

Living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God

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The faith delivered to the saints

I want to begin this morning by reading a key verse from last Sunday. 'They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.' Act 2:42.

In this present season the Lord is restoring and establishing us in these four dimensions of grace that are foundational to the fellowship of the body of Christ, the church. During this God sent 'covid circuit breaker season,' it would be a great tragedy if, what the Lord has been teaching us, as individuals, households and congregations, was not established and abiding in us as our culture.

How do we today continue steadfastly in the faith that has been handed down, in order that we can grow in the sanctification of His faith, and do the works foreordained for each one of us? There are four important areas of fellowship that I cannot place enough emphasis upon and that each one of us must be personally pro-active towards, in regards to our ongoing commitment and participation as a member of the body of Christ. This is aside from our personal devotion and prayer in the secret place with the Father.

The communion gathering each Sunday. This includes the full package of the bible teaching, singing and worship and our participation in body ministry. Our morning tea time is also an integral part of this fellowship and not just a half time break. Heb 10:24.

The house to house fellowship. The heart of our house to house fellowship is to break open the proceeding word of present truth that is coming from the ground of presbytery, so as to encourage, nurture and build one another up in the faith. Act 2:46. Act 20:20

The regular weekly prayer meeting. Joining Christ and praying together with Him and our brethren is such an important part of our life together.

Prayer in family. For further reading and a more detailed study on this very important aspect of fellowship I would encourage everyone to refer to Peter Hay's notes on 'Prayer in Family' from the bible study on 25 September 2020.

It is in these aspects of fellowship that we are receiving a proceeding word from the mouth of God's messengers, which is establishing us as members of His body, the church. Eph 2:20-22.

We are to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God

In answer to the tempter, Satan, who said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' Jesus replied, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.' – Matt 4:3-4.

Every word that is proceeding is the word of present truth. In Hebrews 4:12 the word of God is described as being 'living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.' Something that is living and active is something that is alive and present. Peter writes, 'To those who have received a faith of the same kind (value) as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.' 2Pe 1:1. He encourages these ones and stirs them to be established in the present truth. 2Pe 1:12.

Like Jesus, we too are to live on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. As we said last week, our repentance in the first case is turning to the word of present truth that is being proclaimed from the ground of the messengers, which is the ground of presbytery. Now, if that is the case, this will affect the way that we pray, both personally in the secret place with the Father and also corporately when we come together to pray as the body of Christ and from house to house. Our asking and our praying will be aligned to and be commensurate with the conversation of the word that is proceeding to the church in this present season.

This morning, I want to emphasize this aspect of our fellowship together – 'They continued steadfastly or were continually devoting themselves to prayer.' But first, let's look briefly at an important purpose of the parable of the sower and the seed.

They would turn and I would heal them

Matthew 13:3-23 – The parable of the sower and the seed.

At the heart of this parable Jesus expresses God's heart to completely heal those who have ears to hear, to the full maturity and identity of their sonship in the body of Christ.

"Otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return (be converted) and I would heal them." Mat 13:15.

The word 'converted' implies 'a turning from and a turning to'; corresponding to these are repentance and faith. We cannot understand the word of present truth through the lens of our familiar culture but rather we must turn in repentance to receive the culture of His mind and faith, which is the culture of offering. Phi 2:5-8

Note – Every time we hear the word that is proceeding from the mouth of God, through His messengers, we can hear from any one of the four grounds.

How we hear the word is how we will worship and pray

Primarily how we hear and receive the word is how we will worship and pray. Let's consider this in respect to the four grounds.

The hard or wayside ground response – In this ground the seed is trampled underfoot. Luk 8:5. How do you think this person might worship and pray? We need to remind ourselves that Jesus said that the word that this person needed to hear, was sown in their heart. Matt 13:19. But the birds of the air, referring to Satan, came and snatched away the word that was sown.

Wayside ground is the well-trodden paths of our own familiar ways. This is the independent, resistant response and this ground will always struggle to hear a word from outside of themselves because they are unable to humble themselves. Jam 4:6.

The prayer of this person is likely to be consumed by the thoughts and desires of their own law rather than by the Spirit. Rom chap 7. They try to make the word fit their ideals of what they want the word to be to them, instead of simply being obedient to the word. As such the word is trampled by their own law and they have no capacity to pray according to the word that was sown towards them. Luk 8:5. Therefore, Satan taking advantage of their own law, quickly snatches away the word of life. Rom 7:8.

The stony ground response – In this ground the seed withered away. Luk 8:6. How do you think this person might worship and pray? They initially receive the word with joy, they are excited about the word and might even say to others after hearing the word, ‘wasn’t that a great word we heard today’. They are great at telling you what they like about the word. They are likers of the word but not doers of the word. The trials and sufferings of life quickly take their toll. Because the word they heard didn’t take deep root, they don’t understand why God allows these things to happen and why things aren’t working out the way they think they should. The prayer of this person is likely to be consumed by thoughts of wanting God to fix things. They only trust God if they get a good outcome that is according to their liking and when it’s not, they get disappointed and even angry with God and the messengers. Sadly, they begin to find fault with the word and the messenger, they stumble and get offended.

The thorny ground response – In this ground the seed is choked. Luk 8:6. How do you think this person might worship and pray? Like the other grounds, the word is sown and received into the heart. The trouble is though, as well as a desire for the word there sits in their heart other desires. ‘But the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful’. Mar 4:19. We ‘desire other things’ when we seek validation and worth in pursuits that have nothing to do with our sonship. Compromise and trading becomes the pervading culture. Distracted by the worries of this life rather than devotion to seeking *first* the kingdom of God will eventually choke the word of sonship. Mat 6:33.

The word of present truth and ‘the desires for other things’ cannot cohabitate. The prayer of this person will be consumed by worries and anxiety about many things. And these worries and anxieties bring forth no fruit to maturity for they don’t know how to effectively identify and join the prayer conversation of present truth concerning their sonship or the sonship of others.

The good ground response – In this ground the seed produced a crop. Luk 8:8. How do you think this person might worship and pray? Because they love the fellowship of the word proceeding from the mouth of the messengers and the ground of presbytery, they seek to understand the purpose of the word in their life. Therefore, they prayerfully turn in repentance and faith toward the word as their daily response. Like Job, they esteem the proceeding word as their necessary food. ‘I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.’ Job 23:12. Importantly they give themselves to the fellowship of the word and to walk in the Light as Christ and their brethren walk in the Light. 1Jo 1:7.

Their worship and prayers are according to the word that is proceeding to them and how they can live by that word and be fruitful. They joyfully participate and abide in the word of Christ’s offering and sufferings. They willingly join themselves to Christ’s prayer conversation in the Garden praying, ‘not my will, but Yours be done’. Luk 22:42. Their direction in life is constantly informed and guided by this reference point. Therefore the fruitfulness of the power of Christ’s ‘exanastasis’ life is evident in their lives. These ones receive the blessing of Abraham and are a blessing to others in all they say and do. Gal 3:14.

An important response of the good ground to the word sown towards them is their participation in the conversation of prayer, especially for their fellow saints and the messengers who are proclaiming the word to them. ‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me, that utterance may be given me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.’ Eph 6:18-19.

This is not a token expression but a heartfelt love for both the word and the messenger. Good ground genuinely loves the presbytery. The word that is received into the good ground is planted deeply in the well-watered ground of the fellowship of the presbytery. I have no doubt that in this present season the Lord is restoring a love in His people for the presbytery and a love in His presbytery for His people. I don’t believe it is possible to love the word that presbytery bring on behalf of Christ but not love those who Christ has appointed to bring the message to us.

Good ground is constantly bearing fruit and increasing

Colossians 1:5-6 says, ‘The word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world, also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth.’

When addressing the Colossian church, the apostle Paul identified them to be a people who were making a good ground response to the word sown towards them. How do we know this? Firstly, they received the word of truth, the gospel of sonship, sown to them by the messengers sent from God. Col 1:5-7. In reference to the statement *which has come to you* JFB offers these comments – “Greek, ‘Which is present among you’ i.e., which comes to, and remains with you. He speaks of the word as a living person present among them.” This is an amazing thought for us to consider. The word of truth comes to you because it is present in the messenger who has come to you. Secondly they have received spiritual understanding

as to the work of God's grace in them. Col 1:6, 9. Thirdly, they are constantly bearing the fruit of their sonship and growing in their name and works. Col 1:6, 10. And fourthly, Paul refers to their 'love in the Spirit.' Col 1:8. This is a love for the Lord, His word, His messengers and His body, poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

All of these qualities clearly describe the nature of the good ground response to the word. In Jesus' explanation of the good ground He says, 'But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.' Mat 13:23. Concerning the other grounds, the wayside, stony and thorny, we take particular note that none of these grounds brought forth any fruit to maturity. Luk 8:14. Although the word was initially heard, there was no lasting response to the word from these grounds. The word of their sonship was overcome because at some point they stopped receiving the love of God that was inherent in the word of truth sown towards them.

The apostle Paul warns the church concerning those who perish (the wayside, stony and thorny ground responses) that they do so 'because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.' 2Th 2:10. In contrast the good ground receives the love that is in the truth for them and because of that love, is able to love the word of truth and those who minister His truth to them. Rather than be overcome, the good ground believers are overcomers. 'He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be His God and he will be My son.' Rev 21:7.

Devote yourselves to prayer

Paul writes to the Colossian church and says, 'Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with thankfulness (grace) in your hearts to the Lord.' Col 3:16. And then in Colossians 4:2-4 he says, 'Devote yourselves to prayer keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us (the messengers) as well, that God will open to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I also have been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.'

After the apostles Peter and John were threatened and released from prison they immediately went to their own company and reported what had happened. Act 4:23. This company was the fellowship of the twelve apostles and no doubt other disciples as well. When their companions heard their report they lifted their voices to God in one accord and began to cry out in prayer. 'And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.' Act 4:29-31. 'And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant (great) grace was upon them all.' Act 4:33.

As the church is being restored to the ground of Christ's fellowship there is a healing that is being held within the hand of presbytery. God's desire is to stretch forth His healing hand.