

Anxiety to Offering

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Anxiety to offering

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Introduction

I would say, in terms of an overview of the whole of Scripture, that there are just two ways, or two modes, of existence. On the one hand, there is the life and peace that comes through offering. By this means, lost predestination – the forgetfulness of exclusion – is remembered again and recovered by being joined to Christ’s offering. Alternatively, there is the evil of Babylon – anxiety and sorrow, the forgetfulness of exclusion from the covenant purpose of the Lord.

Forgetfulness of exclusion

Let’s begin our study by examining these two modes of existence. We’ll start with the negative aspect first: the forgetfulness of exclusion.

The ‘wise man’ who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes discovers an appalling fact as he considers and investigates ‘life under the sun’. ‘I returned and saw under the sun that – the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men *are* snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.’ Eccl 9:11,12.

The apostle Paul sheds further light on the subject of mankind’s state when he tells us that, ‘The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be

delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.' Rom 8:20-23.

Faith in offering

We can say that every mortal creature now travails for survival. The uncertainty of time and chance has become the pervasive principle that undermines all proper endeavour. As a result of the sorrow of exclusion from the presence of God, we now have an anxiety that drives us. Anxiety and fear of death constitute the bondage that motivates the unbeliever for the whole of his lifetime. This bondage is a 'cage' from which we cannot escape *unless* somewhere we touch faith in offering . Heb 2:15.

Who laid this anxiety on man? Yahweh did. 'I will do this.' Amos 4:12. All of the things we look at to do with blood guiltiness are what we call 'burnout'. Anxiety and fear gripped the heart of man. Why? Because God laid it upon man.

Anxiety and control

So what is mankind's answer to the impact of the anxiety that comes from being subject to time and chance?

The answer for the unbeliever, motivated and driven by anxiety, is to seek peace of mind by minimising uncertainty through control of their environment. They adopt many

different strategies to establish their viability and sustain their security. Pursuit of science, law, societal institutions, family dynasties, and the accumulation of riches and knowledge are considered to provide the means of exercising control over the effects of time and chance. Some are secure only if they have routines, relational structures, and pecking orders which give a semblance of security, either by claiming control *over* people or conceding control *to* people.

Pseudo-faith

Various religious endeavours are also used to alleviate anxiety, but in none of these endeavours can a person truly know how to make offering. The prophets speak of these pseudo-faith mechanisms: positive thinking, false religious exercises and liturgies, false religious and social structures. We are told that today, sixty-five percent of the community need the aid of exercises such as yoga and deep breathing to cope with the uncertainty caused by anxiety! I suggest to you that we are all subject to this.

The desire to escape from anxiety is the driving force behind much of which we are taught and learn in our educational institutions. You see, God has bound it on man as the curse. Anxiety and fear are the principal part of the curse; they are the sorrow that became the inheritance of man because of sin.

If we consider the Fall, we must acknowledge that in spite of the 'promise' of the serpent, Adam and Eve did not attain to the knowledge of good and evil; they actually found themselves in fear and terror. They did *not* discover

something new; they didn't find the theology of 'good'. The only new knowledge gained through the Fall was that they were outside of the fellowship of Yahweh. Gen 3:8. To Eve, it was greatly multiplied sorrow: 'in pain [sorrow] you shall bring forth children'. Gen 3:16. To Adam it was, 'cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow [toil with anxiety] you shall eat of it'. Gen 3:17.

Consciousness of sin

I disagree totally with the idea that man gained some new faculty through the Fall. I disagree totally with those who suggest that consciousness of sin was God giving man a conscience. That's just folly! Man already had a conscience by which he could apprehend the will of God. He knew God in all things and all things in God. He knew together with himself – with conscience. He had no consciousness of sin, because he had not sinned. But once he fell, he had consciousness of sin and he also had a conscience that knew what sin was. He was neither given nor stole the capacity of conscience.

So the preoccupation of mankind apart from God is to alleviate the fear and anxiety that have been bound upon them by God through the curse. The Scriptures tell us that this preoccupation results in the establishment of a city – Babylon.

Locked up to wrath

Babylon becomes almost a codeword that sums up all of the mechanisms that spring from anxiety. The Gentiles¹ built the tower of Babel lest they be scattered across the length and breadth of the earth. ‘Come, let us build a city.’ Gen 11:4. There is a Scripture which comments on city building and multi-nationalism: ‘Woe unto them that lay field to field ... till they may be placed alone in the earth’. Isa 5:8. God has pronounced wrath on these endeavours. The whole economy is going to repeatedly build and crash, so all that was laboured for is written off overnight. And man never learns; he can’t learn for he is locked up to this wrath *unless* he makes offering. So either we make offering or we join every mechanism of the Babylonish church.

Two masters

It is amazing that when Jesus introduces the beatitudes to us, the negative subject upon which He lands so powerfully is that of ‘anxiety’. He addresses this in relation to not serving two masters.

‘No-one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink ... is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?’ Matt 6:24,25.

1. As far as the Scriptures are concerned, we can define mankind as ‘Gentiles’ because the term originally simply meant ‘the nations’. When Jesus referred to those who were strangers to the covenants of promise, He used this term.

We need to recognise that the whole construction of Babylon, to do with financial security and the minimisation of fear and terror, is driven by anxiety. People will adopt either the offering/faith approach to living, *or* the Babylonish, anxiety/fear minimisation mode. And mammon (money), the coinage of Babylon, becomes the coinage of minimising uncertainty. It's 'the God of this world'.

Nevertheless, those people who are considered to be most successful in the world are the ones who have most successfully minimised the impact of time and chance on their lives. We observe these 'successful' ones in the world, and we often hear a lament similar to that of King David. 'Why is it that the wicked flourish like the green bay tree?' Psa 37:35. Why is it that 'all of their steps are washed in butter', to use Job's term? Job 29:6. It is to do with fatness; nothing ever goes wrong. There is no travail or fear in their death. They have apparently gained the ascendancy over time and chance. But it is not so! Anxiety and fear nevertheless grip the heart.

The mark of Cain

For those who have so prospered (ie the wicked), it's in this life *only* that they have their reward. They don't understand that like sheep, they die and fall into the hands of the living God. But no one 'laid a glove' on them in this world! It is sobering to remember the fate of Cain in this context. He went out from the presence of the Lord into the land of Nod. Gen 4:16. He actually went out into the land of forgetfulness. Psa 88:12. He was forgotten; excluded from the presence of God.

It is a most terrifying condition to be forgotten. He cried out, 'My iniquity is too much for me', and he said, 'anyone who finds me will kill me'. Gen 4:13,14. Now the Lord set a mark on him (the mark of Cain) so that no one would kill him and he would fall totally and completely into the hands of the living God. What sore judgement is that? What fury, what wrath! That's why the word tells us that it's 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God'. Heb 10:31.

And I would ask you to consider this question as you read – do you bear the mark of Cain? No one lays a glove on you; everything you do turns to gold. You may have the mark of Cain. You might say, 'But I'm prosperous, therefore I must be right in all that I do'.

Frightening! I'd rather fall under the stripes, the scourgings, and the chastenings of wicked men (who laid their chastening stripes and tortures upon Christ), and thereby fellowship with Him in His sufferings. I'd rather that, than on the day of judgement fall under that hand of pure, righteous, loving, jealous wrath – the wrath of God Almighty.

It would be a fearful state to have the mark of Cain and the delusion that it brings to a person's mind. You see, when there is no haste in the fulfilment of judgement, the hearts of men grow arrogant. They believe there is no God in the heavens, therefore no retribution. They do not believe that for every thought, every word, they will have to give account.

Matt 12:36. And don't forget this: the thoughts of men speak louder in heaven than the words of men do on earth.

Minimisation of fear and anxiety

In the book of Hebrews, reference is made to Christ humbling Himself to become flesh and blood. 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and release those who through anxiety all their lifetime were subject to bondage.' Heb 2:14.

Men will even use the minimisation of fear and anxiety, either in themselves or others, as a means of excusing any action they take. They have justified wars, genocide, slavery and every other evil on the basis that such action will somehow alleviate the fear of death.

In fact, when we study the story of Cain and Abel, we're looking at the story of mankind in miniature. Why did Cain kill Abel? He'd lost control, so he reasserted himself. He was driven by his anxiety, and murder was the result. I actually think that Cain's initial stance would have been to excuse and justify his actions on the basis of his anxiety. I believe he was a very worried man. He wouldn't have viewed himself as being a wicked man who was plotting to slay his brother. He was a worried man, an anxious man and he was under threat. This was an anxiety-driven, 'just' war.

A person does not normally just walk out the door and say, 'I'm a very wicked fellow. I'm going to go now and kill my brother.' There are many very anxious, fearful, self-justifying reasons why we end up doing what we do.

Esau came with murder in his heart to slay Jacob, as did Cain toward Abel. But for what purpose? What was his motivation? The word shows clearly in James chapter four, that war, murder and fighting come from our lust. 'You fight and kill; you have not.' There are tremendous struggles in many homes; argument over what is supposedly male perspective versus female perspective. That's not the bottom line. The issue is that anxiety feeds the perspective for an outcome which minimises the worries, and the uncertainties. It is the 'have not' side of us. It's our survival mechanism. And Scripture is quite clear as to why these matters remain unresolved. It is because we will not make offering in prayer. Jas 4:2.

How then are we to be delivered from this fear and anxiety? How do we discover the will of God?

Faith and self-control

Let's consider faith for a moment. Remember that the fearful, anxious person is often in touch with reality, but unable to control it. Anxiety is the symptom of little or no faith; it is doubting, double-minded, tormented and not able to be comforted. Trying to control our environment and others around us by imposing our will on them is the mechanism by which we attempt to alleviate this anxiety. But instead of using control mechanisms, our goal needs to be finding faith, and therefore finding self-control.

Faith accepts that the natural environment has been subjected by God to time and chance in hope. But *do* we actually accept that the whole of creation has been subjected by God to this kind of sorrow and that He did it

in hope? Rom 8:20. Start accepting this instead of accusing God every time things go wrong. *God* Himself has done this. He doesn't minimise our anxiety.

So where do we find faith? Through the gospel we *can* find faith and therefore self-control in the midst of the storm, and so be at peace. The gospel message is the only solution to the tumult of the soul caused by sin and the fruit of sin. Think of Christ walking on the water. 'O, you of little faith, why did you doubt?' Matt 14:31. The fruit of the Spirit that brings deliverance from fear is self-control. A person with self-control as the fruit of the Holy Spirit is not a fearful person.

Faith obedience

What then is the very first element of faith? As the writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for', but faith *offers* the fruit of obedience. This concept is a little difficult to communicate because we often separate faith and obedience. However, there is no such separation as far as God is concerned.

Wherever we find the word 'faith' in the Scripture, it must always be understood as faith-obedience. Faith is always expressed in offering made, or obedience being given to the word of God. So faith offers the fruit of obedience. We may look at the grain offering, the 'offering most holy' brought by Cain, *or* that which Abel brought – the fruit of the womb of his sheep and his cattle. Either way, it's a fruit. But faith is the key: faith obedience in the form of offering.

Understanding offering

Nevertheless, many folk are still perplexed when it comes to offering. We note that offering is not something confined to the Christian mindset. There are temples, churches and heathen religions all with their various approaches to offering and so, to varying degrees, most people are familiar with the concept. But as Christians, have we *really* understood what offering is in its most basic form?

A pivotal passage of Scripture in understanding offering is contained in the apostle Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome. In verse one of chapter twelve, the apostle is beseeching us by the 'mercies of God'. Now instantly I say that, we are in water so deep, so unfathomable, that the ocean itself at its deepest point anywhere on the globe is not deeper than this. I know I'm swimming in very deep water, but this is also the most basic statement of the Christian faith.

The first word of the gospel is also the last word, for the 'sure mercies of David' have to do with your resurrection body, your final redemption. Acts 13:34. But it is also to do with Jew and Gentile in one body, so that the natural Jew may also find his resurrection in Jesus Christ. The Jews were very offended by Paul and the apostles as they proclaimed 'the sure mercies of David', the resurrection of the dead. That is to say, *their* resurrection is only with the Gentiles *in* Jesus Christ, who is 'the resurrection and the life'. John 11:25.

So Paul exhorts us, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your priestly [reasonable] service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Rom 12:1,2. He is saying, as priests, 'reasonably' offer, *or* with some understanding, some illumination, present your bodies a living sacrifice.

Your bodies – a living sacrifice

Without going into Paul's linguistic approach, I just make the point that verse two is not a further point beyond verse one. It is a re-statement of verse one. A Jew expresses himself by taking the negative of the positive. The point he's making is this: if you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God as your priestly service, then the opposite of that is to be conformed to the world and not have your mind renewed.

You see, as you present yourself, you will prove what is good and acceptable. He's saying, 'present yourself', *or*, 'you as a priest reasonably present your body so that you can ascertain and know the will of God'. It is to be acceptable, reasonable, illuminated, clear in faith, so you can go sure-footedly on into life.

He didn't say to pray and fast for forty days and forty nights and have Gabriel come so that you might know the will of God! He said, 'Present yourself a living sacrifice', and this will take you all the way to your resurrection body and its glory. And not only that, but if we can do it as the

church universal, God will graft back in the natural seed. It is actually a very large picture that he is giving to us here.

So the first aspect of offering that is called for (and as the messenger I'm calling for it as you read this) is to present yourself a living sacrifice.

The first offering

It is very helpful and instructive to see how this aspect is demonstrated in both the negative and positive in the narrative of the first offerings recorded in Scripture. These are the offerings of Cain and Abel.

‘Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.’ In terms of our present day context, we could say that he left church that day very upset! Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever left church very upset because something has not been accepted?

‘Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” [And we note that it would be through offering that he would be able to do this.]. Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain

rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth”... then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD [with blood guiltiness] to the land of wandering [or the land of Nod].’ Gen 4:1-10,16.

Now let’s carefully consider Cain’s offering. The Scriptures tell us that ‘Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord”. Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel.’ So Cain, as the firstborn, had a predestination to be God’s firstborn over all creation. But Cain lost his first-born status and was not listed in the genealogy of the sons of God because he did not make acceptable offering. He made an offering, but really had no understanding of the heart of offering.

Instruction through offering

So his offering was rejected. But this rejection gave Cain access to God for instruction, enabling and acceptance. That is what we see here. Cain knows nothing about the substance of offering, but God Himself in the form of Yahweh the Son interacts with him around the meaning of his offering. Cain’s offering was meant to connect him to the one offering of Christ, for all offering is His.

When Cain brought his meal offering to the Lord, he was in fact firstly to offer himself. This is the first offering; the inward man is the *psuche*, the living soul. It was to have

been the inward man, the individual person: Cain, 'a man acquired from the Lord'. The inward man, the individual, is asked to present the outward man (the body) as a living sacrifice.

In effect He was saying, 'Never mind your brother. You, Cain, make offering and you will be accepted.' There was enabling, capacity and illumination, and there *could* have been acceptance. 'Will you not be accepted?' It's similar to the situation where Jesus spoke about bringing a gift to the altar where there is relational conflict. Matt 5:24. Leave your gift here and go and be reconciled. 'Cain, don't go and murder him; go and be reconciled.'

Your brother's keeper

The essence of offering required from Cain *was* to have been his brother's keeper as God's firstborn. Now, what did this mean? It required a re-orientation of his vocation in life. He does not *want* to be his brother's keeper. He wants to define his own offering. Or, to put it another way, he wants acceptance on his own terms.

Not only that, but he wants the community of the sons of God to be defined by his own parameters. In our context, we could say that these are his ideas of what he'll give to the church and how he'll keep those leaders and others on the right track.

Abel, his brother, is a prophet and a shepherd but Cain is the firstborn. He hasn't understood his own calling and ministry. He's perhaps thinking that a pecking order has now been established with Abel above him, because Abel's

offering has been accepted and his hasn't. But a hierarchy is not even implied here. We nevertheless note that Abel's calling was different from that of Cain. He was a prophet and a shepherd and his blood still speaks. Heb 11:4.

Cain's attitude should have been one of commitment to present himself through offering, to serve the developing community of the sons of God. He was to be servant of that. Now, what was his test? His was a test of faith, for a word came to him. The test of Cain is demonstrated through his interaction with God as he made offering. God, by rejecting his offering, was able to instruct him.

The way of offering

The Scriptures remind us that the way of Yahweh is the way of offering. It is the way of understanding. Prov 14:6,8-10. This is the mystery of the faith – it's what happens when we make offering. Now the mystery of the faith is the understanding of and participation in offering, for the express purpose of achieving the knowledge and substance of our personal predestination. We have said in our publication, *The Heir of all Things*, that faith is not the essence of God, for only God is His own essence.

You and I can never enter into the essence of God. We can never be God. But we can partake of the substance of God, for the substance of God is the divine nature. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Heb 11:1. The writer is talking about our sonship and we come to this through the process of joining Christ's offering which is the offering of God Himself.

Rejected - resisted

When we find ourselves rejected of God, can we take instruction from that? When we are not accepted, can we receive this; or do we rise up in 'murder' against God's servants? The issue here is not a church problem. The issue is our personal offering; the personal offering of our own selves in the culture of obedience. Our physical, living body is the vehicle that is to demonstrate the fruit of obedience rather than disobedience.

So the first dimension of offering has nothing to do with the leaders; it is nothing to do even with fellowship. It is actually the vehicle, or the means, of coming *to* fellowship. The inward man, by offering, is presenting the outward man as the vehicle of obedience, to demonstrate the fruit of obedience of the inward man – the true heart attitude of the inward man. It's between us and God. Then that is to be demonstrated in the community of the sons of God.

Let's be very clear here. The first aspect of offering is to do with the life and predestination of the offerer. It is about life itself, particularly the life of the offerer and, unless we firstly make offering in accordance with our life and predestination, we will never be obedient in the culture of the community of the sons of God. It is a personal lordship crisis. It represents a true 'born from above' question that the firstborn of all creation needed to face. Cain needed to be born again, born from above, and be brought forth into the community of the sons of God as a *true* firstborn.

He was rejected. And I suspect all of us, in that whole convicting process of the gospel's first interaction with us,

find ourselves rejected and resisted. It was an instruction, and it pointed out Cain's need of repentance and a change of vocational focus. It brought to his attention the need for a *resolution from his heart* to be obedient.

That's what this first offering is all about, and that's what our first interaction with the cross is all about. If it doesn't produce absolute obedience in us, but we instead attempt to turn it to a 'law' to ensure our passage to heaven, we've just damned ourselves. And we'll prove this, because we will 'kill' someone, spiritually, by our own hate, venom and anger.

Betrayed

In this way, the principle of betrayal is revealed in the offering process. If our attitude of offering is not in conformity with God's will, then the life that is betrayed is one's own life, for that's what Cain did! He betrayed himself. And if we do not make a true offering of obedience by presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, we will betray ourselves. On that day, rather than Abel, it was Cain who 'died' – he betrayed himself.

Abel's 'blood still speaks' and his predestination is eternally assured as a son of God because of his offering. We must understand this! For every martyr whose blood is spilled, their eternal predestination is assured by offering – Christ's offering. It was Cain who died that day. Sin, as a lion, devoured him because of his refusal to abide within his predestination.

At the last supper, Jesus said, 'The hand of the betrayer is with Me on the table'. Luke 22:21. Paul, referring to the communion meal, prefaces his statement with, 'The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread'. 1 Cor 11:23.

This links right back to the meal offering of the first betrayer, Cain. Jesus took bread and, in effect, 'Cain' is there with Him at the last supper; but now his name is Judas! For we find that Judas, at the last supper, is committing the sin of Cain. It is the same issue; he's going to murder his brother, Christ!

It is noteworthy that Judas is the only disciple from Judea as was Christ; the others were from Galilee. Judas *should* have been 'his brother's keeper'. Gen 4:9. And so it is at every communion service; 'the hand of the betrayer' is with us as we take communion. It was not Christ who died! He indeed died, but on the day that Judas betrayed him, it was Judas who died and fell headlong.

What's the right response? The right response is: 'Is it I?' It must not be, 'Is it him?' Perhaps they were thinking, 'You need to be washed, Peter'. It *could* have been Peter. Perhaps most were thinking it *was* Peter. But it was Judas.

Life and peace through offering

Now I want to focus our attention on our marriages. Can we begin to make a transition from a marriage ruled by minimisation of anxiety by control to one where there is an overflow of life and peace through offering?

Unless our marriages are realigned to operate by faith and offering, they are subject to the curse. As we have seen already, God said to the woman, ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire *shall be* for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

‘Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow [in anxious toil] you shall eat of it all the days of your life”.’ Gen 3:16,17.

An attitude of stubbornness

The apostle Peter in his first letter explains something of the fear and terror which can touch our marriages. This fear and terror defines the anxiety that gripped the heart of Eve because of her sin. This sin caused her to inordinately encompass her husband so that she could somehow control the terrible uncertainty of time and chance that was now upon her. In the Hebrew language, part of the root meaning of the word ‘sorrow’ is ‘the attitude of stubbornness’.

That shocked me. Sorrow went straight to stubbornness mixed with anxiety. But a woman might say in response to this, ‘The stubbornness is because of my anxiety; I have a certain perspective and I want to see my fear or anxiety minimised’. Such a one is then doing what women who are subject to the curse do. They encompass the man, so that through control of him they can attempt to minimise the

effects of time and chance on their lives and reduce their anxiety.

This stubbornness and anxiety pursued Adam. A compulsive-obsessive dynamic was let loose upon the marriage because of anxiety. It encompassed him so that he facilitated Eve's perspective, in an attempt to alleviate her worry and uncertainty. 'Your desire shall be toward your husband.'

Gen 3:16. Yet because of the double-bind of anxiety and its resulting tension, there was no peace in their relationship. 'He shall rule over you.' Gen 3:16.

Two models

But the apostle also discusses wives being in submission to their husbands and Sarah calling Abraham, 'lord'. At first glance we might think that in Abraham and Sarah's marriage, we are looking at the same type of relationship that Adam and Eve had after the Fall. 'Adam shall be your lord, you will encompass or seek to be under him, and he will rule you.' Gen 3:16.

We might think that the effect of fear and anxiety upon the marriage of Adam and Eve has resulted in a head and helper dynamic operating in their marriage relationship, just the same as in Abraham and Sarah's. But when we properly understand what Peter is telling us, we see that in fact they are poles apart, and two completely different outcomes are evident.

On the one hand we have the 'anxiety driven' model while on the other we see the peace of the 'faith motivated'

model. And it's worth remembering that we have exactly the same 'way points' of head and helper in both instances.

Marriage is *not* man claiming control over the woman and the woman conceding control. That's an anxiety mechanism. That's not headship and helper; that's not *paraclete* and the headship of Christ. Attempting to find security by controlling our environment won't bring peace to our homes. Neither will dealing with uncertainty by the exercise of control over circumstances and others. These mechanisms are just the symptoms of the Fall.

Faith through offering

What is the difference between these two stories of the Christian family and order of marriage? 1 Peter 3; Gen 3. What is the particular element that we do not see in Abraham and Sarah's relationship? There is no fear and no anxiety, for the woman has been delivered! There is an order stated here. Peter teaches us that the right ordering and peace that is the fruit of Christian marriage is achieved when faith replaces anxiety.

Faith is the only answer. Anxiety *has* to be replaced with faith. How do we obtain faith? Through offering and trusting in God. Where faith is operative, a man will offer himself in headship and a woman will offer herself to be helper in accordance with their predestination.

Even in a very difficult situation where the husband does not obey the word of God, he can be won by the conduct of the wife. 1 Peter 3:1. She's making offering in her marriage and is not driven compulsively by anxiety to gain control of

her circumstances. Instead, her chaste conduct, coupled with reverence, is observed. There is none of the fear or anxiety of Eve here; her conduct is with reverence. It is not the outward adornment of seduction which endeavours to run relationships on romantic wheels in order to control them. This is a woman making offering in accordance with her predestination.

‘Rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *quality* of a gentle and quiet spirit.’ 1 Peter 3:4. I have connected the word *incorruptible* to what happened when Eve and Adam fell; they fell under the curse of corruption and death. The first impact, or the first corruption, is anxiety and terror.

But now, through faith and offering, the woman can be free of anxiety and fear in the marriage. She no longer has to live with that corruption, but has the incorruptible flower. It is the lily. It is the beauty of ‘a gentle and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of God’. 1 Peter 3:4. Certainly this is in part what Jesus is referring to when He says, ‘Look at the field, look at the lily ... Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these.’ Matt 6:28,29.

‘For in this manner, in former times, the holy women [the women of faith] who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.’ 1 Peter 3:5. Faith and offering have completely replaced anxiety and fear.

The way of the seed

Now before I conclude, I want to fill out our understanding of the way of offering by considering the way of the seed.

The greatest symbol or sign in all the world is a seed, and offering is a participation in the principle of a seed. A seed remains alone, barren, until it falls into the ground and dies. Christ likened Calvary – His offering, the sum of all offerings – to the story of a seed. It is the process by which the substance of God's life multiplies. And, again, faith is the substance.

This is most basic doctrine. The way of the seed, the way of offering, is the process of its death, its life, its germination, its confirmation, its faith and its predestination. 'Except it falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone.' John 12:24. When the meal offering or the animal is brought, it is brought to die and to be offered and, in the offering, multiplication occurs. Something is affirmed.

The whole of nature lives by the principle of the seed. 'Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more valued than they?' Matt 6:26. Look at the lily, a beautiful flower. In our anxiety we can often race to get to the end point – bread to eat – but we need to 'consider the flower'. He says there's joy in doing this.

You can enter joyfully into the principles of sowing and reaping. There's certainly some gardening to be done because we have to bring forth some firstfruits, for this is the principle of the seed. But note that between planting

and harvest there's a flower. Let's 'Smell the roses' as we go, in full faith, without fear. We are not on an anxiety minimisation excursion; we're in faith. The heavenly Father has a predestination for us and He knows of what things we have need. Therefore, please stop and smell the roses! This is what Jesus was saying, but of course they didn't have roses – they had lilies.

As we enter into this economy of sowing and reaping by participation through offering, we will begin to understand prosperity as it is witnessed to in the Scriptures. For the sake of contrast, we note that in the world is a trading economy.

If, at a base level in the world economy, we operate via usury and obtain ten percent on our money, we're not doing too badly. But those who are trading are not exercising any faith. In most cases, trading is about making a profit. It's not multiplication for it is actually drawing off someone else's offering perhaps, or stealing off someone else who is trying to trade off you.

Trading

It is important to note that this worldly economy seems to be close by when the economy of offering is operating. Jesus, at the last supper, was talking with the twelve apostles about who would be the greatest – he who sits at table or he who serves. Luke 22:27. Then He discussed the 'lords of the Gentiles', the benefactors – those who trade for profit. So He compared the trading economy with the offering economy of the seed to explain to them how true greatness works.

Now the Scriptures record that Judas was a thief and had been using the funds of the community of disciples for his own ends. Judas had not understood the economy of the seed. He was operating in the trading economy of the world and didn't ever understand that Jesus was the Seed who was to go into the ground and die, and that all multiplicity was to come by this mode. And yet Jesus gave him the money bag!

What kind of a lead is that? He gave charge of the money to the man who least understood His mode! It was Judas who wanted to sell the anointing ointment provided for Jesus' burial so he could top up the community funds.

He did not understand that the money had run out simply because Christ's journey had finished. In the end, he found thirty pieces of silver – and it was the price of his own life! Matt 27:3.

Finding no joy

If the trader is one manifestation of one who seeks control of uncertainty through control of money, the miser is another. The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes have much to say about the miser. Such a one is so locked up in 'getting' that he can't even have a decent meal!

Everything to him is a business deal; there are no 'flowers' for him! He is so consumed with minimising the effects of time and chance by accumulating wealth that he can find no joy in life at all. But, if we go by the way of offering (that's the way of the seed), it is possible to reap a

hundred-fold and there is abundance of life, abundant living. John 10:10.

The way of suffering

But we note also that the way of the seed, the way of offering, is also the way of suffering. The seed must go into the ground and die before multiplication can occur. As for those of us who join the offering of Christ, 'all day long we're chastened'. Psa 73:14.

For the 'wicked', every business deal seems to work out, but for you and me, sometimes nothing seems to go right. If we are not careful, this may cause us to stumble. The safeguard for us is that as we commit to the way of offering, we understand 'their' end and our end.

Remember the words of the apostle Paul, who so clearly demonstrated the way of the seed in his own testimony. 'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' Rom 8:18.

Now this is one of Paul's absolute statements. The sufferings of the present time define the sufferings of Christ; the whole travail and suffering of the whole of creation. He's not saying *some* sufferings. He's saying that *the sufferings* are Christ's. He's establishing that these sufferings are the sum of all suffering; they are the effect of cursing upon everything – not just humanity, but the whole of creation.

He was not adopting a 'half-positive Pentecostal' stance saying, 'That's of the devil and this is of God'. It's *all* included in the curse.

It doesn't matter what kind of suffering you're enduring, it's the effect of the Fall. I don't make a distinction between a headache and somebody swearing at me (and we do receive that type of mocking and abuse). The sufferings of this present time are the sufferings that sum up the word 'sorrow'. It's the sorrow of the curse that was laid on Eve and then on Adam.

But the whole world and all of its suffering is not worthy to even be considered beside the glory that is to be revealed in us. Rom 8:18. We can't even compare the two. 'For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.' Rom 8:19. Our suffering is as one mosquito bite compared with the amazing reward. And not only that, but the whole of creation eagerly waits for our glorification.

The beginning of offering - prayer

So, in the end, we see that Adam and Eve sinned and fell under the curse of corruption and death. The harmony of creation became dislocated because the principle of mortality and death was imposed on the whole of nature. Every mortal creature now travails for survival; there is trouble!

The creation has been subjected to the futility of time and chance by God Himself and the fear and anxiety that result

from that uncertainty cannot be removed by any of the coping mechanisms or strategies that men have developed.

The only way to enter into rest is to hear the gospel and offer ourselves in faith obedience to join the offering of Christ. If you know nothing, make offering, for in offering, understanding comes. 'If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know.' John 7:17. The call is to join offering, to make offering.

We must 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to [us].' Matt 6:33. How do we seek first the kingdom? 'You do not have because you do not ask.' Jas 4:2. The key is to be men and women of prayer. In our experience, we go from the last supper to Gethsemane where we say, 'The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak'. Matt 26:41. We find the will of God by offering when we start praying! The beginning of offering is prayer.

The 'all' that is added to us as we join the way of offering, is the full capacity and naming of our sonship, all the way through to the new heavens and the new earth. As sons of the Father, we take the predestinational view which births faith in us, enabling us to realise our sonship. We are able to hear and receive God's word that brings peace, and silences the voices of anxiety and fear. Everything we will be for the whole of eternity is provided for us through offering. And let us never forget, the offering of Yahweh Himself is our provision.