Moses' birth, Pharaoh, under the influence of Satan, had ordered that every new-born Hebrew son was to be killed. Exo 1:22. However, as a child who was born to believing parents in a covenant household, Moses was not devoured by Satan. Both he and his household were protected because they were caught up to the throne of God. This was true even during the time that Moses was raised in the house of Pharaoh, receiving a secular education and interfacing with the culture of the world. Act 7:20-22. Eventually, Moses was also the one through whom God judged Pharaoh and the kingdom of Egypt, which was the administration of Babylon over the nations at that time. Exo 7:1.

Since the beginning of the church age, Satan has been 'standing before' the church, the bride of Christ, seeking to devour the sons of God who are brought forth through her travail. This is now true for our generation. We are called to be sons of God with the divine nature, who manifest the principle of the man-child because we are caught up to the throne of God, we are protected in His temple, and we overcome Satan.

As those who are born of God, we have entered the kingdom of heaven and are serving the Father in His temple as members of the body of Christ. Joh 3:5. Heb 12:22-24. This is what Paul meant when he said that we have been raised up together and are seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:6. This is where we are to fulfil our service of worship. Rom 12:1-2.

Heavenly places is also the context of our warfare. This is because Satan is currently in heavenly places, accusing the brethren day and night. Rev 12:10. Once Satan is cast out of heaven, he will then give his power and authority to the Antichrist who, along with the ungodly, will blaspheme against God, against His name and against His temple. God's 'temple' is those who dwell in heaven. Rev 13:6.

Protection and overcoming

Sons of God are *protected* from Satan as they 'keep the commandments of God'; and they *overcome* Satan because they 'have the testimony of Christ Jesus'. Rev 12:17. Those who 'keep the commandments of God' remain connected to the headship of their Father who is in heaven. 'Headship' describes the order of fellowship through which life, grace and health are ministered to the sons of God. The presbytery of a lampstand church expresses the headship of Christ by proclaiming the word of present truth so that those who hear it can receive faith for obedience. As we keep Christ's word, we are joined in fellowship with the presbytery, and with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. 1Jn 1:3. This word is health to our whole being, so that our body, soul and spirit are preserved, complete. Pro 4:22. 1Th 5:23. It is in this relational context that we are also strengthened by the Spirit to endure the hour of testing.

This fellowship is also the context in which we are equipped to *overcome* Satan and the principle of the flesh that he fathered in the hearts of mankind. Rev 12:9-10. To 'have the testimony of Jesus' means that we overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony and by not loving our lives to the death. Rev 12:11. *Every believer* is called to be an overcomer. Though we will inevitably experience

tribulation in the world, we take courage, knowing that we are overcoming with Christ. Through His once for all offering, He has already overcome the world and has cast out Satan, the ruler of this world. Joh 16:33. Joh 12:31. Heb 2:14. We will consider the nature of *overcoming* in more detail in the next article.

A flood of ungodliness

When Satan attacks the church, he spews water out of his mouth like a flood after her that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. Rev 12:15. It is important that we understand how to withstand this 'flood of ungodliness' that is overflowing the world, so that we are not deceived and carried away by it. Psa 18:4. This 'flood' is the doctrines of men, which are in direct opposition to Christ's word. Mat 15:9. Jesus teaches us that only those who build their house on the rock will be able to withstand this flood. We build our house on the rock by hearing Christ's word and obeying it. Mat 7:24-25.

Increasingly, the voice of the enemy is speaking out against matters that are fundamental to Christian culture. Psa 55:2-3. The redefinition of sound doctrine principles such as gender, sexuality, and relationships, is being imposed upon society. For example, education systems are now teaching children and young adults that instead of accepting the sanctification of their God-given identity, their sexual orientation is a choice which must be determined through sexual experimentation. And, what's more, they are encouraged to dishonour, disobey, and disown parents who refuse their demand for this wicked lifestyle. This is the nature of a generation that 'curses its father and does not bless its mother'. Pro 30:11. They are spiritually dead, having no access to the grace of God because they reject the order of headship in their family. Pro 20:20.

These perverse cultures reveal the evil desires that have always been in the heart of fallen mankind. Mat 15:18. In these times, however, worldly principles are no longer being presented merely as *optional alternatives* to Christian sound doctrine. They are, instead, being forced upon people as the 'new normal' which must be complied with if they are to remain a valid member of society. The exertion of this pressure upon us is 'the oppression of the wicked' against which we will need to persevere. Psa 55:3.

Christians who fail to submit to the headship of Christ in the church and in their family will not persevere under this oppression. Spiritual,

psychological, emotional and even physical distress will be indicators that they have become prey to Satan and other unclean spirits which devour the life of God within them. This is the oppressive and consuming impact of a generation whose 'teeth are like swords and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men'. Pro 30:14. They speak out against Christ and His messengers. Their conversation is also driven by controlling mechanisms such as humour or 'blackmail', in order to conquer others for their own self-centred gain. A Christian who joins this sort of 'devouring' conversation opens themselves up to the devouring influence of Satan upon their life. Gal 5:15.

Fight the good fight of faith

The apostle Paul exhorted all believers to 'fight the good fight of faith' in order to lay hold of eternal life and to maintain their sanctification in the face of such an onslaught as this. 1Ti 6:12. 'The good fight' means a 'better' or 'virtuous' warfare. This is the warfare that Christ Himself demonstrated through His offering. Christ did not overcome the Devil by preserving His life, but by obediently laying down His life unto death. Php 2:8. 1Jn 3:16. Heb 2:14.

Let us firstly consider what this fight does *not* look like. Some are tempted to make judgements regarding the culture and agenda of world. They will be drawn to comment on social and political issues for which they have no accountability. They presume to overcome wickedness in the strength of their own flesh by engaging in arguments about what is right and wrong or good and evil. They do not understand that strength to overcome the wicked one comes from the word of God *abiding in them*. 1Jn 2:14.

Others may find themselves losing heart and lacking the courage to remain steadfast in the faith. Gal 6:9. 1Pe 5:9. They will compromise on matters of Christian culture, hoping to escape the discomfort that accompanies being crucified to the world. Gal 6:14. They seek to avoid conflict with the spirit of the world instead of overcoming through the testimony of Jesus. They feel 'worn down' by the constant barrage of alternative worldly beliefs and unsanctified behaviour, which is precisely the mental disturbance that the spirit of antichrist seeks to inflict upon the righteous. Dan 7:25.

These reactions in a Christian are merely symptoms which indicate that they feel they are discriminated against. They believe that they are the

victim of the attack of Satan against them. These responses are the very evidence that they are allowing themselves to be devoured by the Devil. 1Pe 5:8.

So, how *do* we wage a good warfare, by faith? We take courage, stand, and persevere, as those who are committed to the culture of godliness. Eph 6:10-13. We make no judgements concerning other people and the culture they are choosing. We simply choose clear lines of sanctification for ourselves. 1Th 4:3. We know where to draw these lines as we continue to receive the word of present truth and obey it. This 'faith in action' is our protection from the fiery darts of the wicked one. Eph 6:16.

We can maintain this firm stance on matters of culture without provoking anger and offence in those with whom we interact. This capacity is not inherently in us, but the Lord does grant it to us as He teaches us His discretion. Pro 1:4. Having 'discretion' means that we know the limits and boundaries that will guard us from the way of evil. We are not unclear about *where* to walk. Pro 2:11-12. Pro 3:25-26. The Lord also grants us prudence, so that we are not naive regarding *how* we are to walk. Pro 8:5. Pro 14:8,15. He teaches us how to answer a matter, including how much or how little to say, as well as when to stay away from discussing a matter. By discretion and prudence, we can navigate through all manner of difficult situations and interactions without compromising our Christian culture. At times, the Lord may even grant us favour in the sight of worldly authorities. Exo 11:3. Act 7:10.

Obedience to the Lord and to His word in this way is our place of safety. The fear of the Lord motivates our obedience to the Lord and our unyielding commitment to our own sanctification. Isa 11:2. We are taught the fear of the Lord by giving our ear to the word of Christ's messengers. Psa 34:11. This fear replaces our fear of worldly authorities and of what man can do to us. Dan 3:16-18. Psa 118:6.

Article 7

The nature and warfare of the generation of the last hour – Part 2

Overcoming in the agape meal

Michael Fox

The patience of the saints

Let us be reminded of the key verse with which we began the previous article. 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.' Rev 3:10. During this time of great conflict and opposition, the sons of God will find security in true Christian community.

The culture of Christian community is described in the book of Revelation as 'the patience of the saints'. Rev 14:12. This is our

commitment to 'keep the word of His perseverance', which is Christ's word of present truth proclaimed by the presbytery of a lampstand church. There is an overwhelming need for this quality of patience in the generation of the last hour. Without it, sons of God will not endure the persecution and tribulation arising from those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. 2Th 1:4,8.

We can take courage, knowing that the Lord is faithful to strengthen us and to protect us from the evil one. 2Th 3:3. As we keep the word of His perseverance, He directs our hearts into the patience of Christ, by which we endure. 2Th 3:4-5. In fact, we *count it all joy* when we face various trials, because we know that the testing of our faith produces this patience within us. Jas 1:2-3. This patience is a virtue of Christ's life which is established in us as we remain connected with Him through tribulation. Rom 5:3. The Holy Spirit strengthens us with the power of the Eternal Spirit in our mortal bodies, so that we might attain to the patience of the saints. Col 1:11.

The *agape* meal

The primary activity of those who maintain the patience of the saints is that they participate in the *agape* meal. How we participate in the *agape* meal determines whether we find life, grace and health as children of God who live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Php 2:15-16.

The Lord does not desire that we suffer the judgement of His wrath upon our disobedience. Those who eat and drink the *agape* meal in an unworthy manner come under the judgement of God, which causes them weariness, sickness, and the loss of their sonship. 1Co 11:29-30. Rather, the Lord desires that we receive the healing of our spirit and of our physical body. He desires that we receive His peace which guards our hearts and minds. Guarded in this way, we are not driven by the anxious pursuit of our own desires; nor do we consider ourselves to be victims of our circumstances in life. Php 4:6-7. We can live at peace in our families and in the body of Christ. Rom 12:18.

As we eat and drink the *agape* meal together, we minister life and grace to one another through our confession and testimony of faith in relation to the word of present truth. We find healing as we confess our faults to one another and pray for one another, because the *agape* meal is where the light of Christ's word breaks forth. Jas 5:16. Isa 58:8.

We need not seek an alternative context of 'private confession' with someone whom we deem to be more spiritual than us. That would be merely seeking to alleviate a feeling of guilt or to abandon our accountability for sinful behaviour. It does not bring the cleansing and healing which comes from walking in the light of the word. Confessing our faults is the conversation which belongs at the table of the Lord, in the light of His word.

In order to persevere in the *agape* meal in a worthy manner, we must be those who overcome the Devil. As an illustration, we will consider what overcoming by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and by not loving our lives to the death will look like at the *agape* meal. Rev 2:9-11.

Overcoming the Devil

By the blood of the Lamb

We overcome by the blood of the Lamb as His blood is sprinkled on our hearts. This happens through our fellowship in the seven wounding events that caused the shedding of Christ's blood. Our daily participation in Christ's offering is possible only when we walk in the light of the present truth word that is ministered by His messengers. 1Jn 1:7.

As we receive the word of life and testify with one another at the *agape* meal, we are, by faith, drawing near to the Lord. This is how we come to Christ and to the sprinkling of His blood. Heb 12:24. Our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience by the blood of the Lamb, and our bodies are washed with the pure water of the word. Heb 10:22. This is how we are delivered from living according to the desires of our own heart, and are enabled to serve the living God. Heb 9:14.

At the *agape* meal, the sprinkling of His blood addresses certain fleshly principles in our heart. These are self-determination; self-motivated love and religious ideals; foolishness and rebellion; personality flaws; pride and projections; and self-righteous and self-sourced activities. Furthermore, it is the conversation of faith at the *agape* meal that enables us to walk by a new and living way, where our healing springs forth speedily. Isa 58:8. We are continually healed and made whole in body, soul and spirit as we draw near to this fellowship in the fear of the Lord. Mal 3:16. Mal 4:2.

Participating in this fellowship at the *agape* meal will at times require us to put off our offences so that we do not disconnect ourselves from others in the body of Christ. This is important, because the sufferings and distress of those who are disconnected from the body of Christ remain as judgement upon them. This could refer to Christians who reject the need to walk in the light of the word, choosing, rather, to trust in their own perspective. Isa 5:20-21.

They are described in Proverbs as ‘a generation that is pure in its own eyes yet is not washed from its filthiness’. Pro 30:12. They may accept that they have sin but will refuse to confess their faults in the *agape* meal. They do not avail themselves of the blood of Christ and do not, therefore, find deliverance from their sin.

By the word of our testimony

Overcoming by the word of our testimony means that we are being conformed to the name which we have been given by the Father, in Christ. Obtaining and expressing the life of God according to our name from the Father is dependent upon our deliverance from our desire to name ourselves. Our name as a son of God is expressed as a testimony when we are fulfilling the works that the Father has prepared for us to do, in Christ.

At the *agape* meal, this means that we offer to speak our testimony according to the faith that we have received by hearing the word. Testifying at the *agape* meal is a work of sonship for all of us! We don’t always feel ‘up to the task’ of speaking in this way. Sometimes it is because we are highly aware of our shortcomings. At other times, difficult circumstances in our life leave us feeling perplexed and overwhelmed. Importantly, however, those who are overcoming by the word of their testimony do not deviate from their obedience to speak and testify by faith at the *agape* meal.

The profession of Christians who grasp for equality with the messenger is that they are already successfully achieving the word of present truth. When the writer of Proverbs considered this, he wrote, ‘There is a generation - oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up.’ Pro 30:13. Each time we receive the word, our humble and joyful confession is that we are turning to ‘see the voice that has spoken behind us’. The veil of our self-righteousness is being taken away, and we are gaining understanding about who we are and the works we are to do in Christ. Instead of claiming that we are adequate for these things, we

rejoice that Christ has already finished all of our works for us in His offering journey, and that the faith that we receive by hearing His word enables us to walk in obedience to Him each day. Isa 26:12. Rom 10:17.

Not loving our lives to the death

The third aspect of overcoming is *not loving our lives to the death*. This refers to our fundamental and absolute commitment to the lordship of Christ. This is demonstrated as we forsake all mechanisms of self-preservation and self-promotion. We count them as loss, acknowledging that they are being taken out into the sea of God's forgetfulness. As we are conformed to Christ's death, we are losing our life for Christ's sake, and are finding our life in Him. Mat 10:39.

At the *agape* meal, we entrust our lives to the ones with whom we are joined in fellowship. We do not fear the implications of looking into the mirror of fellowship which reveals our mechanisms of self-preservation and self-promotion. 2Co 3:18. It is confronting when the pleasures and failing projections that we have anxiously pursued are exposed by the light of fellowship. However, in the fear of the Lord, our commitment is to turn to the Lord by receiving reflection from our brethren, and by believing the word that they are ministering to us.

Those who presume to see their own sin and are then hasty to voice their shameful apologies are drawing back in self-preservation. Though they attend the *agape* meal, a veil remains over the eyes of their heart because they are not turning to the Lord. 2Co 3:16. They fail to receive the true understanding of themselves which is available to them in the mirror of fellowship. 2Co 3:18. Jas 1:23-25.

The joy of the Lord is our strength

Overcoming is not merely 'getting through' a difficult time in our lives. Rather, we are full of *rejoicing* because, as we overcome Satan, we are taking hold of the eternal life to which we were called. 1Ti 6:12. As we persevere in the *agape* meal with our brethren, the joy of the Lord is our strength! Neh 8:10.

We do not merely 'endure' the sprinkling of blood; we rejoice that it is effective in our lives, and that we are ceasing from sin. 1Pe 4:1. We do not find ourselves testifying under duress or in shame; our confession and testimony springs forth as a fountain of life within us. Joh 4:14. We do not fear the repercussions of serving Christ as Lord; we boldly lose our

WHAT MANNER OF PEOPLE OUGHT WE TO BE

life for His sake, being fully confident that we will find our life in Him.
Mat 10:39.

Overcoming is the promise that belongs to the one who is a man-child.
Rev 3:21. Let us receive the faith of the Son of God, by which we
obediently and joyfully overcome with Christ and persevere in the
agape meal.

Article 8

Sanctification of the last generation – Part I

Stephen Bourne

Introduction

'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.'
1Th 5:23-24.

It is precious to consider that God desires to sanctify us *completely*, preserving us to be blameless at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. To 'sanctify' is to 'set apart, consecrate, dedicate, purify, prepare or make holy'.

In the next two articles, we will consider what the sanctification of the last generation looks like.

What is our sanctification?

Simply put, our sanctification is us doing the will of God. 1Th 4:3. This is *only* possible by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. 1Pe 1:2. 2Th 2:13. In sanctifying us, the Spirit applies the elements of the washing of the water of the word and the blood of Christ to our lives. Zec 13:1. Eph 5:26. Heb 10:29. He constrains us to walk on the unique pathway of salvation that Christ has pioneered for us, through His offering. Act 13:2. Heb 12:1-2. Isa 35:8. Psa 139:16. In this way, it is the Spirit who joins us each day to our obedience, which Christ has already learned and finished for us in His offering. Heb 5:8. 1Pe 1:2.

The apostle Peter stated, 'Since you have purified [or sanctified] your souls *in obeying the truth through the Spirit* in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.' 1Pe 1:22.

In other words, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are growing in our sanctification as we obey God's word. When we are joined each day, by faith, to Christ's offering, the will of God - which is our sanctification - is done, regardless of how we think the day went. Heb 10:7. We can appreciate, then, that hearing and receiving the word of God by the Spirit is critical to our sanctification.

Sanctification is *letting go of what does not belong to Christ and standing in our name as a son of God*, which is defined by His proceeding word. Clearly, standing in our name as a son of God will mean that we need to let go of our self-defined projections. Rather than living by our projections, we allow the Holy Spirit to be the expression of our sonship. Eph 1:13.

Let us now turn our attention to what it means to be blameless, which is fundamental in understanding our sanctification.

Walking blamelessly

The Lord spoke to Abraham by saying, '*walk before Me, and be blameless.*' Gen 17:1. Helpfully, in this season we have come to understand that walking blamelessly before Him is *not* about attaining sinless perfection. What a relief! Rather, it is the reality of one who is joined to the offering and sufferings of Christ. Put simply, it is *joining Christ* in the sinless perfection that He accomplished *for us* through His offering. Heb 10:14. We can summarise the culture of blamelessness as 'denying ungodliness and worldly desires' in order to live 'sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age'. Titus 2:12.

The Father, through Christ, protects us from stumbling so that we can *continue to walk* before Him and be blameless. Jude concluded his epistle by declaring, 'Now to Him who is able to protect you from *stumbling*, and to make you *stand* in the presence of His glory, *blameless* with great joy.' Jud 1:24.

Walking blamelessly before Him is not merely ceasing from doing 'bad things' to do 'good things'. This would be striving in our flesh to fulfil the Law, which is impossible. Jas 2:10. We walk blamelessly before Him when we stand by faith each day in our unique participation in the finished offering of Christ. Heb 10:14. In His offering, sin and the other law are being circumcised from our hearts. And, as we receive and live by Christ's life, we are doing the works prepared for us which *He has already accomplished*. Eph 2:10. Gal 2:20. Isa 26:12. That is, we are fulfilling the will of God the Father, which is our sanctification. 1Th 4:3. Rom 12:1-2. *As we are being sanctified by the Spirit, we are walking blamelessly before the Lord*. In this way, blamelessness and sanctification are to be concurrent realities in our life.

The testimony of Moses

In seeking to understand what our sanctification looks like, let us turn our attention to the testimony of Moses. 'By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a *proper child*; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.' Heb 11:23.

Various versions of the Bible translate 'proper child' in this passage as 'beautiful child'. Clearly, the writer of Hebrews was not simply drawing our attention to a parent's innate bias regarding their child's appearance. Rather, Moses' parents were looking at Moses just as God looked at him: not at the outward appearance, but as a son of the covenant. Exo 2:2. Act 7:20. 1Sa 16:7.

After being placed in the Nile River by his parents, Moses was eventually brought to Pharaoh's daughter, who approved that he be nursed by a Hebrew nurse. Exo 2:3-6. This happened to be Moses' mother, who nursed him until he grew to a certain age. Exo 2:7-10.

Being a Hebrew child from a believing household, it is likely that Moses was circumcised on his eighth day. This marked him as a 'son' of the covenant of circumcision first given to Abraham. Gen 17:10. This was to sanctify, or to set apart, Moses as belonging to the Lord.

As Moses grew, his parents likely brought him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph 6:4. This is likely to have involved much chastening, rebuke and pointed discussion, as well as encouragement and affirmation. While Moses was physically 'cut', he was also joined to a process of nurture and admonition whereby the 'foreskin' of his heart was being circumcised. And, while he was deeply embedded *in* Egyptian life, which is a type of the world, he remained as one who was not *of* the world. Joh 17:16. Because he was joined to the process of circumcision, Moses did not depart from the pathway of his sanctification as he grew older. Pro 22:6.

Our testimony

Many of us were born into covenant homes, with the divine nature at conception. That is, we were already born again at conception, having the Spirit of God dwelling within our hearts. We were sanctified and set apart to the Lord. 1Co 7:14. As we grew older, we each received the faith for baptism.

Our *daily* connection to our baptism, along with an ongoing commitment to the *agape* meal, marks our participation with Christ in His offering and sufferings - this is our connection to Christ's circumcision. The apostle Paul made this link between baptism and circumcision. 'In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.' Col 2:11-12.

The apostle Paul said that we are to obey from the heart 'that form of doctrine to which [we] were *delivered*'. Rom 6:17. What are we delivered from? We are delivered from being a slave of sin; that is, missing the mark concerning our sanctification. And what are we delivered to? We are delivered to the doctrine of baptism, *which is our circumcision*. By the leading and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, we are joined to the circumcising work of Christ, which results in our sanctification and the outcome, eternal life.

If we are not joined to the circumcising work of Christ each day, the body of flesh is not being cut from our lives. Col 2:11. If the body of flesh is not being cut from our lives, we will continue to be enslaved to sin. Rom 6:17. If we continue to be enslaved to sin, we will not be a slave of righteousness by doing the works that are prepared for us. Rom 6:18. If

we are not a slave of righteousness who is led by the Spirit, we will not be walking in our sanctification as a son of God. Rom 6:19. If we are not walking in our sanctification as a son of God, we will not be blameless before the Lord. Col 1:22. Our daily choice, then, is twofold: we are either presenting ourselves each day as slaves of righteousness by the Spirit resulting in sanctification or we are presenting ourselves to impurity and lawlessness. Rom 6:19.

Learning from Moses

Moses demonstrated for us how we are to walk. Despite having been brought up in a godly house, with believing parents, Moses still had to choose between life and death; between Yahweh and the world. Deu 30:19. Even though he was presented with all of the passing pleasures of sin, he considered, rather, 'the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward'. Heb 11:26. Similarly, we too must be delivered to obedience to the doctrine of baptism, which is resulting in our sanctification. Rom 6:17. 1Pe 1:22. Each day, then, by the leading and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to eschew the immoral and godless culture of the present world, and to choose, rather, to stand in the sanctification of our name. The outcome of this way of living is eternal life in fellowship with Yahweh. Rom 6:22.

Just as it was with Moses, the passing pleasures of sin are constantly presented to us on an 'enticing platter'. If we are not *continually being sanctified* by the Spirit to our name and works, and joined to Christ's offering, where sin and the other law are being removed, we will not be set apart as 'holy to the Lord'. At best, we will be a religious zealot and an enthusiastic adherent to Christianity. At worst, we will be a godless reprobate who rails against the message of the cross and actively rejects their name and sanctification within the body of Christ.

Kept from the evil one

'I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.' Joh 17:14-17.

It is clear from Christ's prayer in Gethsemane that He is not asking us, then, to escape from civilisation and the onslaught of the world by living in a remote commune. Neither is He asking us to compromise our

Christian faith and culture by becoming relevant to the world. So, what is the nature of His prayer? Christ's prayer to the Father demonstrated Yahweh's unwavering commitment to keep and guard the sons of God from Satan, even while we remain on earth and under the administration of the seventh world kingdom.

If we consider the testimony of Moses again, we see that, as a baby, he was placed in the Nile River. Figuratively speaking, he floated above the flood of Satan, which comes against the bride of Christ to devour all that is born of God. Rev 12:13-17. Satan was cursed in the garden of Eden and was told by the Lord God that he would eat 'dust' (or the flesh of man). Gen 3:14. In type, Moses was a 'man-child' who was protected and guarded from the devouring appetite of the evil one who seeks the souls of men. Rev 12:5. Gen 14:21. This protection continued throughout Moses' younger years and into his older age. In fact, Moses proclaimed judgement on the first world kingdom through his sanctification. Exo 7:14. Rev 12:5.

What, then, is our protection from Satan and his flood? Our answer is found in the book of Revelation:

'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.'

Rev 12:11.

This is the sanctified testimony of Jesus, and must be our testimony too. Rev 12:17. Our houses are protected when we are progressively being sanctified and walking blamelessly before the Lord. Heb 10:14. As this becomes our culture, we are caught up to the heavenly places, knowing protection from Satan and his flood even while fulfilling our works here on earth. Col 3:1. Eph 2:6. Rev 12:5. While ever we reject the culture of sanctification, holiness and blamelessness, we reject the protection available to sons of God, and we invite uncleanness into our houses. Our choice is simple: we are either overcoming Satan and bruising his head by walking blamelessly before the Lord, or we are being overcome, and our houses are 'open slather' for the oppression and confusion of unclean spirits. Gen 3:15. Jas 3:16.

Come out from their midst and be separate

It is the truth of His word that sets us free to be set apart *from the world* and *to the Lord*. When the word of the cross is ministered to us by messengers sent by Christ, it is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. Heb 4:12. Our heart is laid bare before His eyes.

Heb 4:13. In His mercy, He calls to us to forsake the things of this world, and to be separate and sanctified to Him.

We are to be the temple of God, the place where He dwells. 2Co 6:16. It is God who says, “Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you”.’ 2 Co 6:17. Because we are a temple of God where the Spirit of God dwells, and we are joined to the sanctifying work of the Spirit, we can rightly testify, ‘ “I am the Lord’s”; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; another will write with his hand, “The Lord’s”.’ Isa 44:5.

As ones who are sanctified *from the world* and *to the Lord*, we must be careful not to regress and to turn our gaze away from Christ’s eyes that are as a flame of fire, and to turn back to the weak and worthless elemental things of this world. Gal 4:9. This would be to draw back in shame, which is the enemy of our sanctification. Heb 10:39. Gen 3:10. If we are sanctified to God, we know that He dwells in us. However, if we destroy ourselves by continually choosing the passing pleasures of sin, rather than *remaining* set apart to God, then God *will* destroy us. 1Co 3:17. Why is this? It is because the temple of God – which is *you* – is to be holy and sanctified. 1Co 3:16.

Article 9

Sanctification of the last generation – Part 2

Stephen Bourne

Introduction

Speaking to the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul addressed the behaviours, attitudes and ways of living that will ultimately prevent us from inheriting our sonship. 'Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither *fornicators*, nor *idolaters*, nor *adulterers*, nor *effeminate*, nor *homosexuals*, nor *thieves*, nor the *covetous*, nor *drunkards*, nor *revilers*, nor *swindlers*, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed [by the water of the word], but you were sanctified [by the Spirit], but you were justified [by His blood] in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.' 1Co 6:9-11. Eph 5:26. 1Pe 1:2. Rom 5:9.

First, we know that sanctification is *only* by the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot sanctify ourselves *by* ourselves. It is the Spirit who enables us

to let go of what does not belong to Christ and, rather, to stand in our name as a son of God as defined by His proceeding word.

Second, it is important to consider the contextual background of this passage. Paul exhorted us in the fifth chapter of first Corinthians to disassociate from immoral persons, the covetous, idolaters, revilers, drunkards and swindlers. 1Co 5:9-13. Yet, he was not primarily referring to people who belong to the world. Rather, he was referring to so-called brothers and sisters in the church. Paul himself said, 'Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits".' 1Co 15:33. We need to let the message of the cross redefine *all* of our relationships. Our testimony should be like that of Joshua who, in contrast to the unsanctified and idolatrous nation of Israel, declared, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Jos 24:15. Joshua and his house made a cultural stand by separating themselves from their so-called brothers and sisters who were unwilling to remain sanctified and holy to the Lord.

Third, we must realise that our sanctification, or lack thereof, has relational implications. 1Co 12:14-27. It is not all about *you*! If we do not continue to walk in our sanctification, our unsanctified and immoral behaviours will multiply like leaven toward others within the body of Christ. Gal 5:7-9. 1Co 5:6-7. Pro 12:26. Conversely, if we do continue to walk in our sanctification, the love of God, rather than leaven, will multiply toward our brethren. 1Pe 1:22.

Fourth, let us remember that deliverance from *any* and *all* unrighteous and unsanctified behaviour is only found in Christ's offering. A way of restoration is made open for every one of us! Thankfully, this way of restoration is not through the mechanisms of self-determination or prohibition. Col 2:23. As we hear the message of the cross proclaimed to us, and do not resist it, a spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon us so that we can look on Him whom *we* have pierced. Zec 12:10. We are caused to mourn, not with fleshly regret and self-pity, but rather with the sorrow of God, which leads to repentance. 2Co 7:10. This is what it means to join the broken heart of Christ. Psa 69:20. Then, through the faith which we have received by hearing His word, He is equipping us to 'shut the door' on the oppression of unclean spirits that we have 'invited' into our houses because of our disobedience and disconnection to Christ's headship. 1Co 11:10. Through faith, we are standing in the grace where we are connected to His offering, and are overcoming Satan by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by not loving our lives to the death. Rom 5:2. Rev 12:11.

Let us now consider each of the ten elements that war against our sanctification, as noted by the apostle Paul in Chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians.

Fornicators

Fornication, or sexual immorality, can consist of all types of sexually aberrant, deviant and unsanctified behaviour. The end of this way of living *is* the lake of fire. Rev 21:8.

The Greek word translated as ‘fornicators’ is *pornos*, from which we derive the word ‘pornography’. An American study in 2016 found that of those surveyed, 41% of Christian men and 13% of Christian women aged between 13 and 24 were actively seeking out pornography at least once or twice a month (Barna, 2016). Other studies have found that almost two-thirds of self-identified Christian men view pornography at least once a month (Barna, 2014). When one is caught in an addiction to pornography, they are selling themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord. 1Ki 21:25. And, while the one who is addicted to pornography is looking to verify themselves through this voyeuristic activity, the opposite occurs: their identity begins to dystrophy. Because the void in their identity is never truly satisfied, such a person will become increasingly depressed, insecure and caught in a downward spiral. The oppression associated with such behaviour will cause all manner of mental illnesses. Ecc 7:7. Shame motivates such a one to draw back from fellowship within the body of Christ. They may become so ashamed that they struggle to confess their sin or even look someone in the eye.

In fact, it could be that this is not something *actively pursued* but, rather, *carelessly absorbed*. That is, they tolerate videos, movies, television programs, books and all types of media content that are sexually explicit or inappropriate, instead of standing firm to their sanctification as a son of God. The wise man said, ‘The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naive go on, and are punished for it.’ Pro 22:3. We should be neither naïve nor ignorant regarding these things. 2Co 2:11.

It could also be that we entertain relationships with those of the opposite sex online or via text, where the lines of sanctification become blurred and our motivations unsanctified and ultimately sexual in nature. Where lines are blurred, and our ‘Yes’ is not ‘Yes’ and our ‘No’ is not ‘No’, it is a tell-tale sign that we are not being sanctified to our name and works. Mat 5:37.

Idolaters

Those who remain ensnared to idolatry have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Eph 5:5. Psa 106:36. Rev 21:8, 22:15. Rather than joining the reproaches of Christ, where they are inheriting the substance of their sonship, they choose instead to *give worth to something of no substance*. Mat 13:44. Heb 11:26. Jer 18:15.

In this season, we have learned that our idolatry can be worthless doctrines that are not the message of the cross. Jer 10:8. In fact, our stubbornness can be a marker of idol worship; that is, we prefer to worth the darkness of our perspective over and above the wisdom of His word. 1Sa 15:23. Mat 6:23.

The apostle John exhorted us to guard ourselves from idolatry. 1Jn 5:21. We guard ourselves from the *lie* of idolatry by girding our waist with *truth*. Eph 6:14. Joh 17:17. Rom 1:25. Through His sanctifying work, the Holy Spirit is the One who leads us into the full truth of our God-given name and resists our efforts to pursue our idolatrous projections. Joh 16:13. Gal 5:16-17. 1Pe 1:22.

What is the idol in your heart that you continue to worship above the Lord your God? Deu 6:13-15. What is so important to you – your projections, fleshly aspirations, dreams, desires, perspectives and false gospels – that you are unwilling to let go of? When our idol is questioned or challenged, our strong reactions, defensiveness, and absence of peace are often telling markers that we are turning aside from our sanctification as a son of God and are not walking blamelessly. The psalmist wrote, ‘Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; for the future of that man is peace.’ Psa 37:37.

Adulterers

Committing the physical act of adultery is a sin. Deu 5:18. Many churches neglect the message of the cross and excuse a culture of ‘sleeping around’ and sexual promiscuity. We must not be deceived – God *will* judge those who are fornicators and adulterers. Heb 13:4.

Nevertheless, Jesus takes this point further by saying that ‘everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart’. Mat 5:28. This certainly applies in a literal sense. Job remarked, ‘I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman [with lust]?’ Job 31:1.

Further, we can think of adultery as being *faithless in relation to a covenant*. We are faithless toward His covenant with us – that is, the Everlasting Covenant – when we lust after something that we hope will multiply life and pursue a life source that is outside of Yahweh’s fellowship. Ultimately, our faithlessness in our marriage to Christ will be evident if we seek liaisons with our fleshly pursuits, projections and false doctrines – that is, our idols. Eze 23:37. 2Co 11:2. Such pursuits lead only to our destruction. Pro 6:32.

Effeminate

The word that is translated as ‘effeminate’ can also mean ‘soft’. A person who is effeminate, or soft, is not measuring themselves to their unique, God-given gender expression. The effeminate man has not learned from godly fathers what it is to be a godly man, and seeks rather to express feminine characteristics and behaviours. Similarly, the soft woman has not learned from godly mothers what it is to be a godly woman, and seeks rather to express masculine characteristics and behaviours. This gives rise to all manner of eccentric and pleasure-seeking behaviour. 2Ti 3:4. In Deuteronomy Chapter 28, Moses referred to the ‘soft’ woman who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground. Deu 28:56.

We can consider such ones as ‘princes’ or ‘princesses’, who rely heavily on others to do everything for them. Mat 11:8. Such ones are unwilling to do the works that the Father has named for them. Eph 2:10. In other words, they are lazy in applying themselves and are unwilling to ‘get their hands dirty’. Pro 21:25. In contrast, Jeremiah remarked that it is good for young people to carry their unique load and to ‘bear the yoke in their youth’. Lam 3:27.

The word that is translated as ‘effeminate’ can be further understood as those who are ‘submitting their bodies to unnatural lewdness’. The one who is submitted to unnatural lewdness is, by implication, not submitted to Christ their Head. As a result, such ones can never rightly stand in their sanctification. The apostle Paul described these ones as having ‘given [or submitted] themselves over to lewdness [or sensuality], to work all uncleanness with greediness’. Eph 4:19. Because of their aberrant and self-seeking lifestyle, they allow an unclean spirit into their houses. A person who is effeminate will give themselves over to behaviours and activities that are invariably indecent, offensive and sexually immoral, and often lean towards embracing a homosexual lifestyle.

Homosexuals

Contrary to many of the prevailing 'progressive Christian' views and doctrines, the apostle Paul was unequivocal regarding homosexuality: those who practise such things *will not* inherit the kingdom of God. To think otherwise would be to stray from sound teaching. 1Ti 1:10. We live in a society that actively encourages teenagers and young people to experiment sexually; that gender is fluid; that the homosexual lifestyle should be embraced, encouraged and celebrated; and that bisexual, intersexual and transgender lifestyle choices should be viewed as 'normal' and 'healthy'.

Our godly sanctification is to acknowledge that God has created male and female as two distinct genders; that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife to become one flesh; and that He gives a remnant of the Spirit to a married husband and wife who are walking together in one Spirit to bring forth godly offspring. Gen 1:27. Gen 2:24. Mal 2:15. In contrast, the homosexual lifestyle rails against the purposes and will of God. Rom 1:26. Ultimately, God gives those who are caught in such a sin, over to a reprobate mind. Rom 1:28. 'A reprobate mind' means one 'not standing the test'; thus, this one will not be walking blamelessly before the Lord.

Thieves

There are several different dimensions that we can consider regarding the 'thief'. Nevertheless, the basis remains the same: it is stealing what is not ours to take. This is the antithesis of how God lives by offering.

As recorded in Malachi Chapter 3, the Lord rebuked the people for robbing Him in relation to tithes and offerings. Mal 3:8-10. We know from the commandments given by the Lord to Moses that the tithe, which is a tenth, is *the Lord's*. Lev 27:30. By implication, the tithe portion is demonstrably *not ours*. Practically speaking, we tithe a tenth of our gross income. If we knowingly or carelessly withhold the tithe, we are in danger of stealing from God. A survey of American churches in 2018 found that only 10-25% of church-goers within congregations tithe, and that the average percentage of tithe is 2.5% (Nonprofit Source, 2018). Jesus exhorted us to 'render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's'. Mat 22:21.

Another dimension of a thief is the one with a 'wolfish' attitude. Jesus said that 'all who ever came before Me [were] thieves and robbers, but the

sheep did not hear them'. Joh 10:8. If we are ones with a wolfish attitude, who draw others away from the presbytery and to our own darkened perspective, we are thieves and robbers. Joh 10:10. We are stealing the 'sheep' who belong to the Lord, who are under the stewardship of the presbytery. Mat 24:45. While comments criticising the church program or casually critiquing the word of the presbytery may seem innocuous, ultimately such ones seduce, or steal, others to their view and perspective.

Covetous

The word that is translated as 'covetous' can be interpreted as 'one eager to have more'. Paul said that the covetous man is an idolater. Eph 5:5. Col 3:5. We have already considered that the idolater chooses to give worth to something of no substance. The covetous person worships their projection, which is an unreality. By implication, the covetous person does not truly worship the Lord, for no-one can serve two masters. Mat 6:24.

Jesus exhorted us to 'take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses'. Luk 12:15. We can spend our whole life coveting and desiring *more* – be it money, a nicer house, career progression, reputation, recognition, intelligence, affirmation, relationships, happiness, well-being or good looks. In fact, we can even covet the life of God that is proclaimed by His word!

Paul encouraged us to 'let [our] conduct [and conversation] be without covetousness; *be content* with such things as you have'. Heb 13:5. Be content! 1Ti 6:6-11. True contentment is found when we are fully satisfied in joining Christ's offering and sufferings. Psa 17:15. It is here, in His death, that we can testify that the reproaches of Christ are greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Heb 11:26.

Drunkards

There are two elements that we will consider regarding the drunkard.

First, we can read Paul's comment to the Corinthians in the literal sense: consuming excessive amounts of alcohol, and/or an addiction to it, can cause us to fail to inherit our sonship. Solomon says that the drunkard will come to poverty. Pro 23:21. The word that is translated as 'poverty' can also be translated as to 'dispossess' or 'disinherit'. Ultimately, the

drunkard will be 'poor' concerning their calling and will fail to inherit their sonship.

Second, we can also read Paul's comment as referring to those who give themselves over to 'mixed-wine' conversations. Pro 23:30. We have recently understood this to be those who devote themselves to a conversation that is *other* than the gospel of sonship. Such ones may be fully committed to the church program and dedicated to offering themselves within the church context, yet, all the while, they are intoxicated with an alternative gospel or conversation. The effect of such intoxication is that their perception of reality is distorted; their mind knows no peace; and they are unable to walk properly along the pathway of sanctification without stumbling. Pro 23:33. Jud 1:24.

Revilers

A 'reviler' blasphemes, abuses or rails against another person. This was the same attitude of those who passed by Christ on the cross, and 'hurled abuse at Him'. Mat 27:39. Revilers speak against Christ and His messengers, and have no fear of God. Num 16. Jud 1:12. They are often found to be openly or privately criticising the presbytery, speaking arrogantly against the messengers and church program, disputing the preached word, and grumbling. Jud 1:16. Such ones are never truly submitted to Christ their Head; thus, they can never submit to anyone else and they struggle with the question of obedience and submission. Because their mind is not protected through submission to the headship of Christ, these ones will invariably go mad. Eph 6:17. Ecc 7:7.

Swindlers

The word that is translated as 'swindler' can also mean an 'extortioner and a robber', as well as being 'rapacious (which means to be aggressively greedy) and ravenous'. Mat 7:15. Lev 6:4.

One dictionary defines a swindler as being, 'a person who *uses deception* to deprive someone of money or possessions'. Colloquially, we could describe such a person as being a 'charlatan', 'rip-off merchant' or 'con-man'. The apostle Paul said that 'evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived'. 2Ti 3:13. Such ones operate by deception but are themselves deceived. They are slaves, not of Christ, but to their own appetite for affirmation, attention, recognition, the reliance of others and money. Rom 16:18.

A swindler may also desire position and power by cleaving to the messenger with deceit. Dan 11:34. They profess and presume to be obedient, but ultimately are unwilling to lay down their lives. Tit 1:10,16. In this way, they merely 'associate' with the messengers and their word, but their commitment to true obedience and offering is in word only. 1Jn 3:18. They live by their self-defined projection, being completely deceived, and deceiving others into thinking that their projection has substance.