

# In view of your participation

*Allan Wills*

*Notes prepared for the communion ministry, 18 October 2020*

What a season we have experienced and are continuing to experience. None of us would have predicted at the beginning of the year, the magnitude of the events that have unfolded and their impact upon our ability to physically meet together as a church. Despite this we have found, by the grace of God, a way to find genuine fellowship together. In the season of the past six months or so, the Lord has been refreshing and strengthening us, with a view to our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ as the only means by which Satan, sin and the world can be overcome. 'Be of good cheer (or be of good courage) for I have overcome the world,' said Jesus. And again Jesus said, 'Greater is He that is within you than he that is in the world.' The only life that can overcome the world is the life of Jesus Christ. And unless we are joined to and are participating in His 'exanastasis' life (His resurrection life in a mortal body) then, rather than being an overcomer, we will be overcome.

Having said that, I want to reflect for a moment on some aspects of our journey thus far and then encourage us towards our participation in the gospel that is being proclaimed to us, by the presbytery. Firstly I want to thank, on behalf of everyone, especially us here in Victoria, our beloved brethren in Queensland who have accepted, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, the burden and load of the livestreaming of communion and the bible study word. What an amazing blessing this has been to all of us around the nation and overseas. Can I also thank, not only those who have been on the frontline of the livestreaming and the proclaiming of the word, but also those who are unseen, those behind the scenes, who are serving the proclamation of the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. What has been achieved could not have been accomplished without their dedication to being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of the presbytery. Php 2:17. This has been an example that we are all to follow and for this we are extremely grateful. Php 2:18.

Hopefully, we have all been able to acknowledge that this has been an extraordinary time of revival and refreshing as we have personally responded, in obedience, to the word that has been proclaimed. For most of us, we have been constrained to our own homes and family. This has been the Lord's doing, not man and his plans. We have learnt to embrace this constriction as being from the Lord's hand, to perfect that which concerns us. Php 1:6. We have come to understand that the Lord has graciously provided us this opportunity to see His culture of offering restored, to be the culture of every household and thus the culture of the church.

When I first received the news that the livestreaming of communion in its current format would cease, I must confess, I felt a modicum of disappointment. Although I was really loving and appreciating the provision of the Lord, I had begun to sense in the past month, a bit of unease in myself that I was getting a little comfortable with things. It was nice to wake up Sunday morning knowing that I didn't have to make the effort to travel anywhere and it was all being delivered to me right here in my own home.

The next morning, whilst I was praying in the Spirit, my attention was drawn to the journeying of the children of Israel. In referring to their journey, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.' 1Co 10:11.

In relation to this, I believe our understanding is being adjusted, to realise that the end of the ages that Paul is talking about, is happening sooner than we had previously thought. 'But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs,' said Jesus when speaking of the time of the end. Mat 24:8. As we know, with birth pangs, they come with an increasing intensity, and we should not be surprised that this will be the case going forward. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.' said Jesus. Luk 21:28. It is time to watch and pray. Luk 21:34-36. 1Pe 4:7. The Holy Spirit is sanctifying every son of God daily, to the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane, 'not my will but Your will be done.' Mat 26:38-41.

### **The moving of the cloud**

The first aspect that was highlighted to me, in the Israelites' journeying, was that they were to follow the moving of the cloud. We recall that when the Lord delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, the word declares, 'The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.' Exo 13:21-22. Once the tabernacle was built and erected, then the cloud remained stationed over the tabernacle. Num 9:15-16. In conjunction with the cloud moving, those appointed to blow the trumpets, Aaron and his priestly sons, sounded forth a certain note declaring it was time to move camp. Num 10:1

Moses further spoke of the operation of the cloud, in setting the direction that needed to be followed. 'Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp. At the command of the LORD the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped. Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep the LORD's charge and not set out. If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, according to the command of the LORD they remained camped. Then according to the command of the LORD they set out. If sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would move out; or *if it remained* in the daytime and at night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out. Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out. At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out; they kept the LORD's charge, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.' Num 9:17-23.

The moving of the cloud and the accompanied blowing of trumpets is the expression of the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit, ministered to us by the presbytery, who are in the right hand of Christ. Rev 1:20. One of the most important things we have learnt, over the

past six months, is that presbytery is no longer a concept but a relational reality. Presbytery are the watchmen of the church! Heb 13:17, Act 20:28.

I have said all of that to say, I very much sensed in the Spirit that the Lord was saying, 'the cloud is moving and the presbytery have spoken, therefore it is time to move with it, for a new phase of the current season is upon us.'

### **I am the lord who heals you**

We note that shortly after the Israelites had passed through the Red Sea and went out into the wilderness, there were two immediate places in particular where the cloud led them to set up camp that reflects something of the amazing provision and protection of the Lord to us in this present season. The first was at Marah, where they encountered the bitter waters. It was here that the Lord declared to them, 'For I am the Lord who heals you.' Exo 15:26.

In this season the Lord has been imploring us, to both receive and then participate, in the healing waters of His offering and sufferings. The apostle Peter is very clear on this when he says, 'For by His wounds you were healed.' 1Pe 2:24. The evidence that we have been healed 'by His wounds' is that we will be restored relationally to Christ's shepherding and overseeing administration of our souls. 1Pe 2:25.

In Psalm 107:20 the psalmist records these words of hope, 'He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions (pits).' Have you been healed and are you being healed of everything from the past or even present, no matter what it is that has caused you to be bitter in anyway? From the outset of this season we have heard the Lord saying that we needed to be healed of lameness. 'Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.' Heb 12:12-13. The writer of Hebrews goes on to say, 'See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many are defiled.' Heb 12:15.

The Lord our healer is able to heal you of every root of bitterness that causes you to be lame or dislocated in your sonship. The immediate evidence that we are being healed of our lameness is that we will be turning to, as our personal repentance, the apostles' teaching that is being delivered to us, and presenting ourselves in offering and fellowship, to serve and be known amongst our brethren, especially with the presbytery who watch over our souls. The healing of our lameness and the manner in which we are healed, 'by His wounds' is then to abide with us as foundational to our progressive attaining to the fullness of our sonship.

### **Twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees**

Immediately after they camped at the place of, 'I am the Lord who heals you' the Holy Spirit led them to Elim. 'Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped beside the waters.' Exo 15:27.

The Israelites camped here for at least two to three weeks. Here they received a nourishing and a strengthening that would enable them for the times ahead, if they continued to persevere and believe in God's provision. The twelve springs of water and the seventy date palms remind us of how Jesus sent out the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples. Luk

9:1-11, Mat 10:1-42, Luk 10:1-16. These were the messengers of Christ that Jesus spoke of when He said, 'He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him (the Father) who sent Me.' Mat 10:40.

During the past six months we have been established and strengthened in the four elements of culture pertaining to a lampstand church, which are: the apostles' teaching, the apostles' fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer. Act 2:42. These key aspects of our life together have been ministered to us through the presbytery in the hand of Christ. Rev 1:20. The apostles' teaching is the word of present truth that is proclaimed by the messengers of Christ in every generation. This is how the word of Christ proceeds as present truth to the body of Christ. To repeat something I said earlier, presbytery is no longer to be a concept but a relational reality, that without, the church is unable to come to maturity. Eph 4:7-16. If we don't give due attention to the apostles' teaching then all the other elements will fall apart. It is incumbent upon each of us to be personally diligent to make offering towards the fellowship of the word that has been generously offered to us.

Now, I don't know about you, but I suspect you might be a little like me. If you are camped in a great place that has all the necessary provision that you need and you are feeling really comfortable about everything, then it can be very tempting to stay there. True? This has happened to many believers and church movements over the course of history, to their detriment. In the past six months we have been camped in a great place of provision and protection. But it was never the intention of the Lord that we live there permanently.

Yes, it has been just what we have needed in this season from the Lord. So much so that it is my personal testimony that this has been the most significant time of revival and restoration in my 51 years as a Christian. Therefore, as much as this has been a glorious season, another season beckons, that will produce a multiplication of the fruit of the word of the previous season for all those who are exercised in the word that has proceeded. 'For this reason we also thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, (the presbytery) you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which performs its work (bears the fruit of sonship) in you who believe.' 1Th 2:13.

### **A note of warning - the enemy attacks the stragglers**

As the Israelites journeyed, we are reminded of a sober warning that Moses issued to them, that is also for our instruction in these times. 'Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God.' Deu 25:17.

We could say that, during the time of Jesus' ministry, the whole of the Jewish nation, except for a remnant, had become 'stragglers'. Jesus issued them a dire warning because of their refusal and unbelief to receive the messengers sent in His name when He said to them, 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' Mat 23:37-39.

We will not see, that is we will have no illumination, until we receive the messengers who come to us in the name of the Lord. This is critical to our salvation, I can't emphasize the importance of this enough.

In this present season, we cannot afford to trail behind in our response to the word of present truth, especially in its relevance to our marriages and family life. If we do, we will end up becoming a straggler, who becomes vulnerable to being picked off by the enemy.

The opposite of a straggler is one who is walking in the Light of present truth with presbytery and having fellowship with their brethren in Christ. 1Jo 1:7

### **In view of your participation**

I love how Paul begins his letter to the Philippian church. 'Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints (holy or sanctified ones) in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including (together with) the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel (of sonship) from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.' Php 1:1-6.

What a beautiful picture Paul paints of the Church in Philippi, joined in the fellowship of One Spirit with the presbytery. Note how Paul then commends them for their participation in the gospel, with the presbytery, when he says, 'in view of your participation'. The word for 'participation' that is used here is the word 'koinonia' which is the same word for communion, fellowship, and sharing. The word of the presbytery, which is the apostles' teaching, connects the church to a participation (a communion, a fellowship) that is inherent in the word that they are proclaiming. This is the fellowship of the Father and the Son, which is also called 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit', which is also the apostles' fellowship. 1Jo 1:3, 2Co 13:14, Act 2:42. Because of their participation together with presbytery, God is able to complete or perfect in them the finished work of their sonship.

The Philippian churches active participation in receiving the word of present truth from a presbytery results in them being a dynamic and effective lampstand church. Paul writes, 'So then my beloved, just as you have always obeyed ..... Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children (sons) of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear (shine) as lights in the world, holding fast (forth) the word of life.' Php 2:12-16.

In the Spirit of adoption, let us follow the fatherly example that the apostle Paul committed to us as sons. Let us keep pressing on, through our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ, so that we can progressively lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of us. Php 3:10-17.

To quote Bruce from last week of the example of Timothy who followed the example of Paul. 'Timothy was a true son of the faith, a beloved son, an obedient son, my son, a son of the presbytery. Are you?'