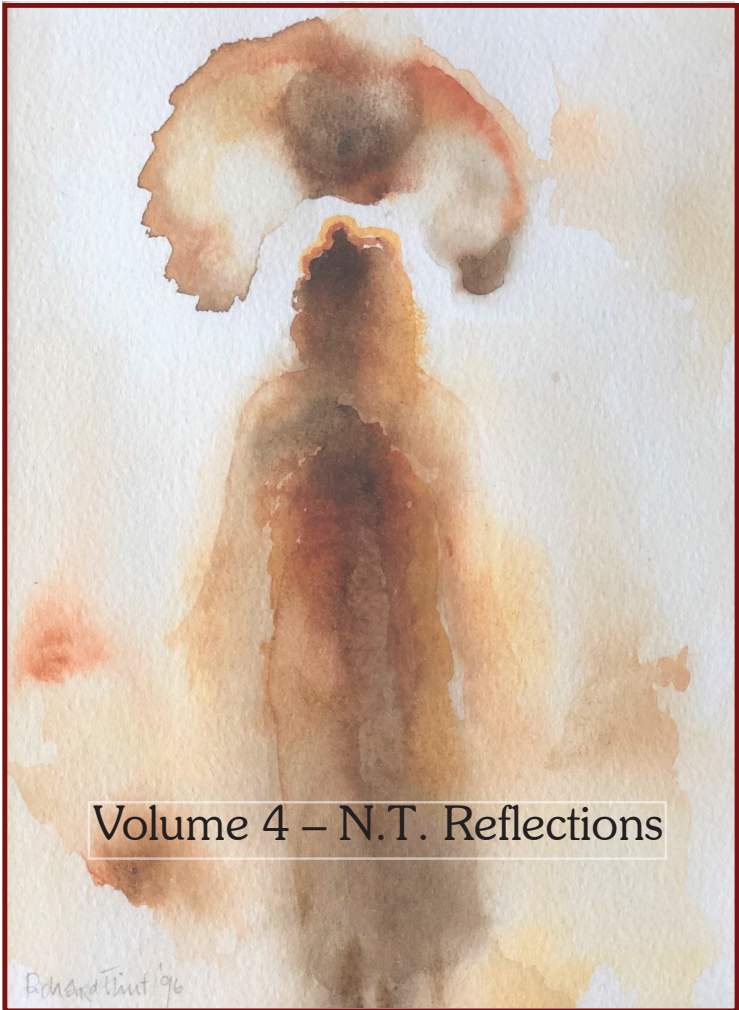


Back to the Future

Rebuilding the Tabernacle of David



Volume 4 – N.T. Reflections

Richard Flint '96

Richard Flint

New Testament Reflections

Back to the future
Richard Flint

The cover picture is taken from
an original watercolour painting by the author
called 'The Forming of Man'

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Contents

Introduction	7
1. Acts 2:42-47: A Church Life Template:	11
2. Romans 12: The Journey to the Charisma is the Journey to the Tabernacle of David	43
3. 1 Corinthians 12-14: Love in Action	69
4. 1 Corinthians 12:25-27: Unity in the Body ...	89
5. The New Man in Christ	107
Conclusion	137

Introduction:

New Testament teaching on the Journey into true Discipleship and Body Life within the revealed Tabernacle of David

In this section, we are going to take a broad sweep of the teaching in the New Testament to see if we can find the key elements that we have explored above. We will be looking to find, not just the presence of sanctificatory journey of the true disciple, but how well this is actually embedded within this teaching as a key thematic motif. Related to this, we will also be looking to verify that the potential lived reality of the gathered body does prove our contention that the essential purpose of the church or ekklesia is to provide a support network for the process of sanctification in the individual. That the ekklesia as a gathered reality of love in action, might become a city set upon the hill of the world and shining out into the

darkness with the light of the presence of Jesus.

Heretofore, we have drawn regularly from the New Testament and its teaching and in the process we have then applied a wide variety of verses to the themes we have been exploring. However, it is important that we can demonstrate that these verses have not been taken out their original context and then misapplied. As the old adage tells us, a text taken out of context can be easily used as a pretext for many a deception. Therefore, are we able to find within the teaching of New Testament any passages that carry a developed argument which will confirm for us that the importance of the journey into true discipleship was well understood.

Our starting point for this will be the important declaration in Acts 15 by James, the brother of Jesus and a leader in the body of Christ in Jerusalem, that the move of God, establishing expressions of this same body in the gentile world, was a fulfilment of a prophecy of Amos¹. It will be helpful to remind ourselves of this scripture which has provided for us the wellspring for this whole study. Providing, as it does the crucial and unarguable prophetic symbolism between the Tabernacle of David and the church both then and now. Indeed, as we have seen this is a prophetic symbolism still in serious need of fulfilment in our own time. This flimsy tent that houses the very presence of the Almighty God².

Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among

Introduction

the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Acts 15:12-18

Therefore, can we find the journey and can we find the gathering?

The book of Acts will also be where we begin our study as we explore the essential elements of the embryonic church in Acts 2, before moving on to the teaching of Paul in Romans 12 where we will find a description of the journey of which we are very familiar. This will lead us to explore how the insights we have received inform our understanding of Paul's teaching in his first letter to the church in Corinth concerning the spiritual gifts and important aspects of the way Father desires to build the body of His son on earth. Moreover, how we might be able to maintain true unity. We will then complete our study as we explore the important

Introduction

Pauline teaching on the new man in his letter to the Ephesians, through which we hope to complete our journey together as we have discovered the principles that lay behind the carrying the presence from the flesh into the spirit.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit...

John 3:6, 6:63 nkjv, Romans 8: 1,13; Galatians 5:16a

Notes:

¹ See Amos 9:11,12

² The literal meaning of 'ekklesia' is to called out of something to be together.

Chapter 1

Acts 2:42-47

A Church Life Template

The rebuilding of the true life of the body, that we have come to identify as the Tabernacle of David is being rebuilt is the work of the Lord in these last days. We say this, as we recognise the prophetic import of the words of the prophet Amos as they are filtered through the narrative of Acts that speak directly to us today.

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit

the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Acts 15:14-18

As we have highlighted below, there is an unfolding of a sovereign work of God that takes us right back to the Spirit hovering over the primordial waters in Genesis 1. A wonderful plan that has its total fulfilment in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. However, moving on from there, as the cross is applied dynamically within the hearts and lives of true believers; the ultimate dwelling place for the dove. As we have seen this is now the ongoing work of God, to prepare a people made ready for the return of His Son; a bride fit for Jesus the bridegroom. This is the mystery of the church that Paul teaches us about,

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world

hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ

...Unto him be glory in the church (ekklesia) by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Ephesians 3: 8, 9, 21

Moving on, does scripture help us understand what this ongoing work of Jesus might look like in the 21st century? Indeed, we believe it does for within the description of the embryonic gathering of the incipient body of Christ in Jerusalem following the day of Pentecost, there is a simple, clear picture of what this might look like. It is the description of what the fragile and vulnerable primal church looked like and what we are shown here is the body in all its new born beautiful potential.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 2:42-47

Let us pull out the key elements of this description to help us develop our own understanding of how this might shape our own understanding of what we might see Jesus build for our own time. There were four important, foundational elements to their gathered reality that are clearly delineated for us: teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer. Each of which we will be exploring in a little more detail below. However, before this let us catch a sense of the beating heart of this gathering. The first thing that we need to notice is that there was an all pervading sense of the fear of the Lord. Here, we are back with the lessons learned on the road from Gibeath to Jerusalem. Specifically, we are reminded of the event that transpired on the threshing floor of Nachon. The event that brought King David to a new found fear of the Lord, the death of Uzzah.

This was not a day for partying. This was a day for awestruck fear and wonder. In the account of the first day of the life of the church we also can clearly recognise that this was a similar day. A day for awestruck fear and wonder at another death. A day in which this fear and wonder swept through the camp of the new believers. Indeed, this was a day of true salvation,

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:37, 38

This was not a day like today when minds and feelings are tickled by another 'gospel' that attempts to call people to another 'Jesus'. This was not about enticing souls, this was about convicting hearts, for on this day hearts were pricked. Like with the spear that pierced Jesus' side the words of Peter made an eternal impact in their spirit.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Hebrews 4:12, 13

The word of the Lord when delivered in season and in the Spirit will bring a receptive heart to a revelation of its true state of nakedness before the Lord God so that whoever hears and responds will be receptive to the offer His Son's covering of true holiness and righteousness. Receiving at the same time the wonderful betrothal gift of the Holy Spirit; the mattan, as they are added

to the beloved¹. The indwelling presence with whom we can now journey into becoming true sons of God. Moreover, as we tread the narrow path we are trained in the things of the Father which are walking in obedience and walking in the fear of the Lord. This will once again be a literally crucial² aspect of the Lord's building work. Salvation belongs to our God, and the rebuilt expression of His body will be purveyors of the true Gospel within which the convicting power of the Holy Spirit will be at work³. This will be a time for true and life changing spiritual birth,

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:3

Moving on to the description of the early church life in Acts 2 and applying it to today, and the Lords work of rebuilding this reality for our own time. Can we identify the essential element of this work? The equipping or perfecting of the saints; as they find their true place in the body and to then learn the lessons of living in love, harmony and unity, one with another. Indeed, as we have seen above these are the essential lessons that we need to learn from our own 'Abinadab', our own willing Father God who is our teacher in all things.

...but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I

write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

1 Thessalonians 4:8,9

Indeed, when considering the example of the early church and how Father God was teaching them to walk in this new spiritual reality, guiding them to walk in obedience and fear, we do need to recognise that they had their own Uzzah experience.

And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things... Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost...

Acts 5:5,10a

We are told that a couple, called Ananias and Sapphira, who were believers and members of the church in Jerusalem had decided to hold back some the money from the sale of some unnamed possession that they had said they would be giving to the church. Father God judged this severely. As He, we are told, took this lie personally. And, this deceit was hatched by this couple in secret it came to the attention of the Apostle Peter, although we are not told how. Peter confronts Ananias in the absence of his wife with the facts and we are told he keels over dead on hearing the words. His wife, however, does seem to be given an opportunity to come clean and admit the deception three hours later when she arrives home and is again confronted by Peter. However, she

repeats the lie and suffers the same fate as her husband.

In a similar way to the account of the death of Uzzah we are a little shocked by such a story. We are told that understandably both of the deaths in Acts elicited a reaction of awestruck fear in those who witnessed it directly or indirectly as news of it spread.

What do we make of it? Why, did this couple suffer this fate? How can we understand this? Indeed, how can we relate to it sitting in our Sunday pews? No doubt having told a few half-truths ourselves this week.

First, we need to understand the wider context that lay behind this tragic story.

At the birth of the church there is described a significant breakthrough in terms of the all-pervasive domination of covetousness for those gathered. The grass has always been greener across the fence in our neighbour's garden, we have always wanted more stuff. However, what do we see here in Acts? The Spirit had done such a work in the hearts of these people such that they:

...had all things common;

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Acts 2:44b-45

This aspect of the early church's life; the sharing of their lives which included their possessions and goods, is usually explained away as merely a culture facet of the life at this time. However, is this not in reality rather a

demonstration of the quality of the heart of this new born body? Actually loving one another. Actually loving not the world nor the things of the world. For through the Spirit they had overcome the world in themselves and were truly free from its consumerist shackles and therefore free to be truly there for each other in the issues of life.

A blow had been wonderfully struck against the prevailing problem that lies in the heart of the human condition since the fall; that is covetousness. Like Eve we all want what we do not have through the misguided belief that this extra thing will bring with it the fulfilment we all crave. The early church could give and share because they had learned to hold all the things of the world lightly. They had learned that this was the way of obedience and fear of the Lord. As we learned from 2 Samuel 6 it is not about the new cart but about the presence carried by it. It is clear that this was heart driven and not done out of misplaced religious obligation, because we are shown what happened when it went wrong. As it did for Ananias and Sapphira when their hearts were found wanting.

To understand this for ourselves we need to focus on the words of Peter who gives us something of the Lord God's perspective.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Acts 5:3

We are also told that they met together because they were together in their hearts,

And they, continuing daily with one accord ... breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart

Acts 2:46

This incident is all about the heart. The heart, as we have recognised, can be understood as our own Ark carrying the presence of the Lord God within each of us. Moreover, when we do gather with others it is our heart that we are bearing and sharing. His presence that is within us. Therefore, what is happening here is that when the presence within the heart of Ananias is touched, not just by the finger of the flesh of his greed, but even by the presence of Satan, as with Uzzah, death will occur. Just as with oil and water, there can never be a mixing of the flesh and the spirit, particularly in the heart of man.

Peter's words to Sapphira are instructive. He accuses her of having, together with her husband, tempted the Spirit of the Lord. The Greek word translated here as 'tempt' actually carries the meaning to push at boundaries or to try and see what they could get away with. Clearly, for them to think in such a way, does indicate that they did have some issues with regards their perception of the Lord and that their heart was still riddled with an unresolved love of the things of the

world⁴. Just as with the example of Uzzah before them God is not mocked. We all need to carry His presence within our hearts with fear and walk in obedience. For us, the consequences and judgement from the Lord, might not be quite so instantaneous. However, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3 judgement there will be and unless we change there will then be consequences.⁵ Indeed, as the Lord does rebuild these early church realities once more, perhaps this level of judgement that we see with Ananias and Sapphira might once more be a chilling witness to everyone that a Holy God is not to be trifled with.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Galatians 6: 7,8

Moving on, the early church was predominantly Jewish and, therefore, it is understandable that the early believers still felt a great attachment to the Temple and its worship. However, they also needed an opportunity to meet together for relationship and this they found within the key gathering that was in the home. Indeed, it is this gathering that we would want to recognise actually as the ecclesia or church. It is wonderful in the way that their living closely in relationship with each other is described as being a daily reality. Moreover, significantly, so was the practice of breaking of bread within these small intimate

home based gatherings.

It is our contention that this form of meeting, meeting from house to house, will be a feature of the end time rebuilt reality of the body of Christ. As individuals find the Sunday morning religious system increasingly problematic, they will require a new church paradigm to meet their need for a more relationally focused way of practising their faith. This is a step beyond midweek house groups which are seen as an added type of obligatory meeting within the church calendar today. This form of meeting will be a gathering of those who meet together because they are already together in relationship. Moreover, this will be in a full and complete sense 'church'. Indeed, a gathering with its own Godly and God given shape and structure, but carrying within it a togetherness that we see expressed in Acts as being in 'one accord' and having 'a singleness of heart'. Indeed, as we have already recognised, there is a prophetic verse in the Old Testament that does seem to capture this development,

Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the
cluster
Isaiah 65:8

Perhaps, once again the Lord is looking for the son of peace within communities to open up their homes into which Jesus can then begin to gather His sheep.

And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest

upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

And in the same house remain , eating and drinking
such things as they give ...

Luke 10: 6,7a

Within the narrative of the journey of the Ark of the Covenant itself, as we have seen above, there does also seem to be an element of the story which prophetically speaks into this idea. For when the death of Uzzah occurs the journey comes to a sudden juddering halt as David has to come to terms with what has just occurred and decide on the way forward. At this time we are told that he leaves the Ark in the household of Obededom. It is here, at this point in the narrative, that we can see something that speaks to us prophetically. Will the disobedient way we are attempting to carry the presence in the church today be brought to a sudden halt in the west? And will this provide our king, Jesus, with the opportunity to move the presence back to where it should always have been, in the relational setting of the household?

The phrase, '...did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart' (Acts 2:46c) might suggest that they gathered around food regularly which is probably true and for our purposes there is an interesting connection here with both the agape meal within the peace offering and with David's gifts which the people would take home that we explored in 2 Samuel 6. However, as we will see the scriptural connection is to Jesus' teaching in John 6 where He reveals Himself as the true bread of Life. This will be explored in greater depth below. Church life was a shared

life reality, not a series of disconnected religious meetings

The final point is that as they loved one another the world saw that they were the Lord's disciples, they were a city set up on a hill and the world saw their good works and glorified the Father, and as a result,

... having favour with all the people... the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.
Acts 2:47b

The quality of the unity in love of the body is a direct corollary of the efficacy of the Gospel, nothing can or will speak more clearly or strongly that Jesus Christ is the saviour of the world than the reality of love shared one to another in the body of Christ. We need to understand that evangelism is not something that we do but that the Gospel is something we need to become and to be.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
John 17:21

Only the Lord can do this. However, He is looking for those who will be willing to respond to his call in these days. The call to be part of the interface between the Lord God and a lost humanity for our time and to be become a glorious expression of His body, His bride, for whom he is desirous to return. A people willing to be made into fishers of men and to fulfil their calling to be

peacemakers. A people willing to suffer the consequences of being both the salt of the earth and shining with the light of the world as we have allowed Father to create the light of His Son in us. We live in the reality and the Lord does the rest.

As we view this beautiful new born body across the two millennia that have passed since its inception we might recognise how far we have wandered in our practise, culture and even theology from this time. How different the body now looks having been stretched, pulled and buffeted by the heavy hand of man with his power, control and religion. So that instead of having a spiritually alive gathering sustained by relationship both vertical and horizontal, we have in large part a cold religious, man-made hierarchical system. A system we today call the church.

Since the time of Constantine, when the religious system of Christianity was established, we have struggled to break free from these systemic shackles which bind us to hierarchy, buildings and liturgy. This applies just as much to the 'free' evangelical/charismatic church as it does to the more obvious candidates such as the Anglican, Catholic or Orthodox wings of the Christian world of the twenty first century. It is probably safe to say that the reformers did not take the church quite as far as was really required and that today we might recognise a new move towards a simplicity of gathering where once again genuine relationships built on agape love are being rediscovered.

However, our contention is that the Lord has not finished with us yet. Indeed, He desires to put the pieces

back together, the good news for the church is that it isn't Humpty Dumpty. All the King's men and women with ears to hear and who are willing to pay the price and respond to His call can be part of this work of end time rebuilding of His one and true body. This rebuilding work can also be understood as the work of preparing the bride to make her ready for the bridegroom, Jesus, who is waiting to claim her for His own.

However, what is rebuilt today, by definition, has already existed in the past. Therefore, what were the essential elements that we find expressed within the gathered body of Christ that we find described in Acts 2: 42? And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:42

There were four basic elements to the early church's gatherings: prayer, teaching, fellowship and sacramental worship. We clearly have echoes here of the elements that we already identified in the original Tabernacle of David in 2 Samuel 6; the meat of the word, the sacrifice of peaceful fellowship, the bread of body ministry, the breaking of the bread and the burnt offering of the prayers. Our contention here is that this will always be the case; this is the Church that the Lord will always build and, therefore, this description is to be understood as being normative. These four elements are the framework or skeleton, if you will, upon which the gathered body will always

find its shape. However, in the early days of the life of the original body would there have been a plan for the meeting? Would there have been a worship practice on Thursday evening? Would the whole gathering have been dominated by a few? This does not seem to have been the case from the few descriptions of body life that we find in scripture.

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

1 Corinthians 14:26

What is important here is the actual gathering together and the genuine loved soaked relationships that underpin this gathering. Within which the elements would have naturally flowed and would have found their expression differently every time as the wind of the Spirit blew giving both direction, utterance and unction.

These gatherings would have had one agenda and one overarching purpose: to glorify Christ. The gatherings would have been a vessel through which the glory of His character and nature would be touching and changing hearts and lives.

...but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Ephesians 5:18b-21

The heart is again the crucial source of all that occurs in the gathering, out of the heart comes the flow of worship, indeed, a depth of worship that is in the truth and in the spirit. Moreover, notice how the quality of the relationships is described, there was a safe and loving level of accountability here. Relationships that were rendered safe by the presence of the fear of God in the midst.

Indeed, each of the four elements would have had a part to play in maintaining everyone's focus on glorifying Jesus and by this enabling the Father's will to be fulfilled whenever the body gathered. Let us turn to look at each of these in turn,

i. The apostle's teaching

This is redolent of the king's gift of 'a good piece of meat' that we explored above. Within any gathering of the body there would be an exchange of truth and revelation that would be shared between individuals and to the group as a whole as the Spirit gives both utterance, unction and inspiration. This would have been the apostles' doctrine; a word that would have come out of the heart of Father, and for the apostles this would have been grounded in the teaching they would have received from the Lord. A point verified by Paul when encouraging his young protégé, Timothy, to stand firm against creeping error,

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.

1 Timothy 6: 3

Clearly, for the apostles, as reflected in their writing, the essential focus for the church was to be the Lord's words and His doctrine which is according to godliness, in other words, the sermon on the mount applied to the gathered hearts of the body. Here are a few examples of this from the apostles' letters,

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

1 Timothy 6:10,11

The apostle Peter teaches in a similar vein,

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And

beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-8

As does the apostle James,

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

James 1:2-4

It seems evident that the apostles, be they James, Peter or Paul, taught and applied the teaching of Jesus. A teaching that challenges us all to realise and to respond appropriately to a spiritual reality that through faith we are all on a transformational journey toward godliness expressed in love, which Peter even describes here as the divine nature. And this in turn, was in preparation for a fruitfulness of life and character both here but more importantly in that which is to come with the return of the bridegroom and beyond into His Millennial reign.

There is a beautiful prophetic picture for the potential impact of the word of the Lord that can be found in Isaiah:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace...

Isaiah 55:10-12a

Whenever the body gathers it gathers to receive communication from the head, and to then put this to work in our lives. He sends His word forth to achieve His purposes in the lives of those gathered together. Whenever we gather there will be a word. Therefore, we have to be in the midst and available to the Lord whenever we are gathered with others. Indeed, available to either be the vessel through which the word might come or the vessel for whom the word was given or both or neither.

God is God.

His word is a hand grenade of peace, love and truth.

However, we have to pull the pin.

His word is a word that is given to do one of two things. To give seed to the sower and to give bread to

the eater. We will either be equipped to be fruitful or we will have our hunger satisfied. We will be built up and strengthened in him by what he supplies and we will be provided with the resources to make a difference and to bear fruit in our daily walk.

The King has a gift for everyone to take home with them!⁷

It is His word that we need, not mine or anyone else's. Only His word will provide what is necessary both for the individual and for the body as a whole. We need to know that His word will not return to Him without achieving that for which it was sent. We also need to understand that there is a proviso here, there does need to be an honest and real receptivity to the word of the Lord. Indeed, we need to be passionately jealous to hear only that which does come from His mouth. Just because we allow someone to deliver a form of words to us does not mean that we have heard the word of the Lord. The word will come through the body to the body, in more than one way or in one form. This is why we need each other, this is why we need the body and this is why we need body ministry.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understand it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Matthew 13:9,23

The Lord may challenge through His word, but it will always be in love and will always offer a way as it will be flavoured by hope, mercy and lead to freedom. The word will always build up or edify the body.⁷ When the word of the Lord is delivered, heard and received the result will be one of joy and peace. Indeed, as Isaiah prophesies we will leave the gathering full of joy and ready to share His peace.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalm 119:105

ii. fellowship

There would have been a profound level of koinonia. This is an important Greek term which carries the meaning of a shared and active participation with others. As we saw in an earlier, active engagement with others is crucial.

And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it...

2 Samuel 6:17a

We are individually required to fully immerse ourselves into the gathering so that we can effectively share His presence with others and can also receive of His presence from others as well. In this way, we are giving full recognition to His Lordship and to His indwelling presence.

This is His place and what He wants goes. Therefore, those gathered are encouraged to be willing to make themselves transparent and vulnerable, honest and obedient in order that we are willing and able to share the presence one to another and to share our journey with its highs and lows. This is fellowship or koinonia which is to be experienced and enjoyed as both an active and participatory reality. We need to leave our pews and get involved.

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

1 Corinthians 14: 26

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1,2

Either giving, receiving or both, so that ultimately this level of fellowship will lead us here,

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure

of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:15,16

iii. breaking of bread

There would be a sharing of the bread and the wine, recognising that this is our spiritual food which we receive by faith. This is an opportunity for the life giving sap of the true vine to join us together in His unity and to recognise it is only as we understand our brokenness before each other that we will be able to feed and sustain each other.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

John 6:53-56

This is more than mere symbolism, the bread and wine if taken in faith will feed our spirit man and, potentially, bring healing to our body, soul or spirit. After all what do the words of Jesus in John 6 teach us? They clearly had left their mark with the early church in Jerusalem.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you...' means, He means

what He is saying here, but what is He saying?

Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

John 6:56

In other words unless you eat me you are dead. How do we eat the Lord?

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:54

There is a clear connection between eating Jesus and an individual looking forward to both a place in the millennial kingdom and in the eternal state.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

John 6:56

There is also a clear connection between eating Jesus and an individual enjoying the indwelt life in the here and now.

From our current position looking back with twenty twenty hindsight we can understand what the Lord was referring to here, the breaking of bread sacrament that He instituted on His final night on earth. However, if this is what He was referring to in John 6 then how should this sacrament impact our lives both individually and as part of His body? Do these points still remain? Do we need to

consume Jesus in faith through the breaking of bread to sustain our actual spiritual life, to secure our eternity in Him or even to maintain our indwelt reality in this life? It would seem as though the early church did take these words of the Lord seriously because as we saw Acts 2:46 does seem to indicate that they broke bread on a daily basis.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart
Acts 2: 46

Jesus does have more to say in John 6 that might help us here.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. ... I am that bread of life.

John 6:32,48

Jesus makes a direct analogy between Himself and the manna that the Lord God fed the children of Israel with for 40 years as they made their way through the wilderness. Therefore, just as the children of Israel required to eat the manna every day to physically survive is not Jesus making the same point to His disciples concerning the breaking of bread and their spiritual life? This is a difficult question to answer given the two thousand years of religious confusion and dispute over this issue. However, perhaps we do need fresh revelation

of how important this is truly is?

This sacrament is also important for reminding us of our dependency on the cross in the here and now. It also provides us with hope and expectation that He is coming again soon.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

1 Corinthians 11:26

And finally, the sacrament provides each of us with a regular opportunity to maintain the bond of peace through forgiving others before taking the sacrament and, to also honestly assess where we might be in terms of any other sin issues which might need a touch of the Lord's grace and mercy.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

1 Corinthians 11:28

By this we are able to maintain the 'shalom' peace that lies at the heart of who we are in Christ, particularly if we were to break bread every day.

iv. prayers

This is also an opportunity to fulfil our intercessory calling that we identified as the burnt offering sacrifice within the Tabernacle of David⁸ and to stand in the gap in prayer. Indeed, for the church to be the conduit in

the spirit for enabling the purposes of the Lord to be achieved through our faithful intercessions. Indeed, this is precisely how the Lord encouraged the gathered body to pray in the Sermon on the Mount.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13

This is first and foremost a corporate prayer of intercession that looks forward to the return of the Lord and indeed to Him coming with His kingdom. As we saw above, intercession is likened to the burnt offering and as such it carries a weight of fragrance before the Lord that it is collected in the golden vials and offered on the altar in heaven.

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Revelation 5:8

and then,

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much

incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

Revelation 8:3

In conclusion, therefore, perhaps today we do need to see again such a gathering? A gathering of those who are called to be truly intercessional and thereby fulfilling our calling to be peacemakers. A gathering of those whom the Lord is calling to gather together and to begin to develop the quality of shared lives that is a fulfilment of New Commandment that the Lord gave His disciples in the upper room,

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another

John 13:34,35

As we rediscover for ourselves what it truly means to share with each other this profound and dynamic reality of 'agape' love, we will discover our destiny, our true calling and the means by which the world around us will be impacted by the Gospel. When Jesus tells us that by this will the world know that we are His disciples He is also by definition also saying that by this reality of shared love they will be provided with the revelatory evidence that he is, 'the way, the truth and the life'. Jesus prophesied

that it would happen,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

John 17:20-23

For a short time it did happen,

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 2:42-47

However, how much does it need to happen once again?

After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Acts 15:16-18

So that,

...he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:27

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

Notes

¹ See Ephesians 1 for the spiritual blessings that are given to the true believer at salvation.

² The word crucial is derived from the word cross.

³ See John 16: 8-11

⁴ 1 John 2: 15-17

⁵ 1 Corinthians 3: 11-15

⁶ See 2 Samuel 6: 19d

⁷ See 1 Corinthians 14: 3, 5, 12 and 26

⁸ See Book 3 in this series

Chapter 2

Romans 12:

The Journey to the Charisma is the Journey to the Tabernacle of David

We are starting our study of Paul's teaching in Romans 12 because it is here that he establishes from the outset that body life with its giftings and ministry come within a process or journey. Indeed, we will be able to recognise that this is the same journey that we have already identified in 2 Samuel 6; the journey from Gibeah to Jerusalem, from the flesh into the Spirit, the journey of true discipleship.

The new focus for his teaching that we find in Romans 12 comes after the wonderful dissection of the Israel/Jewish issue in the previous chapters, perhaps even going right back to the question he first raises in 3:1, 'What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? However, the specific springboard for the first two verses of Romans 12 is the last verse of the previous chapter, where we read,

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all

things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Romans 11:36

Paul comes to this crescendo of praise in response to what God has, is and will ultimately do for his own flesh and blood, Israel, and for the church's own grafted-in part within the eternal purposes of God. At this point in his letter he is looking to challenge the believers in Rome to respond to this by actively embracing the vision of the life of true discipleship that lies before them.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:1,2

In response to such a God and His amazing grace filled plan how can we do anything else, but give our all? Paul has captured for us here in this verse the gateway reality of what each of us need to do in order that we can walk fully in the purposes of God for our lives within the spiritual and social context for this life, which is a life lived in and through His body. He is saying that if we were to actively respond to God in this way, with all that we have then we would find the, good, and

acceptable, and perfect, will of God. There is a clear connection between the spiritual and the temporal, and we won't be able to fully enjoy the one without the other. The word Paul actually uses here is translated as 'prove', which is the translation of the Greek term dokimazo, which carries the following meanings, to test, examine, prove, scrutinise (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), such as with metals or to recognise as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy. Paul's challenge to the church in Rome and to us as well is to seek out the real thing, the authentic walk of discipleship, with all that we have.

This is for us the pearl of great price. A beautiful, precious pearl created over time by an irritant within our shell- our self-life.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Matthew 13: 45,46

The key is in the seeking until we find the real thing and then being willing to give up all in order for it to become ours. How much do we need to find the real thing, the genuine article, for our lives? The real and actual will of God, that is not just good or acceptable, no, Paul is challenging us to lift our expectations to reach for the actual perfect will of God. And as we have ascertained there is only one thing that Father is truly

concerned about for each one of us and that is that He can see the character and nature of His son Jesus Christ in each of us. This name, His name and, therefore, by definition His character running through the heart of each us like a stick of Blackpool rock but even more sweet to the taste.

Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

This is the wonderful reality that Father will prove to each one of us if we are willing to walk the walk He has for us, to inhabit the special secret place with Him and allow Him to bring about the heart transformation we each need to happen. This is his will for each one of us,

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification... And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.

1 Thessalonians 4:3a; 5:23,24

However, this said there is a not inconsiderable cost attached. Are we willing to pay the price? This is all about the journey, our individual bespoke journey of discipleship, which will make a demand on everything we are and on everything we have.

Romans 12

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

Perhaps, we can understand why Paul seems to stress the importance of this so strongly when he uses the phrase, I beseech you therefore, brethren? The reason being that this will be one of the most important decisions that we will ever make. This is a moment beyond salvation when we realise for ourselves the full consequences of walking with the Lord. This is the moment we have already encountered in the life of David, the moment when we he utters the following heartfelt words,

And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said,
How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

2 Samuel 6:9

This moment when we are brought to the end of ourselves and have only one option but to cling to the Lord. In this moment the Lord is that floating plank that can keep our heads above the waves. The moment we truly realise that we are broken and spiritually destitute. This is the moment Peter came to one morning by the side of the Sea of Galilee when he is brought to his knees and exclaims,

Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Luke 5:8

For Peter, however, the important judgement here is not his but Jesus', for the Lord, at this moment, recognises that Peter was indeed ready to fully follow Him as he beckons him forward with these words:

Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

Luke 5:10b

This is true for all of us for it is at this moment that we are useable to the Lord, for we have come to a new found place of healthy Godly fear and as we saw with David the journey can now continue, however, it is now grounded in wisdom and obedience to the truth. This is the moment we are able to lay the whole of our lives open for the Lord to use, this moment will take us to new level of walking with the Lord, through which we will be beginning to walk into true discipleship. We are called to sacrifice all, to be a living sacrifice, on a daily basis. Jesus said nothing different.

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Luke 9:23,24

We also need to know that this is a process or a journey. The expectation is that we will learn to deny ourselves and that we will develop our obedience muscles so that we will have the strength carry the cross that the Lord has for each one of us. This new radical lifestyle is captured by the Lord in a parable that is seldom referred to from the pulpit, I wonder why?

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Luke 17:7-10

Can we see the similarity here? The duty or reasonable service for a true servant of the Lord is all encompassing, it will demand all we are and all we have. Are we ready? Are we prepared? Are we willing, because with God all things are possible? We shouldn't make the same mistake that the rich young ruler made, when challenged to give more than he could contemplate giving, he bowed his head and walked away. However, the key is to look to Father God's ability and not to our own inability.

...the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Luke 18:27

We do need to know that by His grace this is a journey we are all well able to make, one step at a time. Once we have truly come to him and submitted to His purposes we will find that actually His burden is light and his yoke is easy, because it will be in His strength not ours². And we will be responding increasingly from a heart that is motivated by a love for God, His people and His purposes in the world and from a heart that has begun to learn the lessons of the threshing floor of Nachon walking in fear and obedience before God³.

We also need to notice that there is a caveat here, God is looking for us to make a sacrificial offering of our bodies that is holy; the only sacrifice that He will accept is a holy sacrifice. It has always been so.

And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt offering unto the Lord; it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

Exodus 40: 10; 29:18

However, again we need to understand that this is a process, as we make ourselves available to His work of sanctification, which means 'holy-fication', He will be

transforming us from one level of glory to the next. As Paul says in Philippians 2:15 we will become blameless and harmless or unmixed, it is a process. Holiness is essentially a state of a humble and honest walk before our God as James clearly challenges those to whom he was writing.

Submit yourselves therefore to God... Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness, Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

James 4:7a,8-10

This call for us, individually and corporately, to be submitting all we are and all we have to God and to be making a living sacrifice, which is described by Paul as our 'reasonable service' or, translated literally, our logical act of worship. Indeed, a sacrifice that demands the whole of our being and that actually makes sense, as the Yorkshire expression puts it 'ya ne'er get owt fa nowt'.

This brings us back to the ideas we have been exploring with regards to the tabernacle of David, and specifically to the application of David offering the burnt offering in the newly established tabernacle of David in Jerusalem⁴. We saw here, how the particular feature of the sacrifice was that it burnt the whole carcass and that nothing was left. The fire consumed everything. We also saw how this

Romans 12

particular sacrifice is described as, a sweet savour unto the Lord. This is helpful imagery for us, as it enables us to understand what scriptural picture Paul had in mind when writing this particular verse. God is looking for each one of us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice that he can totally consume into His purposes and then enjoy the sweet savour as it bears its fruit in our lives. We can see this process expressed clearly in this earlier verse from Paul's letter to the church in Rome, where we read,

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Romans 6:22

The journey is one through which we will be set free from sin, to become servants of God and as such we will then bear the fruit of holiness. A process that requires an individual to be willing to meet challenges in two specific areas of their lives, in what we do, but more importantly in how we think. For how we think will determine what we do. And crucially what we think will be determined by what or who is in our heart.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:2

Therefore, having truly submitted to God and offered

ourselves as living sacrifices, in order for us to continue our journey of true discipleship, our lives must change such that we no longer conform to the world and its values so that our lives will not be full of hypocrisy and compromise. The most important part of this will be that our minds need to be renewed so that our thought life is no longer a place of defeat that will undermine our walk. The Lord will take care of our hearts, only He can change the essential quality of who we are, but we can facilitate this by bringing what we do and what we think under control. Initially this may require a process such as the strengthening of our will, the choice muscle, to gain some control, but ultimately and fundamentally Father God desires to transform us from within such that we overcome the world in us and increasingly become His new creation in all areas of our lives. However, through His grace and mercy the change can be instant as the old man drops off us and we walk out in newness of life and spirit in aspects of our lives that have prior to this proven to be problematic for us. A reward experienced in the open for a faithful plea made in the secret place. As we will see below this not about becoming a stronger willed old us, but by becoming the free new us.

This is not religion but transformation!

John captures succinctly what our approach should be to the world in terms of our lifestyle when he writes the following:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in

the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

1 John 2:15-17

We are not talking about religious abstinence here, we are talking about a change of heart that will bear the fruit of holiness in our lives. Only God can break the hold that these things might have over us, however, the choices are always ours. In 2 Corinthians 10 Paul helps us with the issue of our minds by encouraging us to take control of our thought life, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. We do need to realise that the enemy is always trying to trap us on his sin escalator, as we read in James,

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

James 1:13,14

The battle line for spiritual warfare is drawn between our ears. We have to be exercised to bring every thought under control because if left to run and to develop, it

will soon express itself in an action that is contrary to the purposes of God for your life, an action otherwise known as sin. Ultimately, the sin escalator will have its reward in our lives, death, both physical and, tragically, spiritual if left unattended for too long. Therefore, James warns us all when he says simply,

Do not err, my beloved brethren.
James 1:15

However, the Lord's heart is that we do overcome³ and that we do enjoy His blessing:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
James 1:12

It is back to the heart again, the wellspring of all life. The first mention of the human heart in scripture isn't encouraging:

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
Genesis 6:5

And neither is the effect this has on God's own heart in the following verse.
And it repented the LORD that he had made man on

the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

Genesis 6:6

Jeremiah isn't very complimentary about it either.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Jeremiah 17:9

However, again in the next verse, we have God's merciful perspective on the situation with the human heart.

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Jeremiah 17:10

He searches our hearts, He tests the reins, or another way of saying this would be, He tests who reigns, because it is all about who is in control.

He tests those who might reign.

He does this so that our hearts might be transformed. But before this can happen we need truly know what our hearts are like.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Psalms 51:6

Therefore he tries the reins, pulling us this way and

then that, to see how we react in the moment as he did with the children of Israel as they made their journey through the wilderness.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Deuteronomy 8:2

Therefore, let us walk humbly before our God and one another and allow the Lord's proving work so that we know what is really going on in our hearts, so that He can repair the breaches that are in David's tabernacle in us. Let Father do His work.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

James 1:2,3

If we allow the Lord to truly transform us from the inside out then we can walk in His victory consistently, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.⁶

This is why we have to come through this process, through the cross to actively and safely function in the

body? Any other way and we will be that unshrunk, unproven and unprocessed piece of cloth which will ultimately cause a tear in the fabric of His body.⁷ As Paul uncompromisingly expresses it in 1 Corinthians 3

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

1 Corinthians 3:7,18

The currency in His body is faith

...according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Romans 12:3d

As we submit all to the Lord and continue to walk in Christ allowing Father to transform our hearts and to change our thinking we will be taught how to develop our capacity to hear His voice and to exercise our faith. We explored this when looking at developing our own secret life particularly in chapter 9 above. The currency to be used by us in His body and in the world to exchange something from heaven for something on earth is faith, we each have a spiritual account with Father which we can spend within His spiritual economy. Father has given to each of us sufficient to achieve that for which we have been called. A principle that takes back to the building of the first tabernacle under Moses.

Romans 12

For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

Exodus 36:7

As we read in Hebrews faith is defined in the following way:

... faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Faith is described in both of the verses above, Romans 12: 3 and Hebrews 11: 1, as something that is tangible, such that it can be measured or that it has substance. For us, as believers, faith is the foundation for our belief, it is the active ingredient, such as yeast in dough, which transforms mere head knowledge into an energy to put the head knowledge to work. The Greek word translated as 'substance' in Hebrews 11, is translated elsewhere as confidence⁷, and this is what true faith can give us as we endeavour to step out in faith to serve the Lord. We are told later in Hebrews 11:

...without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Hebrews 11: 6

Faith is important because it is that moment beyond the hand of Uzzah.⁸ Faith steps in when our own strength

fails. By faith we are coming to God and recognising our own insufficiency and trusting in His sufficiency for whatever circumstance or situation we are in. Indeed, the apostle Paul understood this very well himself,

And he (Jesus) said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

The walk of faith begins when we have stopped walking in our own strength. This is the lesson that the Lord has to teach each one of us as we walk with him on the journey of discipleship. The way of faith is a way that needs to come through brokenness and humility, otherwise it can be misunderstood, misused and abused, as it is too often in our own day. Faith has to be on God's terms, not ours.⁹ The measure of faith with which each of us has been blessed, has been given for each one of us to achieve two things within the body of Christ.

...as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us

Romans 12:3,4,6a

For each one of us there is a task to do and there is a gift to share. The Greek word translated office here is praxis from which we get a range of words, such as practical and practise. Here the meaning is best understood as something practical to do, a task or more broadly a function or even a ministry. For this we have been given the right amount of faith. This isn't related to our natural propensities, this is something that God has decided for us. This is the best thing that we can possibly do, not from our own perspective or the church leadership's perspective, but God's.

And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle...

2 Samuel 6:17

I will build my church...

Matthew 16:18b

...but God has tempered the body together...1

Corinthians 12:24b

This is because it is the one thing that will enable us to become more like His son, Jesus. For the process through which we have to travel to become able to fulfil this task will be the process through which Father's work of the transformation of our hearts can be best achieved. We need to take our hands off this decision making process and humbly seek the Lord for his will. We simply have to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice,

to seek this God given task, the outworking of God's plan for our life, within the body and this is where we will be able, to prove what is good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The Lord is doing the building and we are each His living stones which he will place where ever He desires. The church is God's building, this is the body of Christ, and Jesus says 'I will build my church'. However, the building work starts with the building work He needs to do in us.

To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen by God and precious, Ye also, as lively stones (i.e. living bricks), are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.
1 Peter 2:5

This will be His perfect will for us and therefore by association for the part of the body to which we have been added as well. This is because this process will insure that the Lord is doing the building and that He is only using with the best quality material-Him in us.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 3:11

We, therefore, come to Him as our foundation in life and are then built upon Him together with others into a

tabernacle in which we each serve as priests to offer our own sacrifice of all that we are in Him, which through his shaping our sacrificial offering is acceptable and our living stone fits into the space that God has made especially for it.

However, this does lead us to a scary thought; how often do we ask Father what do YOU want me to do? Particularly when we consider the fact that we will be judged according to the work that we do as part of God's building purposes during our life.

Ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

1 Corinthians 3:9b-13

Is anyone truly taking heed how the church is to be built? Is anyone truly taking heed of who is doing what and why? What is the decision making process, if there is one? How can we stand before the Lord to have our work judged, if we have never even begun to do the work that He had planned for us to do? Instead we have been doing

Romans 12

something else, something we have chosen or something someone else has chosen for us. Let us reflect again upon Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12.

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

1 Corinthians 12:18

Can we be confident this is happening? Has God truly set every member in the place He wants? Has He set you and me? The phrase 'as it hath pleased him' is underlining the seriousness of this process because in the Greek it is clear that the actual will of God is involved here. In the rebuilt tabernacle of David God would have his place and therefore hopefully everyone else would have theirs as well. For we will certainly be taking heed as to how we build so that we are confident that it is His building dynamic. Indeed, we do need to take some time here to labour this point a little further. So let us, even now, no matter how long you have been doing what you have been doing in the body, let us be brave enough to reflect on what we are doing and why we are doing it and turning to Father and asking if it is the place He wants for us, whilst we still have time. Let us repent for usurping the position of God in this matter.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us

Romans 12:6

Along with a measure of faith we have individually also been given the charis or grace to achieve a charisma or

task of grace, the charisma we excel at will be determined by the charis we have received. Again this is the Lord's doing. Again, as we read in 1 Corinthians 12.

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

1 Corinthians 12:11

Out of the heart of the Father and under the authority of the Son and through the auspices of Holy Spirit, it is God who is building the church, His body, and He first decides divides the charis and then expects the charisma; the grace and then the gift. This time the underlying purpose is different from the measure of faith as Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12, where read:

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

1 Corinthians 12:7

**Faith is invested in the individual,
grace is a gift for the body.**

The manifestation of the work of God through the Spirit by the grace in which the gift is given is to be a blessing for everyone and by which the whole body is built up. As we saw in chapter 4 of the previous book, this is the outworking of the betrothal gifting or mattan which traditionally was given to His bride to provide her with the wherewithal to make herself ready, prepared for the return of her bridegroom.

Romans 12

The function and context of the gift of grace will be experienced within those faith filled moments when we step out under the inspiration or unction of the Spirit to meet the needs of others, within a gathering of the body. In terms of the tabernacle of David this relates to gift of the cake of bread in the passage in 2 Samuel 6¹¹. The gifts given from God to be administered one to one by the disciples, as we read in Romans 12:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:6,7 (nkjv)

Paul's concern here is to remind the church in Rome to keep within their measure of faith in all their public engagement within the body. Thereby, they are being encouraged to keep it real and honest. This list includes both gifts, functions and ministries, and in Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth we find another list of spiritual gifts. In the next chapter we will move on to consider Paul's teaching in this letter our concern will be, as it is for Paul, to look past the practise and to focus on the underlying motivation that is required to authentically exercise spiritual gifts within the body. The challenge will not just be to the seemingly over

enthusiastic Corinthian believers to whom he was writing as his teaching here is normative and requires universal application.

Therefore, in this chapter we have established that for Paul full submission to God is our starting point. And that for anyone to be actively used by the Lord as part of His body they have to come under the Lordship and leading of God in all matters that pertain to body life. Also to walk the walk in the body is to walk the walk we first recognised in the journey of the Ark from Gibeah to Jerusalem which is one of obedience to the truth and fearful devotion to the Lord God. So that, with hearts that increasingly carry the imprint of the nature and character of Jesus, we are actively enabling the Lord to transform our thought life such that we are increasingly conformed to think like Jesus, and therefore to increasingly exercise our measure of faith so that we increasingly act in ways that bring glory and pleasure to Father.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Notes

¹ See 2 Samuel 6:9

² Matthew 11:28-30

³ See 2 Samuel 6:6

⁴ See the chapter 'a place for a whole burnt offering,' in book 3 of the series.

⁵ See the chapter, 'Walking On: Overcoming in Christ,' in book 1 of the series

⁶ Chapters 11 and 12 in book 3 of the series provide more teaching on the issues dealt with here.

⁷ See Matthew 9:16

⁸ See Hebrews 3:14

⁹ See the chapter 'The Journey into Death: the death of self' in book 1 of this series

¹⁰ This is covered in more depth in book 3 of this series

¹¹ See the chapter, 'A Place for the King's Gifts' in book 3 of this series

Chapter 3

1 Corinthians 12-14: Love in Action

Paul's teaching has hopefully helped us understand that active engagement in the body and its life is dependent upon certain principles. Nothing comes cheaply, a sacrificial price is demanded if we want to move into Father God's blessing and the best that he has for us, which is of course His perfect will. The cost is a call for each of us to give completely of ourselves, to open our minds to the renewing of the Spirit and to step free from worldly conformity to operate in the Godly realm of faith and grace. In short, to put off the old man and to put on the new, but more of this later.

In this section of Paul's first letter to the church at

Corinth he is continuing his teaching concerning their public gatherings and their experience of corporate worship. Here, he begins to help them bring some understanding and order to what, we assume, to be their weekly public worship meeting, which we would again assume to have taken place on a Saturday, but this may not have been the case. Indeed, who is to say that this was merely a once a week gathering? As we have seen in Acts they met daily from house to house in Jerusalem.

However, whenever and wherever they gathered together it does seem to have contained similar elements to those which we have already recognised in our exploration of the picture provided by the Tabernacle of David and, specifically, the chapter on the King's gifts that we have looked at above. In this section, our focus will be upon the type of gathering within which the king's gifts, be they bread, meat or some wine, and in Corinth these seemed to have been distributed liberally. We, therefore, do have a keen interest in the teaching that we find here concerning these issues, for we, too, seek to understand our potential as a spiritually gifted people within the rebuilt Tabernacle of David; a reality that the Lord desires to build in our day.

As we have already discovered, motive is everything. Why do we say what we say and do what we do? What is in our hearts? Indeed, motivation does seem to be Paul's starting point in this passage.

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

1 Corinthians 12:1

Paul intends this to be an opportunity for him to establish the underlying principles concerning the spiritual gifts that were experienced in and through the body within the gatherings in Corinth and by association these principles are judged to be normative amongst the rest of churches of this time, and for all time. He is writing this in response to some issues that had arisen in the church in Corinth that were probably due to a mixture of over enthusiasm, the influence of the flesh life and the enemy; attempting to sow discord and defilement within their ranks. Indeed, we have the same mixture today. However, it does need noting at the outset that throughout Paul is positive and constructive concerning the use of spiritual gifts within the gatherings in Corinth. As he goes on to explain, the gifts are profitable for all and come by the inspiration of the whole Godhead. Even for the seemingly most troublesome gift, the public use of tongues, he is still able to exhort them to forbid not to speak with tongues. Indeed, what does it mean when in verse 3 Paul makes the following statement?

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians 12:3

There are two words in the English translation which express the idea of using ones voice to communicate

here. In the Greek these are represented by two different words and, therefore, they carry two different meanings. The first word used is *laleo* and this is the most common term for human communication and this carries the everyday meaning to speak as in to use your voice to communicate and it is used in the first phrase; that no man speaking=*laleo*. In the second phrase, no man can say, the Greek word used here is *eipon*. Significantly for us, it is a Greek term that is only used in the definite past tense. Therefore, importantly what this means is that what Paul is saying by his use of this term here, is that no one can say that Jesus is Lord unless this is a proven reality for them. Indeed, a proven reality that has been wrought by the indwelling and transformative reality of the Holy Spirit in their heart and life.

Paul's use of this word here is a declarative act. A declaration that announces to the world that Jesus is truly Lord of my life. Indeed, a declaration that can only be made by a disciple who is on a journey learning how to carry this wonderful presence of the Holy Spirit from the flesh in to the Spirit and along the way learn how to walk in wisdom, obedience and in the fear of the Lord. As we have seen this is the road from Gibeah to Jerusalem and along the way we have encountered our own threshing floors at Nachon where something of our flesh life has had to die. Therefore, it is now in the Spirit that we can say Jesus is truly Lord of our lives. What a difference grammar makes!

As we begin to explore Paul's teaching here our focus is not on the actual gifts per se, but rather Paul's teaching

on how they were to be exercised. This is because we do need to understand that the gifts will only flow within a spiritually healthy context, one which carries the mark and character of Jesus. This context is summed up completely as we have already seen by His last commandment.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34-35

How do we know this is the assumed context here? Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 13.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

In the midst of two extensive passages of teaching concerning body life, worship and exercising the gifts

of the Spirit, Paul is suddenly gripped by the need to remind us of this foundational teaching from Jesus. A teaching which informs every aspect of body life. Unless any thought, word or action comes from a heart of love then it would have been better off not thought, said nor done. The watchword for all that would occur in the body of Christ is love. The translators have chosen to translate the Greek word *agape* here as charity, which today perhaps confuses our understanding. The term charity had a clear meaning at the time that the King James Version of the Bible was written; meaning 'love in action'. This is a very helpful, is there any better definition of what the beating heart of the body of Christ should be but simply love in action?

From the outset Paul, if its position within the letter was not evidence enough, clearly presents us with the required underlying motivational context here for this whole section of his teaching. The challenge for the Corinthian church, and for any expression of the *ekklesia*, is to reflect upon their true motivation for their use of the spiritual gifts within their gatherings. Why are they doing this stuff? Is this motivated by their love their brothers and sisters or does their motivation lie elsewhere? Or to put this another way, what is the real focus for this activity; the needs of those being ministered to or perhaps the need for the prophet to look anointed? Do some people like the sound of their own voice a little too much?

In all activities within the body the motivation behind the activity is key, for Father always looks at the heart.

Let us remind ourselves of what Jesus taught His disciples concerning false prophets in the Sermon on the Mount.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Matthew 7:15-20

The contrast that Jesus makes here is between what is shown on the outside and that which is really going on in the inside. If it looks like a sheep and if it sounds like a sheep is it always a sheep? Jesus' answer to this is no, because what is going on inwardly is not sheep like. They have the heart of a wolf. This is why we can never stray too far from the wise words of King David when he said the following:

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Psalms 51:16

Therefore, when delivering a gift from the king Father, who has provided the gift, will desire that the individual

has truth in the inward parts or will be on the journey towards knowing wisdom in whatever hidden part that father is working with them on. For there is always grace, and we will never fully arrive. For even Paul here recognises that, for we know in part, and we prophesy in part. Simply put, anyone who delivers a gift from the king, such as a prophecy, does need to be a vessel fit for the master's use.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2 Timothy 2:20,21

The work of the closet needs to have impacted even the prophets. The key is to be on the way, to be reaching forth and to be pressing towards our call home, as Paul expresses this reality for himself.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward

1 Corinthians 12-14

the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:12-14

Our tree needs to be rooted and grounded in Him, so that the fruit we produce will be His fruit and will carry within it the seed of spiritual life that will feed the recipient with His life.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

James 3:17-18

Indeed, Paul continues to express something very similar to the church at Corinth when he writes this wonderful definitive, definition of the true agape love that is to be shared one to another through the king's gifts.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ¹

1 Corinthians 13: 9

1 Corinthians 12-14

Bearth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Paul, before returning to teaching concerning the worshipping body makes the following exhortation.

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

1 Corinthians 14:1

By this he is clearly establishing the pre-eminence of love. Self-less agape love was, is and always will be the foundation and motivation for everything that takes place between those gathered together at any time. The word 'follow' is used here to translate a Greek word which carries a stronger meaning than to merely traipse behind someone, there is expressed here an enthusiastic energy to run after or chase something as an ultimate goal. Let us see how this term is used elsewhere in Paul's writing to understand this point more clearly.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Romans 14:19

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of

Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:12

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

1 Timothy 6:10,11

In each of these three scriptures we can see the urgency behind Paul's words and the same applies to its use in 1 Corinthians 14. It is His love that He desires to pervade His body through words and deeds of love shared one to another, within a gathering of people who truly do love one another. Understanding this foundation of love is important because we do need to be reminded once more of the underlying purpose for which the body of Christ does need to be built up in its love one for another.

...even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:25b-27

Today, as we have said, we believe that the Lord by His Spirit is looking to rebuild His bride. His Bride for

whom He is returning.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:2,3

As we have already explored in depth above, Jesus was talking to His disciples on the night of His betrayal and the language and imagery He was using throughout was matrimonial in its cultural context. This mysterious spiritual gathering we know as the church was always to be His reward, a bride for the bridegroom. And this also provides us with the context for the role of the Holy Spirit and His gifts. We have to understand the work of the Holy Spirit within this matrimonial context, particularly in our own day, as the Lord is waiting for His Bride to make herself ready.

So having taken a slight detour let us return to Paul's teaching on the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. These gifts have a crucial part to play in the Lord's purposes for building His body, preparing His bride and making her ready to join Him for His Millennial reign. They will be an active part of any expression of His body in which His life and importantly His agape love is permeating. Therefore, what do we understand the ongoing purpose of these gifts to be?

We do need to recognise that this whole process is

determined by the truth that our giftedness is in direct relationship to how we are carrying His presence. The gifts will be an out working of Father's purposes for us, for others and for the body. Moreover, it is through the gifts that each of us will be edified or built up. These gifts are the open rewards that flow from the time we are spending in secret with Father in the closet, fasting or giving alms.¹

This reality challenges a prevailing idea within the more charismatic section of the evangelical church today. There is much that is taught concerning the 'anointing' that individuals are encouraged to wear like a spiritual overcoat. And as long as they have the anointing then the Lord will use them to do great exploits for Him no matter what state their life and their heart might be in. The prevailing understanding is that it is the anointing itself that needs to be sought rather than the only means by which an individual might be used by God, which is to be, like David, a man after the Lord's own heart. Someone who is motivated to become more Christ like, this is the key. Or more like Christ. Indeed, someone who is rooted and grounded in His love and overflows with it within the body and without. Sadly, in these circles there is little talk of the cost that this involves, instead they talk about Father being pleased with us just as we are and that there is no need to change, we just need the anointing. This clearly is missing the point, for as we have been exploring from the outset of this study, the quality of the presence or anointing, to use their term, is determined directly by the quality of the vessel, which is carrying it.

A new cart and oxen or the shoulder of a priest called to the task and prepared for the task. As we have seen, our vessel for carrying the presence is our heart and this, for all of us, is in serious need of purification before we will ever be able to move powerfully in the spiritual realm.

Indeed, it is in the spiritual realm, as we have already seen, that the Holy Spirit, working in and through our spirit, is responding to the voice of the bridegroom. Jesus is desiring to provide the bride with what she needs and for this reason will then provide whatever gift is required. We cannot be prescriptive about when this might be and what this might entail. The Lord at the right time for His and His Father's purposes desires to reach into the lives of His body and to provide something only His Father can provide that will meet a need, make a difference and fundamentally demonstrate His love and Lordship over those He is engaging with. It might be a healing, prophecy or a miracle, but it will be given to build up the body and to prepare the bride.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

energēma (effective working) = God (the Father)
diakonia (act of service) = Lord

charisma (gift) = Spirit
phanerosis (manifestation) = given to every man
to profit withal.

The Holy Spirit activates each gift in the individual. The Lord is then working on the heart of the individual concerned to serve the body with this gift. The gift is then given its effective power or working by the Father. The whole Godhead is therefore, through this process, part of the wedding preparations for the Bride and the Bridegroom.

We can also recognise here the cake of bread motif within the tabernacle of David metaphor that we explored above in chapter 14. Indeed, is this not the same pattern we have recognised already in the account of the feeding of the five thousand during Jesus' ministry on earth? The disciples came to Jesus with a problem, the multitude that had followed them into the wilderness were hungry, and his response was:

They need not depart; give ye them to eat
Matthew 14:16

He attempts to put the responsibility back onto the disciples. However, He didn't just leave them there looking at each other and wondering what to do next.

And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves,
and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me
Matthew 14:17

He took what they had in the physical realm and through the inspiration of the Spirit He brought the heavenly realm to bear upon it. And finally he then turned to His Father, and looking up to heaven, for the working of the miracle, before handing the gift to the disciples to distribute, and the people were fed.

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Matthew 14:19

Like the multitude in the desert everyone was fed, we saw this when David handed out the gifts to all the people of the nation after the tabernacle had been inaugurated in 2 Samuel 6, everyone was blessed.

And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one...

2 Samuel 6: 19

In moving on to the specific gifts listed here in this passage in 1 Corinthians, what can we learn?

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom;
to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues
1 Corinthians 12:8-10

As we have already identified, Paul's purpose is to provide some clarity concerning the issue of the use of spiritual gifting in the church in Corinth and by implication to the church in general. We are aware that at Corinth we do have the beginning of a problem with gnostic ideas that were prevalent at the time. Simply put, Gnosticism can be understood as a special level of revelatory knowledge that an individual is said to come into which will lift them to another level of human spiritual reality; for Gnostics the special knowledge was the key. So perhaps we can see partly what Paul was trying to achieve by classifying the gifts in the way that he has. As he is redefining and reclaiming wisdom and knowledge within their corporate worship experience as a gift from God through the Holy Spirit rather than as an esoteric state of being.

However, for our purposes we need to understand how these spiritual gifts can be seen as bread in our hands, to be shared amongst the brethren. Something, indeed, that we can take home with us as we leave the tabernacle of David; as a gift from the King to provide us with ongoing spiritual nourishment.

There are nine gifts or charismata listed here. They can be divided into three groups of three, there are three gifts that provide spiritual insight: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and the discerning of spirits: three that are a demonstration of spiritual power, healings, miracles and faith and three that provide a variety of prophetic input to a meeting or the body more generally: prophecy, tongues and interpretation of tongues.

As we have identified above, the rebuilt Tabernacle of David can be understood as being representative of the gathered body coming together for whatever purpose, such as worship and the word, a time of intercession, or the breaking of bread. We must not be too prescriptive here, but, the three revelatory gifts could have a particular role to play within the time of intercession or in bringing some encouragement to a brother directly from Father. Therefore, as we are praying into certain situations and seeking the Lord for clarity, a gift from the Lord such as wisdom or a piece of knowledge that would be the key to unlock a particular spiritual impasse or situation would be invaluable here. Or as we share fellowship and share our lives one with another let us be in the Spirit and be prepared to speak into one another's other's lives through the exercising of these gifts as well? The gift of tongues and its interpretation, however, would probably suit a meeting context over which there would then need to be Godly oversight from the eldership.² Moreover, flowing out of our secret life with the Lord there will hopefully be opportunities for some of us to step out into the power gifts of miracles and healings as the Father strengthens our faith. However, these will also be a feature of body life in general

1 Corinthians 12-14

and perhaps more specifically find manifestation within the worship celebration as Father brings something from heaven to restore damage done on earth.

The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

1 Corinthians 15:47-49

However, we must never lose sight of the essential foundational necessity that will always have to be an active presence, if the body is to operate fruitfully in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, this is agape love. However, there is one gift that for Paul stands above all others.

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

1 Corinthians 14:1

And this is because of all the gifts, prophecy is the one gift through which the Spirit is able to speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

1 Corinthians 14:3

Prophecy is an artisan wholemeal granary loaf of bread of a gift from the King. The Lord desires that we become an increasingly prophetic people so that we can

truly know and understand the days in which we live and might be a voice in the wilderness for those who would have ears to hear.

Notes

¹See Book 2 in the series for more teaching on the secret disciplines

²An exhaustive study of the role and function of leadership within the rebuilt Tabernacle of David that is taken from a fresh appraisal of scripture; can be found in the book that accompanies this work. 'Taking the Form Of A Servant; The Scriptural Principles of Leadership in the Rebuilt 'Tabernacle of David' A Leadership Model for Our Time and Any Time Within the Body of Christ', by the same author.

Chapter 4

1 Corinthians 12:25-27

Unity in the Body

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one

for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

1 Corinthians 12:25-27

An obvious adjunct to love will be unity. Indeed, Paul's remarkable teaching on body life in 1 Corinthians 12-14 has at its heart the need to maintain unity. Once again, the context for this teaching is so important as Paul moves seamlessly from teaching concerning spiritual gifts to teaching about the realities of living out the agape love commission that Jesus gave the disciples on the night He was betrayed.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34,35

Sadly, today the church is, for the most part, in serious need of coming into a new understanding of the importance of building and developing emotionally connected relationships of love with one another, otherwise known as friendships. For it is only when a relationship reaches a certain depth that the adopted spiritual filial emotions will be engaged so that when something good or bad happens to another person in the church others will then respond empathically. Laughing

with those who laugh and crying with those who cry. Things will only touch us as they touch others when we have some level of emotional and spiritual investment in the other person, this is known in psychology as attachment theory. Indeed, Paul teaches us that this is the level at which our relational yoking should be. For, as we explored above, the Lord desires to place us in active relationships or partnerships or as it is consistently described in the Greek, *koinonia*.¹ And that this would provide a strong driver for unity and a protection against division, as long as this doesn't then form into an exclusive club or clique. As we saw above in chapter 12, this aspect of body life is an outworking of peace offering that we saw in 2 Samuel 6 and an expression of the calling we are all required to aspire to, which is a peacemaker. Peacemaking as we saw is the culmination of the beatitudes and the quality that will prepare an individual to bear lasting fruit both in the world and in the body of Christ.

Schism is a tear in the fabric of the body

The Greek word for schism is *schisma* and it means to tear apart. In Matthew 9 Jesus paints a picture that will prove very helpful here:

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.¹

Matthew 9:16

The imagery here is of a piece of new or, more accurately, a piece of unprocessed or unshrunk material, which is sown into a garment of processed cloth and as soon as the rain comes the new piece of cloth shrinks and causes the tear in the original cloth to become worse. Therefore, schism, and the factions and the gossip that leads to it, are the result of unprocessed or unshrunk believers, placed in the wrong place at the wrong time leading to the tear in the fabric of the body getting so much worse, especially when the rain comes.

The process is crucial!

This is why the transformational processing of the Lord in the heart of the disciple is so important, which as we saw in the journey of the Ark from Gibeah to Jerusalem. The journey, taking us from the flesh to the spirit as we walk the walk of true discipleship. For the quality of the heart of an individual will inevitably be felt in the body. The tragedy is that so few understand the need for the heart transformation. Consequently, we are constantly putting out the fires set by the discontented and witnessing the damage done to relationships within churches and to the lives of those thereby affected.

What does scripture teach us about the benefits and blessings of unity?

We find the actual term 'unity' used in just three verses

in scripture. Of these, one is in the Old Testament in Psalm 133.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Psalm 133

The Hebrew word used here, *yachad*, means the unity of togetherness. This unity is described as being both good and pleasant; this is both the good that was spoken over creation by the Father of all creation in Genesis 1 and it also carries the imagery of the pleasantness of the sound of a beautiful song. Unity, therefore, by extension, facilitates the creative work of God and produces something truly beautiful in the process. Indeed, the two pictures that are painted for us here are important.

In the first, we see the anointing oil soaking the high priest, Aaron, from head to toe. Therefore, what we learn here is that only unity enables and allows the Godly anointing to flow, and to touch everyone.

**Unity opens up the channels of
anointed blessing**

Perhaps, we are also reminded of the words of the Lord on the night when He was betrayed as He delivers to the remaining eleven disciples, once Judas had left, His new betrothal covenant, (we can never hear this enough, this commission seems so simple and yet as we can all testify in reality it is so hard)

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34,35

True agape love and the unity it will engender will be the unshakeable witness that will prove to the world, looking on, that we are a true and fair representation of Jesus Christ on earth. It is not about our words, it is not about our anointing or power, it is simply and purely the love we have for one another that will be the light that shines out in the darkness of this world. A light that is powered with a love for Jesus and out of the lives of those who have walked the path of the beatitudes together.

The second picture is that of the melt water coming off the Mount Hermon, flowing down into the Jordan and then into the Sea of Galilee, bringing wonderfully verdant life wherever the water goes, transforming a desert into an oasis of life. What a picture for our time. Could the Lord so transform His Body to bring about such a spiritual transformation? The answer has to be yes. If we could only find this level of unity, a reality of unity

where the Lord would be able to command His blessing, even life for evermore.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.

Isaiah 35:1,2

In the New Testament we have two references to unity. The first is found in Ephesians 4:2,3 where we read, I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:2,3

We are back to the journey of true discipleship here as well, for we are only able to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, precisely because the Lord has done the work in our hearts so that we have the spiritual capacity or fruit to achieve this reality of unity. The fact is that we are full of potential in Him. However, this potential needs to be made real in and through our lives. Through the work of sanctification in

our lives, we now potentially can have the quality of a God given character that can meet all challenges in the body with lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering through which we can also forbear one another in love. However, this potential has to be realised in hearts of individuals and without this the church can be a scary and hurtful place!

The actual word translated here as endeavouring is important. It carries the meaning of moving with speed, to hasten the completion of its specific purpose. When there are issues that require resolution, be it forgiveness, healing or a challenge, it is so important that the resolution occurs quickly, so that there isn't time for the issue to fester in the hands of the enemy and to produce a poison which will eventually threaten the Body itself. After all what does Paul teach about anger?

...for we are members one of another. Be ye angry,
and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
Neither give place to the devil.
Ephesians 4:25b-27

It might be helpful if we understand the term endeavouring here to be an encouragement for all of us to be a spiritual engine for unity, which is always running and looking for opportunities to be a peacemaker within the Body. So that, we are all working to the same ends to achieve and maintain the unity of the Spirit in order that we might then enjoy

the blessings we have seen in Psalm 133.

The third and last scripture which makes reference to unity comes later in the same chapter of Paul's letter to the churches in Asia Minor, where we read:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

Ephesians 4:13

This a helpful reminder that we are still work in progress, but like all good trainers the Lord is holding out a carrot of encouragement for us, something to reach for. That we might become a perfect or fully mature man and come unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. What a vision to aspire to. However, it will only ever come true if it is carried within the unity of the faith that, potentially, is His body.

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12

To complete our study it will be appropriate to leave the final word to Jesus and his formative teaching on maintaining unity in the body through the effective exercising of forgiveness.

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Matthew 18:15

If the church was to adhere to this one simple principle then so much pain and division would be prevented. If everyone, whenever they have been hurt or offended, in any way, would go to the person concerned and talk about what had happened and hopefully come to place of peace and forgiveness about it with them and to then move on, then the condition of the church would so much healthier. However, as we saw above, this is not always the easiest thing to do, people, egos and baggage are often involved? It is usually easier to find a third party who knows the offending party and to share 'in love' what has just happened. Sadly, this will cause even more problems because now a third party has got an issue with the offending party, and before you know it this all gets out of hand and the body is divided. The Bible describes this as the little foxes which spoil the vine, i.e. the foxes eat the fruit, so the vine is unfruitful.² This is also called gossip and it is very destructive. It doesn't matter that the original grievance might have been valid, the individual has responded in an ungodly way through which others have now been drawn in and defiled.

Indeed, Paul provides a helpful list of the issues he found in the church in Corinth.

lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes,

backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults

2 Corinthians 12:20

Let us explore these issues so that we might understand where the church in Corinth was going astray and, hopefully, be able to see and understand that there is better way for us.

- The first term, debates, actually carries the meaning of a difference of opinion, a falling out.
- There was also jealousy, jealous is zealous gone bad. It is the same Greek term for both jealous and zealous. And at its root it means to boil over. Jealousy is very destructive, the green eyed monster, and it demonstrates an inherent insecurity in the person involved.
- Outbursts of wrath are never good, the Greek term here is thymos, not orge which is the other word for wrath and usually related to God's wrath. This is the dark side of passion, again the blood is running hot and a negative anger is involved.
- Strifes, translated as selfish ambitions in the NKJV, are next, and this is related to someone using the church as a means by which they come to some level of prominence, we could possibly call this church based social climbing. The issue here is that the individual's motivation is distorted. Again, driven

by insecurity.

- Backbiting might follow the previous issue, as an individual would put others down to further their own ends, this literally means evil speaking or gossip.
- Whisperings would be the means by which the backbiting would be achieved in the church, the term is actually related to the magical murmuring of a charmer of snakes. This is the mechanism that would draw others into the strife and potentially cause a tear in the fabric of the church.
- Swellings is a description of what happens in the hearts of those caught up in these things, they become puffed up in the sense of their own importance, since judgement comes with self-pride as a freebie.
- These would then result in tumults, the Greek for which is actually defined as instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, and confusion. James sums up this sort of situation when he says:

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion
and every evil work.

James 3:16

It all begins with a falling out and the problem is, that because the hearts of those involved are largely

unprocessed, the issues grow and then tragically eventually destroy all concerned. The pieces of cloth are unshrunk. The distortion, the disruption and then the destruction always come from within the hearts of those involved. They may mean well at first, their intentions might be to serve the Lord and to serve the body, but lying lurking within them, and within us all, is the potential for a trip up, it is called the self. This is why the journey is crucial. We all, each of us, has to come to the tabernacle through the threshing floor of Nachon, there is no other safe way. We all need to discover for ourselves, by actually experiencing the death of Uzzah, the death of our own strength. Our strength is not just expressed physically, it can also be expressed through our personality, our will, our ego and even our natural gifting. However, it all has to be brought to the cross, and left there. Indeed, the cross that we find in the closet. The walk of true discipleship is so important, so that our hearts are actually prepared and we are, therefore, not so vulnerable to the things we have just explored. However, there will always be a risk.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

1 Corinthians 10:12

In returning to the teaching in Matthew 18, Jesus simply says go and have a chat. We need, individually, to take responsibility for the stuff that affects us and to be honest, but be honest in love, and to be in the moment. This will be part of our journey, facing up to

our responsibility to maintain church health and unity, no one said it would be easy. We need to grow up in these areas, to bring things into the light and to give no place to the devil.

It is significant that this teaching follows directly from Jesus' telling of the parable of the lost sheep in Matthew. This is because, as the Good Shepherd, Jesus desires to keep His whole flock together.

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Matthew 18:14

It is also significant that it is followed by Jesus' teaching on binding and loosing and this is the true context for this teaching. Jesus' concern here is for us to maintain relationships and walk in forgiveness. Indeed, this, itself, is followed by this question from Peter.

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

Matthew 18:21

Indeed, forgiveness is the most powerful selfless virtue that we, as Christians, do possess. When faced with the most heart breaking pain, such as with the loss of a loved one, Christians do have a remarkable capacity to release the people responsible for that pain. And this speaks so loudly within a society such as ours which itself is so full of

anger, bitterness and has a thirst for revenge and litigation. Christians, it seems, have almost a unique capacity in this regard to forgive, because we follow an example set before us by our Lord, and we each know what it is to be personally forgiven.

Perhaps this is captured to some extent by an interesting exchange at the end of John's Gospel that takes place between the Lord and His disciples. It was the evening of the day of His resurrection and we are told that the disciples are gathered behind closed doors in fear of their lives, when the risen Lord Jesus appears to them. Having already settled their hearts by saying peace to them, we read:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.
And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost
John 21:21-22

This a special time of commissioning for those present and it is also a time for an infilling of the Holy Spirit, and as such a significant stage in their journey into salvific completion. Jesus then says something truly profound that we still struggle to fully understand.

Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.
John 21:23

When people sin against us we have a choice to make.

This is the same choice that was faced by David at the death of Uzzah and as we saw this was also the same choice that Cain faced when his offering was rejected³. We can either use these difficult situations to find the Father's still small voice. What are you teaching ME here, Father? Or, we can fall into deeper sin, frustration and personal torment.

What Jesus seems to be offering His disciples with this teaching is both a wonderful gift, but also at the same time a very profound responsibility for their own emotional and spiritual welfare. In terms of forgiveness, we can release people in forgiveness. Indeed, the Greek word translated as remit here does carry a meaning to send away or to release. You are releasing them but it is you who feels the benefit, as the Lord can then come alongside and soothe the pain and bring us to a place of emotional healing. However, we can also choose to retain the unforgiveness, and it is us again who feel the effect by being left in the pain and emotionally chained to the person and the situation. Left in the torment. In returning to Matthew 18 we seem to have, within the context of forgiving others, a similar idea expressed by Jesus when He says,

Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 18:18

There are eternal consequences to the choices we

make. There are choices we will make here on earth that will have ramifications in heaven.

There is a need for church discipline and we will certainly require it in the tabernacle of David to prevent the sort of issues we saw in the passage above and by this, hopefully, we can all come to a place of maturity in Christ, and to be prepared and made ready for His coming.⁴ Hopefully things won't get that far, if we are walking the walk and not just talking the talk. However, to reiterate, the responsibility always rests with us to do the right thing and to take the initiative, don't wait for the other person to make the first move. Be loving, but be decisive. We all, each one of us, need to walk the walk of forgiveness, particularly with our brothers and sisters within the Body and it is one of the most powerful ways that we can bring conviction on those around us in the world.

(one last time)

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34-35

Notes

¹ See 2 Corinthians 6:14ff

² Song of Songs 2:15

³ Genesis 4:6,7

⁴ The issue of church discipline and church leadership more generally are dealt with in 'Taking the Form of a Servant; Principles of Leadership in the Body of Christ' by the same author.

Chapter 5

The New Man in Christ.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is

The New Man in Christ

renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him

Colossians 3:5a,9b,10

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Romans 8:13-14

In this chapter, we will be bringing together much of what we have been exploring above and to set it within the context of Pauline teaching which is seldom heard today from the pulpit. Indeed, teaching that will prove very useful in helping to support our understanding of the spiritual dynamic capture metaphorically within 2 Samuel 6: 1-19. As it describes David's journey from Gibeah to Jerusalem carrying the presence of the Almighty God. A journey, which is illustrative of our own, as we endeavour to carry His presence through the realities of our lives. Indeed, crucially, as we already have recognised, just as David suffered setbacks along the way, we need to understand that we will experience the same. However, the key for us is to understand that there is a God given purpose to these events, which in reality can be the most difficult and challenging of circumstances that we will ever face in our lives. The reason being:

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and

on the unjust.
Matthew 5 :45

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.
Romans 8:28-29

However, we can so easily read verses like this without really understanding or taking in for ourselves their true import. Indeed, there are certain questions that do require an answer here, such as do we truly know that all things do work together for good? Indeed, do we know what 'good' means for us in this context? Do we know that as we endeavour to take this journey from Gibeah to Jerusalem that the path has been mapped out before us and that for each of us our true destination is conformity to the image of Christ? And as we approach Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4, do we know that we have two natures, the old and the new? Indeed, two natures that are, in effect, competing for our attention on this our journey? For this is the import of Paul's teaching here that as we walk the narrow path of transformational sanctification that is impacting our hearts and our lives as we walk before our God, choices will have to be made.

At this point, we do need to remind ourselves of

what we have learned so far when exploring the seedbed of truth that is the creation narrative, and specifically to the account of the fall of man. Crucially, we learned that a truly significant consequence of the choice that Adam made in the Garden of Eden. A choice to follow his wife and to wilfully disobey God as he eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was that from this moment forward Adam and the rest of mankind were condemned to be eat from the wrong tree. No longer would we be spiritually sustained from the tree of life. From this moment on, mankind would no longer be a spiritual being, we were now spiritually dead in our sins¹. From this moment on, mankind would be a soulish being, the Godly order of shalom had been lost and now mankind would be nourished and sustained from that which satisfied our souls and bodies. Therefore, our nourishment would be coming from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil such that we all share a common inheritance that is described by Paul in his letter to the believers at Ephesus.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Ephesians 4:17-19

We are now trying to make sense of our world and our place within it and using as our guide the vanity of our limited minds. On the one hand, in so many ways we are confused about who we are and what is our place in the universe. And yet at the same time, on the other hand, we are intellectually proud and self-sufficient as we accept the scientific anti-God agenda as providing us with all the answers within this Godless universe in which we live . Perhaps, the scientific endeavour of those such as Brian Cox and David Attenborough can be likened to an intellectual tower of Babel for our own time. Indeed, surely the cautionary words of the Lord God echo down the ages to us today when He says:

...nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Genesis 11:6b

This is all because, as Paul describes, mankind is alienated from the life of God by the fall and most chillingly the heart of mankind is in a fallen state, which as described above, is a state described as having a blind heart. Moreover, what is all too obvious is that because of this, the drivers within our world are now fundamentally selfish, self-actualising and self-obsessed and are expressed across to earth in immorality, greed and essentially, sin.

However, this is not the end of the story and as we read in Genesis 3.

The New Man in Christ

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise
thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

The seed of the woman would indeed prevail, and this seed is Jesus. And it is through His death that we can access once more the tree of life, which is the cross.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Galatians 6:14

Indeed, the work of the cross is central to everything and it is a wonderful finished work. However, for us as disciples this finished work still needs to be worked out in the daily realities of our lives. To this end, Father God, as we have seen, wants us to be dealing directly with Him in the closet and to be learning that His grace is sufficient through the power of the cross of His Son and the efficacy of His presence within us by His Holy Spirit. We are crucified to the world and to the worldly problems we carry as we learn to carry the cross through the issues of our lives. Within Paul's teaching this is described within a particular dichotomy that lies at the heart of the believer when they come to Christ. Within each of us there are two realities at work which he labels as the old man and the new man. And as we shall see the way forward is for us to deny our

old man and as we follow the Lord with our new man.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30

The new man is the very nature and character of Christ in us. This nature cannot be secured by the laying on of hands, it has to be worked out in and through the issues of life, so that His nature, that is expressed in His wisdom and His righteousness becomes increasingly our nature.

It is important before we move on that we challenge a recent distorted teaching that has impacted this area in recent times. Over the last thirty or so years, since Frank and Ida May Hammond wrote their seminal work 'The Pigs in the Parlour', there has been a significant interest in what has come to be known as the 'deliverance ministry' and with it also a practice known as 'inner healing'. And although the scriptural record is very quiet about such things, particularly in the writings of the apostles where it is totally absent. Those that deliver such ministry use subjective anecdotes, as well as the few occasions Jesus challenged the demonic in the lives of individuals, such as with the account of the Lord's dealings with the Garasene demoniac², as a norm for us all to follow. They argue that both deliverance and inner healing are an essential requirement for everyone to go through in order that they might find

true freedom in Christ and to be able to truly walk the walk of a disciple. Clearly, the witness of scripture is that within the spiritual realm there is reality of spiritual conflict in which the enemy is a demonic reality that can impact the life of an individual; just look at the world. However, if scripture is to be our guide in all things how much is this ministry based on truth or experiential conjecture. Indeed, what does scripture teach us concerning the way to walk in freedom and newness of life?

This said, however, we are not denying that there may be occasions where an individual will need to be set free through some level of deliverance if they have allowed the demonic to have a significant stronghold in their lives. However, we do not believe this is the norm for all, as some would suggest. What we are saying however is that there is certainly no place for inner healing. A therapeutic ministry in which an individual is taken back in time to receive healing at the point of the hurt they have received. This is bordering on occult new age practice. The past can only be healed in the here and now by the work of the cross that is actively applied and then, through Father's wonderful grace, healing can occur.

The second problem with the deliverance ministry is that it is also based upon a false and distorted understanding of the spiritual realities of how things really are. Sadly, it comes from a theological position that at times seems to come close to the error of 'Dualism' and placing the Devil on a similar level with God in terms of the impact he has on our lives. WE do

need to understand the devil is only part of the created order and as such can only do what he is allowed to do. Indeed, from scripture, we can identify that he does have a God given function and that this is to accuse the brethren.³

And as we see with regards to the way David is challenged in the 2 Samuel 6 over the death of Uzzah, it is all about our response and the way we react to the stuff of life that does not go to plan and within which we may detect the hand of the enemy at work. The challenge is always to our heart and will always show us our hearts and help us to recognise that there is more work required. Surely, the story of Job still communicates this truth down through the ages to us today. After all, what do we make of this scripture?

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat...
Luke 22:31,32

From time to time, we will be in need of sifting. The wheat of our lives needs to be shaken in the wind to remove the husks. Who does Father use to fulfil His purposes here?

God is God

Indeed, if we are challenged let us learn to first look towards Father and ask Him what the lesson might be that we need to learn here before blaming the devil, people or whatever might have occurred in the past.

The New Man in Christ

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Hebrews 12:11

We do need to realise that the race that is set before us will involve the Father's chastening and again the fruit of which will be the nature and character of His Son being built into us, even though the process might be painful.

The cross is never pain free

...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1b,2

Moving on, therefore, let us explore what Paul actually teaches concerning the path of sanctification for the true disciple.

But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt

The New Man in Christ

according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Ephesians 4:20-24

The way forward for each of us is to move from the old into the new, from the flesh into the spirit. There is a requirement for us to actively make some choices as to what we think, what we say and ultimately, what we do. Paul likens it to removing one set of clothes and replacing these with another set. He challenges us to put off the old worldly self, to be renewed in the spirit of our minds and to put on the new man. A new man who, like the Lord, is characterised by true righteousness and holiness. We do have a wonderful picture of this described here:

And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head.

The New Man in Christ

So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments.

Zechariah 3:1-5b

Indeed, what are these new garments?

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Isaiah 61:10

Let us look at little more closely at this process of the change of our wardrobe as described by Paul in Ephesians 4, starting at verse 20.

But ye have not so learned Christ

Ephesians 4:20

The one and only lesson that we need to learn is Christ, we are each called to focus in this life on one learning objective, to learn Christ. This is why the early believers in Antioch were first labelled as 'Christians'. They were being mocked as being little Christ wannabees. Why was this? This was because the early church were, indeed, Christ wannabees. This was because they knew that this was their one and only calling. The world could see Him in them and resorted to the lowest form of wit, sarcasm, in order that they might dilute the challenge to their own hearts. We mock that which scares us.

What or who does the world see in you and me?

Paul is actually admonishing the church at Ephesus because the example they had begun to set was far from what it should have been. Things were already beginning to slide. The verses that precedes this one tells us that their behaviour and therefore their nature was far from Christ like.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,...

Ephesians 4:17

They had fallen back into the flesh, walking as the Gentiles, walking in the old man and not the new. They were seeking wisdom from the wrong tree, in the vanity of their mind, as they were becoming reliant on worldly understanding and reasoning.

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Ephesians 4:18

Therefore, they now lacked the understanding that Paul was so fervently praying for them to have, remember his heartfelt prayer in chapter one of this letter. They had

The New Man in Christ

a blind spot. Indeed, they lacked understanding to the extent that they were now not living in a way that Father could recognise them as true worshippers having moved away from the truth and were spiritually blind in their hearts.

Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Ephesians 4:19

Moreover, they were now, through their adherence to the wrong tree, open to whatever worldly deception might come their way.

If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus

Ephesians 4:21

The way back, is to turn back. To begin once again to walk the narrow way. To return to the place from where they had wandered from the path. The place of error. To return to the truth, to return to the simplicity of Jesus. To climb back onto the foundation and the corner stone. He is knocking. To hear once again the still small voice that says walk this way for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. He is saying once more, 'Come to me'.

And then moving forwards in Christ, there are three steps or stages involved in the way forward in the spiritual process of sanctification as identified in the

teaching of Paul in Ephesians 4:22-24.

1) That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man...

The Greek word that is translated 'put off' here is found elsewhere in the New Testament, such as in Hebrews where it is translated as laying aside.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...

Hebrews 12:1-2a

In James, it is translated as laying apart. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

James 1:21

And in Peter's writings where it is also translated as to lay aside.

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have

The New Man in Christ

tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:1-5

Therefore, as verified by this, its consistent use by a variety of New Testament writers, this is the accepted normative teaching that was given to the early church as the means by which a believer would begin their journey towards their goal of Christlikeness. Indeed, as the sincere milk of the word is allowed to have its way in our lives and hearts the old man will be denied and the new man will increasingly be a newly created reality by God and this will become the daily reality of those walking the path of true discipleship. A path that would create holiness and righteous living for those who walk the narrow way before their God. A walk that:

...yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Hebrews 12:11b

We are, therefore, called to put off, to lay aside, to lay apart from what we were, in order that, we might put on and lay hold of what we are to become in Christ.

However, we do need to be careful here that we do

not err in understanding this to be achievable in our own strength and by our own effort, such that we might recognise it as salvation by works. This is not a moment for Uzzah to get involved. At the heart of this process is the active will of the Father who desires that we become like his son and therefore this is the outworking of His will and it is His work.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

This is wonderfully described by Paul again as he brings his first letter to the believers in Thessalonica to a conclusion.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Indeed, this work is a work of heart transformation and it is a work that only the Father can do, however, it is a work in which Father has chosen to work with us as our desire joins His desire to see transformational change in our hearts and our lives. This is also consistent with Jesus' teaching, as captured within the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel, the tenet of which is exactly the same as we find in

The New Man in Christ

the teaching of Paul, Peter, James and the author of Hebrews. To walk as a true disciple is a walk of heart transformation and as the heart is changed so will the thought life and the behaviour. As such, the walk of a true disciple is a walk into becoming a new man, leaving behind the old in its wake. The distillation of which is carried by the following words of Jesus:

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Matthew 7:16-20

As with David before us, the Lord is looking to create in each of us truth in the inward part and to know wisdom in the hidden place of our heart.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Psalm 51:5-6

The Sermon on the Mount ends with the following parable.

The New Man in Christ

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Matthew 7:24-27

From this concluding parable it is clear that to walk effectively and fruitfully as a true disciple, an individual is required to do two things, to hear and to do. Firstly, he needs to develop ears to hear the voice of the Lord for himself. This is the still small voice that expresses itself within us through His Spirit. A voice which will be unique for each one of us. The still small voice of the closet. However, what we do need to develop are the spiritual ears that are attuned to hear it. So that, as we endeavour to walk the walk and to be fruitful in Him in the daily round we are following His voice. As He challenges our attitudes and behaviour that we need to leave behind with Him on the cross and to develop new Godly attitudes and behaviours which bring glory to His name. He is looking to develop spiritual ears so that we can hear him, but also that we will actively respond to what he tells us to do.

The New Man in Christ

As we have seen the goal of which, is described by the Lord in the beatitudes. The beatitudes are in essence a challenge that set before all those who would dare to be called by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to be a carrier of the character and nature of Jesus. This is the journey. A journey, as David found, that will involve the pain of death and loss and it will involve the joy of coming into our true life, as a son of God and as a son of the true light.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Through His nature and character being increasingly our true nature and character He is this light within us.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life...

Philippians 2:15

This is what the Lord desires to do for each one of us, but there will be a cost. In returning to Paul's teaching in Ephesians we can now identify that this is what he is referring to by the phrase 'to put off'. This is the first element of the three stages inherent within the spiritual process of sanctification. An active engagement and cooperation in the work of God in our hearts bringing

cleansing and transformation, as we actively open the self-life of our old man to Him and for Him to bring change. That this is a work of the Spirit and not of our own effort is shown by Paul's teaching in Romans 8.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Romans 8:13

This work of transformation is a work of cooperation between us and the Spirit of God. And through the effective outworking of this partnership we enter the second stage of sanctification.

2) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind...

Interestingly, in Hebrew there is no actual word for the human mind as there is in New Testament Greek. You will find the term 'the mind' in your Bibles in the Old Testament and here it will be a translation of a variety of different Hebrew words, the most common of which are the words which are more usually translated as 'heart' or 'soul'. Therefore, how do we understand this phrase the spirit of your mind? It is a phrase which only occurs in scripture in this one place.⁵ Given the fact that Paul has a Hebraic world view, what he is expressing here is this idea that there is a deeper reality that lies behind the things we think and this is the heart, the wellspring of our

The New Man in Christ

thought life. Again, this is consistent with Jesus' teaching, true change will only ever come from a change of heart.

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Matthew 5:28

The wonderful prophetic possibility of a time when such heart transformation would be a reality can be found in both Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

These prophecies find their wonderful fulfilment in Christ and in His cross, and ultimately they will find their complete fulfilment when the children of Israel come into

this blessing when their blindness is lifted and they see Jesus as their true Messiah.⁶

Indeed, in Christ we do have a new heart of flesh but we now need to learn how to live out of it and not out of the old heart of stone. To live in the new nature, such that this new nature increasingly becomes our true nature. In Christ we have a wonderful potential but this potential needs to be fulfilled in and through the daily realities of our lives. It is a process through which, as we read above, His law is steadily written on our hearts and established through revelation of His principles. We are not talking about the Mosaic Law here, for us, these are the lessons He takes us through as we walk with Him. As Ezekiel describes this, by His Spirit He will cause us to walk in his statutes. Or to put it another way, as we walk with Him carrying the presence he will teach us His principles of Godly living and as we learn these lessons He writes them on our hearts. In effect, sealing them as they become our own built in principles for living and walking before Him.

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

1 John 2:27

There is much talk concerning anointing these days. Indeed, this verse is often used as a pretext to support

some of the current distorted ideas doing the rounds. However, what point is John actually making here? There are actually echoes here of Jesus' words from the upper room on the night before He was betrayed. We are individually indwelt by the Holy Spirit as a believer and from within, the Spirit, alive within our spirit, desires to be our teacher. The Holy Spirit take things from the Lord and communicates them to us so that we might grow in Him. The word anointing here, essentially, carries a sense of equipping. Describing the fact that we now have the means, i.e. the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, through which we can walk the walk and learn as we go. Let us turn again at this point to Paul's teaching in Romans 12 where we will find this same process clearly delineated for us.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:1-2

As we have recognised our first requirement is to make an offering of our whole being to Him. He will not force Himself on us, He is looking for cooperation and partnership, put simply a living relationship. There is a proviso or condition to this, however, the aspect of us that he desires to be sacrificed is our

new man and not our old man. Only our new man is holy and acceptable.⁷ However, the good news is that within the symbolism of a sacrifice that is burnt, it is the deadwood of the old man that is burnt up as He provides the heat. As we offer our selves as a living sacrifice He will provide the opportunities and situations in and through which we will lose that which we need to lose in order that we gain true freedom from the world and can walk into our true identity in Christ.

This is a process, and this process is wonderfully underwritten by the mercy of God, we are under grace here. Unlike the rich young ruler we need to see that nothing is impossible for God; merely point yourself in the right direction and He will do the rest. If we show willing then He will be willing, as we saw with the name of the father of the drovers in 2 Samuel 6, Abinadab, the Father, our heavenly father is willing that we, step by step, come into his perfect will for our lives. As we endeavour to carry the presence through the daily realities, like with David, things will happen. And also like with David the key is how we respond to these things that is crucial. We need to see that it is the Father at work in our hearts, this is His business.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

And again, as we have seen the crucial aspect of this process is a change of heart that will be demonstrated by

a change of thought life; that in turn will bring about a change in behaviour. This will be the journey from the flesh to the spirit, from Gibeah to Jerusalem, as we move away from the way we used to think and to steadily develop a Godly worldview. The key phrase here is that we will be able to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. We will be being taken through situations in which we will be able to prove this new reality of who we are in Christ and this new reality will steadily become our reality as we come into who we are in Christ; and discover for ourselves the Father's perfect will for our lives to become like His son Jesus.

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

3) And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Having cooperated with His presence within and become an active participant in His purposes for heart renewal there will need to be an active response. He, and only He can change our hearts but we can change our life style. We can make positive choices concerning what we do and what we do not do. The Greek word translated here as 'put on' does literally carry the meaning of to be clothed. However, this is far more than any fig leaf of

The New Man in Christ

religious fashion, this new man is the true 'us'. The true 'us' in which Christ is expressed and the true 'us' which is being created by Father in His righteousness and true holiness. This is still a process; we need to know that we never fully arrive until Lord arrives to claim us as His own. For even Paul realised this:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13,14

The way we do press on is to follow Jesus,

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Luke 9:23

There are three steps to pressing on and thereby following Jesus, as a true disciples. First of all we are to give no room for the old man, which is our selfish sin ridden self-life. It is a walk of self-denial; a walk wherein the spirit will lead each of us toward our own unique destiny of freedom from the world and Christlikeness.

To this end it is also a walk in which on a daily basis we are required to take up our cross. How do we understand

this? What does it mean for us to take up our cross? What was the motivation that led Jesus to literally pick up his own cross?

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

Mark 14:36

The Lord clearly wanted to avoid the pain and shame that awaited Him, however, only if this had been possible within the will of His Father. A pain free glory was the third temptation that was offered to the Lord from the devil and sadly this seems to be a temptation that much of the church is succumbing to today.

There is no such thing as pain free discipleship.

The will of His Father was sacrosanct for Him and it needs to be for us as well, this is the fear of the Lord. Indeed, in John's gospel, Jesus describes his adherence to the Father's will as being his very sustenance,

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

John 4:34

And finally, to press on to its completion, that for Him and for us is the cross. However, for us our cross is waiting for us on a daily basis; opportunities to follow the Father's will no matter where it might lead us. The

cross for Jesus was the Father's ultimate choice for Him, for us we will have our own times of painful obedience to this same will, however, as the writer to the Hebrews encourages us we need to keep our eyes on Jesus and know that our story is written in Him and will conclude with Him, our bridegroom, as we follow Him wherever He might lead.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him... Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3:1-10,11b

This is a journey, our journey from Gibeah to Jerusalem, from the flesh into the spirit, and from the old man into the new.

To conclude, therefore, this is the journey of David

moving the Ark of the Covenant from the Gibeah to Jerusalem. This is our journey.

It is a journey that seems to start well, however, they soon meet a bump in the road at the threshing floor of Nachon and things begin to unravel. There is a death and the Ark is parked up for three months at the home of Obededom and the new cart and the oxen and the band are all put off. It is during this time that David is able to reflect on what has happened and is able to come into a new way of thinking about the way the Ark should be carried, the way the Lord God should be approached and worshipped. He comes into a deeper level of revelation and is now able to walk in fear and obedience. His mind has been renewed. The journey continues with changes having been put on, such that the Ark is now being carried in obedience with the word of the Lord and the worship is now acceptable to the Lord God. We can, therefore, clearly see these three elements at work here.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns

Conclusion

and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Colossians 3:12-17

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

1Thessalonians 5:23-24

Notes

¹ See Ephesians 2:5a

² Mark 5:1-6

³ See Revelation 12:10

Although as we have seen Paul uses a similar phrase in Romans 12:2.

See Matthew 23:29

⁶ See Ephesians 4:24

Conclusion

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

Amos 9:11,12

Is 'that day' this day? There is such a need for spiritual restoration in the church today. Indeed, a restoration of a dwelling place for the presence of the Lord that is fit for the Master's use. The dove is circling above us, looking for a safe place to alight. Allied to this, there are two sukkot. Two flimsy, ephemeral shelters that are in desperate need of being built again. Restored and functioning as they were meant to, so that the true followers of Jesus will have the shelter they need to make it out of the wilderness and into the promised land of the Millennial reign of the Lord. One is the closet, that secret place of the Most High, where Father is waiting for the return of the son or daughter who realises their need to

Conclusion

come home. The other is the ekklesia, the true Body of Christ. The Bridal chamber needs to be made ready. This is the Tabernacle of David; the spiritual shelter that has been provided for an habitation for the Gentile world in order for them to come into the blessings and covenants of Israel through the cross of Jesus Christ. Including as it does, most importantly, the new covenant and this is the Tabernacle within which these words of Jesus will become an end time reality.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.¹

John 13:34-35

We say this because the end time ekklesia will be the bride that is presented to Father by the bridegroom, and it will be a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.²

We will conclude by reflecting on another prophetic challenge that comes to us from the prophet Joel.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly

Joel 2:15

It is time to blow a trumpet in Zion! It is time for true heartfelt repentance from the church. It is time to come home to Father.

Conclusion

Therefore, also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Joel 2:13-14

It is time to move forwards, following the Great Shepherd as he leads His flock to a richer pasture. The prophet Joel helpfully outlines the journey ahead, for, as in all things, scripture is our route planner.

Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

Joel 2:16

It will be a helpful exercise to unpack this verse and as we do, those of you with ears to hear might be able to catch something of the voice of the Father and respond to the call.

- **Gather the people**

“Gather the people,” the prophet exclaims. The

Conclusion

Lord desires to build His church, a church that lies beyond the religious system that carries His name today and this will be characterised by the Good Shepherd gathering His sheep into His sheepfold.

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

John 10:2-3

Jesus is calling His own sheep by name and he is leading them one by one out of the system so that they can come into His sheepfold. Perhaps we can find a similar scenario in Hebrews 13?

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

Hebrews 13:13-14

This will be an end-time move of God that will occur without the gate and without the camp of the religious system that is the church. As those with ears to hear seek for more and seek for a kingdom and a city that is to come and respond to this call and are drawn together in small flocks by a shared love for the shepherd. Indeed, it will be a spiritual gathering who meet because they are

together, rather than meeting to be together. It is all about the heart. **We meet together because we are together**

- **Sanctify the congregation**

Essentially the ekklesia is a house of sanctification. The gathering within which everyone is supported and encouraged in their own journey towards being made perfect in Christ. This will be an end time move of God to prepare and make ready a gathered people for His son. A move within which the sanctificatory point and purpose of the church will be discovered afresh. This will be the glorious expression of His church that Paul exhorts to look for expectantly. She will be mature yet virginal bride who has made herself ready for Her bridegroom.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Conclusion

Hebrews 10:14-16 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ; 2 Corinthians 11:2

- **Assemble the elders**

This is an important aspect of the new move of God as the Lord builds His church. This is similar to the process of rebooting a computer and taking it back to the factory settings. Church leadership and its authority was always meant to stay with the one and only shepherd of the flock, Christ Jesus, and it was then to be exercised through a team of elders. It is His power and authority exercised through humble, loving, obedient, servant leaders to the church, as Paul describes it here:

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Ephesians 1:19-23

Indeed, providing us with a leadership model that aligns the old and new covenants.

Conclusion

And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

Numbers 11:24

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee

Titus 1:5

Furthermore, we need to discover what it means to operate under a leadership model which defers its decision making through the Holy Spirit to the Lord, such as we see exercised at Antioch in Acts 13.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said...

(Acts 13:2a)

We also need to discover what it means to operate under servant hearted leadership such as that modelled by our Lord on the night before He died.

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I

Conclusion

have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

John 13:13-15

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

1 Peter 5:1-4

A lesson clearly learned by Peter following his conversation with His resurrected Lord on the Galilean beach.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

John 21:16

Interestingly the Greek word translated here as 'feed' is a different word from the one used in the rest of the dialogue between the risen Jesus and Peter. The word used here is not the usual word for feeding the sheep food

Conclusion

which is 'bosko', but is the word 'poimaino' which means to care for the sheep as a shepherd. Therefore, there does need to be a connection between the love an elder has for their fellow believers and the love they have for the Lord. For the flock needs the love, the servant heart and the authority of the good shepherd to emanate from and through the earthly leadership in order for them to flourish and grow in the things of God, being ensamples to the flock.³

• **Gather the children, and those that suck the breasts**

Sadly, because the church has not been effectively promoting the essential work of perfecting the saints, the situation today it can be likened to the Simpsons. Although this TV cartoon series started in the 1980s, thirty years on the children have not aged or matured, Bart is still 10, Lisa is still 8 and Maggie is still just a toddler who is not able to walk or talk. There is a clear parallel in the church today, it is as though the majority of believers within the church system have been infantilised, trapped as children, never being nurtured and allowed to grow up into the meaty things of Christ. This is similar to that which we read concerning the believers to whom the writer to the Hebrews is writing.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become

Conclusion

such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Hebrews 5:12-14

Believers who have been fed for too long on a diet of baby food and who have been going over the same basics time and again without anything ever changing in their lives and hearts or ever moving on to their higher calling of perfection in Christ. For we must all move on.

Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection...

Hebrews 6:1a

This move of God will be characterised by believers who, when they are gathered, still understand as a child or even as a babe and who are still being fed on milk. However, this will change as they are now supported, encouraged and empowered to grow up in Christ and to move on towards their own level of perfection or maturity. To become true sons of God.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Conclusion

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him
in all things, which is the head, even Christ...

Ephesians 4:14-15

• **Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber**

Here, we have the context for all that has preceded this prophetically signposted event. Christ Jesus, the bridegroom, leaves his chamber and returns for His bride, just as He said He would. The bride has made herself ready and this will prove to be the catalyst for the bridegroom to go forth from His chamber. A return that is captured prophetically by Paul when he writes the following to the church at Thessalonica:

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

We do need to understand that once again the picture being painted here by Paul is a marital one. Within the Jewish wedding celebrations at one point the bride

Conclusion

and the bridegroom are carried aloft on chairs and they literally meet together in mid-air. They are caught up together in the air as will the bridal church when Jesus, the bridegroom, returns to claim her.

• **The bride out of her closet**

Significantly, the Hebrew word translated in Joel 2: 16 'closet' is the word 'sukkah' meaning a booth or tent and reminds us of the sukkah that is the sukkah of David, as Amos describes the tabernacle of David in Amos 9: 11. The final aspect of this move of God will be rooted and grounded on a profoundly important restoration of the closet experience for the individual believer. This will be a new found understanding of how important our one to one with Father is in terms of the transformative process of our personal sanctification. We have not just been provided with a place to meet but the Lord encourages to recognise that there is a crucial place in the here and now that believers will need to regularly utilise to enable Father to ring the changes in our hearts and lives. Through which He will then take each of us through the stages of the beatitudes into the character and nature of Christ and into true blessing.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,
and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy
Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth
in secret shall reward thee openly.

Matthew 6:6

Conclusion

Jesus encourages His disciples to come to His Father, indeed, He is the only way by whom anyone can come into relationship with God the Father. Just as Jesus Himself said that in all He said and did he was restrained to walk in obedience to His Father, how much more are we? It is Father God who is looking to bring about the transformative changes in our heart and lives. As He formed the first man in the garden He is still looking to form each one of us into the image of His dear son Jesus. Perhaps we can detect the prevailing heart of Father God in the words of Paul when he says the following:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:2

This is the voice of the Father to each one of us, we are betrothed to one husband, my son Jesus, and I am longing to present you to him a virgin. No matter what we have done or where we have been in our lives we can be presented to the bridegroom as part of the bride, holy and without blemish.

And the crucial place in which this transformation will take place is in the closet. Here we can open up our secret lives to Father and in this secret safe place He will then do the work in our hearts that will bear fruit in our lives. This is His open reward for each one of us, a transformed heart and a character and nature that increasingly looks, sounds and even smells more like Jesus.

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

Amen.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 ; 1Thessalonians 5:23,24 ; Jude 23-25

There is also obviously a corporate aspect to the bridal chamber of Joel. We come together to be transformed into the most beautiful expression of gathered humanity, the Bride! A gathering that its founded and grounded on grace, love, and unity and those within walk the walk of true followers of Jesus in Godly fear and obedience. A gathering of true worshippers who walk together in selfless love expressed in sacrificial giving of themselves whole heartedly to the glorifying Jesus. A gathering where the presence of God is tangibly expressed in the love, peace

and joy found in the midst.

And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Acts 15:15-18

Make it so!

Amen

Notes

¹ John 13:34,35

² 2 Ephesians 5:27b

³ For an extensive study of the shape of leadership that will be required within the rebuilt Tabernacle of David read 'Taking the Form of a Servant; The Scriptural Principles of Leadership in the Rebuilt 'Tabernacle of David' A Leadership Model for Our Time and Any Time Within the Body of Christ.' By the same author.

