

GRACE & TRUTH



THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF SALVATION

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:29-30



TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH
N A I R O B I

Editor's Desk

We welcome you to read and profit from 'Grace & Truth', a publication of Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi. We believe there is a very great need for serious Biblical literature to be produced in our country of Kenya. We trust your soul will be fed and that you will be challenged from the Word of God. We welcome feedback from you by letter, phone or email. Please also visit us on the web at: www.trinity.or.ke

Keith Underhill

GRACE & TRUTH

Magazine

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THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF SALVATION

For those whom he foreknew he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he should be like his brethren in glory. And those whom he predestinated he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
Romans 8:29-30

Cover: Salvation belongs to the LORD (**Jonah 2:9**). Salvation that truly saves sinners is anchored in the foreknowledge of God. (**Romans 8:29-30**). This is the guarantee that those whom God foreknew in eternity and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son will enter glory. All those ordained to eternal life will be saved.

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Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

Keith Underhill

The Grace & Truth magazine that is now in your hands is yet another piece of literature. Is it important for you to read? What is the purpose of the magazine? Why is Trinity Baptist Church using time and money to get this to you?

- First of all we want to expose you to a careful study of the word of God, the Bible.
- Second and more specifically, our greatest concern is to expose you to the **salvation** that is taught in the Bible, a genuine salvation that really saves sinners from their sin.

We often hear that Kenya is a ‘Christian country’ with more than three-quarters of the population as Christians. Very many of these go further and profess to be ‘saved’, that Jesus Christ is their personal Saviour. Yet at the same time Kenya remains a country plagued by corruption at all levels of society; immorality is rife as is seen in the HIV infection rates; tribalism and other forms of selfishness are rampant. Alarm bells ought to ring when the Christian church is numerically strong yet it does not have a profound influence on society. We are supposed to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Through the pages of this regular magazine we unequivocally say that the common Gospel preached in Kenya is false, it is not God’s Gospel, but a man-made and man-centred Gospel. Jesus is not so much the Saviour from sin (Matthew 1:21), but the provider of our felt needs, especially ‘health and wealth’. The emphasis is far more on present, earthly blessings than on present and future spiritual blessings (see Ephesians 1:3ff.). Man’s needs have taken centre stage, and the God who is offended by our sins is only there to give us whatever we may ask for. And where sin is mentioned the way of salvation from it is reduced to a simple method – walk to the front of the meeting, repeat the sinners prayer, and the evangelist gives us assurance of salvation that must never be doubted. Despite the Bible clearly teaching that salvation is not by the will of man (John 1:12-13, Romans 9:16) the false Gospel tells man God has done all He can and now it is up to you to choose using your free will. This message puts the key to unlock the door of salvation in the hand of man, not of God.

It is our mission to prayerfully proclaim that “Salvation belongs to the LORD!” (Jonah 2:9). The only solution to being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 1:21) is, “But **God ...**” (v. 4). Read a further contrast in Titus 3:3 & 4ff., “But when the goodness and loving kindness of **God** our Saviour appeared, He saved us ... “. God has an eternal plan of salvation when He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), and then gave us to Christ to die in our place (John 10:11,14). All who are given to Christ will come to Him and be raised up on the last day (John 6:37,39). Foreknowledge – Predestination – Calling – Justification – Glorification are an unbreakable chain from eternity to eternity (Romans 8:29-30). Saving faith is putting our total trust in the God who has accomplished this saving work in Christ. It is so significant that there are 3 pictures of salvation that all clearly imply it is God’s work and His alone without any input from the sinners:

- Birth (John 3:1-8)
- Resurrection (Ephesians 2:5-6)
- Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:10)

May the Lord enable you to embrace the Biblical Gospel that humbles man and gives all the glory to God!!

THE BLESSING OF AN INHERITANCE *Keith Underhill*

EPHESIANS 1:11-12

Why should you be daily blessing God? Ephesians 1:4-10 has been reminding us of four great blessings that we have already received – we were chosen (elected) to be holy, we were predestined for adoption as sons, we were redeemed by Christ's blood, and we have come to know the will of God to unite all things. As Paul describes the fifth and sixth blessings he makes reference first to the Jews ("we" in verses 11-12) and then to the Gentiles ("you" in verse 13), then returning to the Jews ("our/we" in verse 14). Whatever the ethnic background of the Ephesian Christians, if anyone is "in Christ" then these blessings are theirs. Now add a promised inheritance to the reasons why you should be always blessing God!

1. WE HAVE THE BLESSING OF AN INHERITANCE

"in Him we have obtained an inheritance" (v. 11)

Children who have been orphaned, or whose parents are so poor, cannot expect to receive an inheritance. Many children who are now grown up would have nothing in this world unless they received it as an inheritance. Some translations, such as RSV and NIV have "destined/chosen", but we will take "obtained an inheritance" in agreement with the thought of verse 14 and Colossians 1:12. So we not only possess great blessings *now*, but we also have a title to the greatest possible blessings *to come*. Read 1 Peter 1:4 (inheritance), Matthew 19:29 (eternal life), and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (the Kingdom of God). The salvation you have begun to experience is only a foretaste of something far greater to come. This is what distinguishes the Christian from a worldly person who has no hope apart from the present things. So the Christian is content with much or little now as our real joy not dependent on our circumstances in this world, but from having Christ and all the blessings that are in Him. Whatever you have now you will leave behind, and if that is all you have you will have nothing in eternity. The Israelites had Canaan as their inheritance, a land 'flowing with milk and honey'. Our inheritance is the new heaven and the new earth, with Christ our Saviour there, and the greatest problem of sin completely gone.

2. WE OWE THE INHERITANCE TO GOD ALONE

"having been predestined according to the purpose of Him..."

It is not by chance or our own efforts that we have been so highly favoured, but only because of the predestining purpose of God (see verse 5). The only reason why anyone receives the inheritance is because God has determined it (compare Acts 4:28). God had His own "purpose", a purpose that originated with Him, and on this basis He predestined who would receive the inheritance. It is so important to have a living faith that we owe everything to God (Romans 11:36). Today's version of Christianity is too man-centred. According to many God can do nothing without man's consent, man can manipulate God, and the 'man of God' gets so much glory. But the Bible has a totally different picture, one where man is totally dependent upon God, and especially for salvation as God finds us as dead as Lazarus in his burial chamber. You may find this difficult to accept because it is so humbling, as it takes

the key from your hands and puts it into God's hand alone. Listen to Jesus after His ministry in Galilee was generally rejected: "no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son *chooses* to reveal him" (also John 6:44,65). Don't think the will and power to do is in yourself. That is why you must cry out to God for mercy.

3. WE HAVE FULL ASSURANCE OF THIS INHERITANCE

"Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,..."

How can you be sure that this glorious inheritance will really be your portion? Students have a purpose in mind when they take their examinations. However, getting low grades or not having the necessary finances may hinder all that they have planned. In the same way you might imagine that something could come in to prevent God from giving what He has planned to give. So it is written that God not only predestines, He also **works**; He makes the plan and He carries out the plan. This is what the Bible is all about, God working out His wonderful plan of salvation, planned in eternity, from Adam, through Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and David, to Christ. What makes it certain is that this working includes "all things" that take place. Everything happens according to "the counsel of His will" = His will resolved to do it, that is, to give an inheritance, and His counsel devised the best way to fulfil the plan. God did not take counsel with anyone (Isaiah 40:13-14), not even with His foreknowledge, as it was dependent on His will. Everything happens according to the will of God – Psalm 115:3, Daniel 4:35, Matthew 10:29-30, Romans 9:19. You know that so many of the details about Christ's life on earth, and especially His death, were revealed beforehand in the Old Testament. It is with this Biblical view of God that it is possible to have a properly grounded assurance and not just wishful thinking.

4. THOSE WHO HOPE IN CHRIST HAVE THE INHERITANCE

"we who were the first to hope in Christ..." (v. 12)

"We" is a reference to Paul, the apostles and fellow Jews, who were the first to receive the gospel. Those who participate in the blessing of the inheritance are those who "hope" in Christ. This is one way a true Christian can be described, one who has a firm hope in Christ. It is another way of looking at faith (see Romans 8:24-25, Hebrews 11:1). You might ask, 'If it because of God's purpose, then why does it also depend on having hope?' The answer is that God purposes the means as well as the final result. God purposes that it is through hoping in Christ, and that hope is also His gift.

Christ has made promises which have not yet come to pass, but 'hope' means it is sure they will be fulfilled. He promises forgiveness of every sin, that there is no condemnation, and there will be the full inheritance on the last Day. We have no hope in our own efforts, but that Christ will bring it all to pass when He appears. Your one great hope and expectation is to receive from Christ the promised inheritance. Sadly, some cannot see further that exams, job, marriage, retirement; then, What?

5. GOD IS GLORIFIED IN GIVING THE INHERITANCE

“to the praise of his glory.”

For the second time Paul reveals that God’s purpose in giving these blessings is that He might be glorified (see verse 6). There is certainly no place at all for boasting as if I have done something that deserved the blessing. There is absolutely nothing in me that makes me worthy (see 1 Corinthians 1:29,31). This is a further proof that the blessing of the inheritance originates in God and is secured by Him, because **all** the glory is to Him. Whether a doctrine is true or not can be tested by this touchstone – does it bring the glory to God?

How is God glorified? The inheritance is indescribably wonderful, it is given according to His will, and it is not based on anything in us, as we are all completely unworthy. How great God is to do this for one like me! What would you say about a rich man who gave his inheritance to a street boy? We glorify God as we bless Him with voice and heart for such a blessing as the inheritance; as we talk with others about what God has promised to us in Christ. We are very good in complaining, yet we have so much more cause to glorify God for His blessings. Think about it: what you have in Christ, things about which the world knows nothing. The world only has hope for this life, so it struggles only for the things of this life. We Christians have *eternal* hope. Whatever happens in this life can never take away your inheritance (Romans 8:35-39).

GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

Salvation Planned:

From all eternity God has planned to save for Himself out of lost and fallen humanity an innumerable multitude, not because of any foreseen faith or merit on their part, but because of His mercy in Christ, who He appointed as the only Mediator, the prophet, priest and king of those whom the Father had given Him. All whom God has thus determined to save will certainly be called, justified and glorified.

Salvation Accomplished:

According to the plan of God, Christ, the eternal second Person of the Godhead, united to Himself a real human nature through the womb of the Virgin Mary, becoming fully God and fully man in one Person, yet without sin. For the salvation of His people, He perfectly kept God's holy law, voluntarily suffered and died as a full and sufficient substitutionary sacrifice for them and thus making reconciliation to God for them. He was buried, rose bodily on the third day, ascended into heaven with the same body and sat down at the right hand of the Father. In heaven He now reigns over all things for the church and makes continual intercession for His people.

(Continued on Page 9)

The importance of a right understanding of **conversion** according to the Bible cannot be stressed too much. Without a Biblical conversion experience you are not a true Christian and you will not receive any of the blessings reserved for Christians. Especially, the nature of the change that conversion brings to someone's life is very little understood. As a result there are so many who profess Christian conversion yet they show no evidence of the radical change that is demanded.

Paul up to this point of time, when he wrote this letter to the church in Rome, had not been to Rome. He writes this letter to give them a clear presentation of his gospel message, i.e. justification by the grace of God (5:20-21). Like a good pastor he imagines a possible objection, the wicked encouragement to sin so that this grace may abound (6:1). He gives a devastating answer in the rest of the chapter, that it is completely impossible! "By no means!" It is impossible because in your conversion you are united to Christ (6:2-14) and you have changed masters (6:15-23). As you read this teaching examine yourself and submit to the word of God. We shall focus on the testimony Paul gives about the Roman Christians in 6:17-18.

1. TO BE UNCONVERTED IS TO BE A SLAVE OF SIN

"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin" (6:17a)

The first words are to give thanks to God. Conversion is not something the Romans did for themselves, but what God did for them. It is God who delivered them from the awful state of being slaves to sin. This was once true of *all* the Romans who became Christians, and is true of *all* people by nature. It is because of the sin of Adam imputed to us (5:19), and the original sin with which we are born that we inherited from Adam. It is not only that people are sinners, engaging in acts of sin; they are slaves to sin, sin is their master (see also John 8:34, Romans 3:9, Titus 3:3). When it is said that this is true of all people by nature it is surely strong language, and it may be objected to. You grant that some people are obviously in bondage to certain habits and vices (alcohol?), but it is not true of you, for you are respectable, responsible, fully in control of yourself. But living for pleasure, for the material things of this world, and even for religion in self-righteousness, are just as much manifestations of slavery to sin! Think of these questions: Why do you follow what others do? Why do you do some things you know can be harmful? Why are you ashamed to be known as a follower of Christ? Please receive this truth about how **God** sees you:

(1) You are not free to do what you like. You do many things you later regret. Why is it that children, if left without discipline, always tend towards evil? Why is it, after weighty arguments from history, logic and experience have been brought to you, that you still refuse to truly believe in Him?

(2) You can do nothing to free yourself from slavery to sin. In the very depths of your being you need a new heart that only God can give you (Matthew 12:33-34). The only hope is the Lord and what He is able to do (Mark 3:27).

2. CONVERSION COMES THROUGH OBEYING THE TRUTH

“have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed” (6:17b)

Although a mere intellectual presentation of the truth cannot change a person, it is the *truth* that God uses, as with the Romans. Note the following details:

(1) Conversion is through a “standard of teaching” – The teaching is of course the message of the gospel as outlined in Romans. It is called a “standard” because it is like a mould that it imparts its shape to whatever is put into it, for example, a cake tin. So there is a recognizable teaching that marks out what is true, having a definite ‘shape’. Do not think of this teaching as just a simple message like, ‘Come to Jesus’. Rather, it begins as Romans begins, with a message about the wrath of God towards people in sin (1:18), the inability of anyone to deal with sin (3:9), and then what God has done to bring salvation from sin (3:21ff.). Evangelism is not telling stories, playing on emotions, or even giving testimonies.

(2) Conversion is being “committed” to this standard of teaching – This is **God’s** work. You did not ‘commit’ yourself; you “were committed” to it by God. It is through the means of the truth that God takes you, puts you into the mould of the truth, so that you take on the very shape of that truth. He is the Baker, and you are the dough being shaped! Another way of putting it is that God gives you a new heart that loves God’s word (Ezekiel 36:27). So this is why Paul began by thanking God, and it is on the basis that it is God’s work that we can have assurance. Too often people talk only about having ‘committed’ themselves to God. God’s work in us through the truth is far more wonderful than this!

(3) Conversion is by being “obedient from the heart” to this standard of teaching – The “heart” is the totality of your inner being, including your mind, emotions and will. You understand the teaching, you love the teaching, and you obey the teaching. It is first evidenced when you start to submit to what it says about you as being a slave of sin, lost and hopeless outside of Christ, then to what it reveals about Christ as the only way of salvation, and finally to the command to believe in Christ and repent towards God. In short, God has made you a new person.

3. TO BE CONVERTED IS TO BE SET FREE FROM SIN TO BECOME A SLAVE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (6:18)

Once you have understood what true conversion is this third point should be obvious. You have been moulded according to a standard of teaching that paints sin as a master totally opposed to God and that aims finally to bring you into destruction (6:23). You are no longer a willing slave of sin, doing its bidding (6:16); you are now a willing slave of righteousness. Christians are under a new slave owner, the power of righteousness.

There is no place here for a ‘Carnal Christian’. You cannot have Christ as your Saviour from sin unless you have also become a slave of righteousness. There is no possibility for a person to have Christ in the life but not on the throne of the heart. Conversion naturally leads into the Christian life, justification into sanctification. Paul delighted in being a slave (1:1), because he served a Master who loved enough to

die for him, who withholds no good thing, and who never treats us cruelly but always in love.

Do you understand your privileged position as a 'slave of righteousness'? It implies ownership, God owns you. It implies your total dependence upon and submission to God (6:22). Do you gladly confess this? If so, do you willingly and joyfully obey *all* that God commands you (Matthew 7:21-23)? The real test of obedience is not in those areas that are common to society, such as church attendance, outward respectability, caring for your family. Rather, think of those things that are not common to society, and even against it, such as refusal to give or receive bribes (Proverbs 17:23), using the tongue truthfully and not in bearing false witness (Ephesians 4:25), using Sunday as a day holy to the Lord (Exodus 20:8-11), making fellowship with Christians your priority (Hebrews 10:25), using your time and money for the glory of God. What about baptism as a believer and becoming a church member? Are they not commanded? Should you not obey unquestioningly as a slave of righteousness? Is it not your delight to serve such a Master? Do not hold anything back from Him?

If you are not converted then you remain a slave of sin. Why do you refuse to avail yourself of Christ's sacrifice and His life-giving Spirit? He is speaking to you through this word. Plead with Him to break the chains of your sin.

Salvation Applied: : *(continued from page 6)*

The exalted Christ sends forth the Holy Spirit to apply the fruits of His accomplished redemption to all His people, which application is essential unto salvation. The new birth, the giving of a new heart, by which the sinner is enabled to repent and believe, is not an act of man's free will and power, but the result of the effectual and gracious working of the Holy Spirit, who works when, where, and how and in whom He pleases. By this work, often referred to as regeneration, the Spirit enlightens their minds and renews their wills and affections, as God effectually calls them into fellowship with His Son through His Word. The immediate fruits of regeneration are:

Repentance - Repentance is a gift of God, whereby the Holy Spirit convinces a person of the wickedness of his sinfulness and his acts of rebellion against God, so that he turns to God in sorrow in order to walk in obedience before Him and to please Him. No one is saved without genuine repentance and unreserved submission to Christ as Lord.

Faith - Faith is a gift of God by which a person receives and rests on Jesus Christ alone for salvation, as He is freely offered to sinners in the Gospel. Although a person is saved through faith alone, this faith never stands alone but is accompanied by all the other fruit of the Holy Spirit.

(Continued on Page 16)

In the Grace and Truth Magazine No. 118, I pointed out that the church exists for the purpose of worshipping God and witnessing. In witnessing the church seeks to draw and gather more people to worship the Triune God. Worship is the primary reason for the existence of the church. If the church misses this, then it will lose the direction and purpose for her existence. In fact the redeemed will spend all eternity in worship – and it begins now and here! This is the most important thing for us to consider – for we must worship God and get it right! Yes God is the object of Christian worship.

But the tragedy of the church of our day is that many imagine and so have invented all sorts of ways of worshipping God, without any regard or with little consideration on whether such worship is acceptable and pleasing to God. There is no question that God demands and commands His people to worship – in fact the Father is seeking such people who will worship Him. But the question is how? Christ provides a very definite answer to this:

“You worship what you do not know, we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father, in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:22-24)

Will you continue what you do not know or you will worship the thrice-holy God? As Christians *we worship what we know* – God who has saved us and made us His covenant people. Yes salvation came from the Jews for to them belonged the special revelation - the law, the patriarchs, the promises, the prophets and even the Messiah. But now God has made us who were far off, as Gentiles, to belong to the commonwealth of Israel so that He has made us both one. For by His atoning sacrifice He *has broken the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of two, so making peace* (Ephesians 2:14,15).

The result is that the partial hardening of the physical Israel has brought blessing upon the Gentiles. The remnant of Israel and the fullness of the Gentiles makes the full Israel (Romans 11:25,26) which is the church. *“For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”* (Philippians 3:3)

The hour has come for true worshippers to worship the Father in Spirit and truth. What does this mean? It means that Christians worship God guided by His Spirit so that it is spiritual worship and worship Him as He has revealed Himself in His Word (*in truth*). For why did He reveal Himself to us?

The Bible is the story of God’s redemptive history as we witness the most gracious covenants that God gave. But it is also a manual of how God should be worshipped. The summary of the Bible is the Ten Commandments. And the summary of the commandments is the two great commandments on love for God and for man. You must note that God is not just looking for any worshipper but for **true** worshippers. To worship Him as He demands and commands. In this case there is no place for

sensual worship. Let us consider these two aspects as to how we may worship God:

A. TRUTHFUL WORSHIP – Notice the First Four Commandments:

1. The Object of Worship – The Lord our God

The first commandment requires us to **know** and **acknowledge God** to be **the only true God and our God** (1 Chronicles 28:9; Deuteronomy 26:17), and to **worship and glorify him accordingly** (Matthew 4:10; Psalm 29:2). This command forbids *the denying* (Psalm 14: 1), or *not worshipping* and *glorifying the true God* (Romans 1:21), as God and our God (Psalm 81:10, 11), and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due to God alone (Romans 1:25). In this commandment we are taught that God, who sees all things, takes notice of and is much displeased with the sin of having any other god (Exodus 8:5ff).

2. The Manner of Worshipping The True God – As prescribed by God

The second commandment requires the **receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances, as God has appointed in his word** – the Bible (Deuteronomy 32:46,47; Matthew 23:20; Acts 2:42). This commandment forbids the worshipping of God by **images** (Deuteronomy 4:15-19; Exodus 32:5, 8), or any **other way not appointed in His word**. Why must we worship God **ONLY in the manner He has revealed to be worshiped in His Word?** The reasons annexed to this command are God's sovereignty over us (Psalm 45:6) his propriety in us, and the zeal he has to his own worship (Exodus 34:13, 14).

3. The Subject of Worship – The Name of the Lord

The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names (Matthew 6:9), titles (Psalm 68:4), attributes (Revelation 15:3, 4), ordinances, (Malachi 1:11,14), word and works (Job 36:24). This commandment forbids all profaning and abusing of anything whereby God makes himself known (Malachi 1:6,7,12; 2:2; 3:14). **You notice that** the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not let them to escape his righteous judgment (1 Samuel 2:12, 17, 22, 29; 3:13; Deuteronomy 28:58, 59).

4. The Specific Time for (Public) Worship – One Day in Seven

God has appointed a day to be the weekly Sabbath: Before the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-14); and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath (Psalm 118:24; Matthew 28:1; Mark 2:27, 28; Revelation 1:10; Luke. 24:1, 30-36; John 20:1; Acts 1:3; 2:1, 2; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day (Exodus 20:8, 10), even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days (Exodus 16:25-28; Nehemiah 13:15-22); and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship (Luke. 4:16; Acts 20:7; Psalm 92; Isaiah 58: 13-14; 66:23), except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy (Matthew 12:1-13). The fourth commandment forbids the omission or careless performance of the duties required (Ezekiel 22:26; Amos 8:5; Malachi 1:13), and profaning the day by idleness (Acts 20:7, 9), or doing what is in itself sinful (Ezekiel 23:38), or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about

worldly employments or recreations (Jeremiah 17:24-27; Isaiah 58:13).

The reasons given for observing the fourth commandment, are God's allowing us six days of the week for our own lawful employments and labour (Exodus 20:9), his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the Sabbath (Exodus 20:11). By implication, unfaithfulness having a special time for public worship of God will mean unfaithfulness in labour for the rest of the week!

B. SPIRITUAL WORSHIP: Let the Lord Define Our Worship

In considering what spiritual worship, we could fast track the heavenly worship – which must be most truthful and most spiritual. God's own definition of worship is set out in a remarkable detail in Revelation 4 and 5 (please read them) and this provides key insights into the arrangement, tone and matter of worship.

Notice the following in the heavenly worship:

- 1) The **object of worship is God** – He sits on the throne and is at the centre of those who worship Him – God is surrounded by worshippers – whether angelic or human. Everyone is facing the throne.
- 2) The worship described is the **most glorious** and awful as such appearances as jasper and carnelian, rainbow with an appearance of emerald surrounds the throne of God, Elders (not children, or youth, but mature men!), flashes of lightening, sea of glass like crystal.
- 3) The worship is very **orderly and meticulous**. There is a great sense of reverence and holy fear before God. The arrangement is amazing. **The objective praise comes first** from the four living creatures round the throne, *“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is, and is to come!”* God is named and described by several of the divine attributes – His holiness, sovereignty, power and eternity. Subjective thanksgiving comes afterwards. The second worship described is that of the 24 Elders, representing the church of all ages (Old and New Testaments), **who fall down** in humility and adoration and cast down their crowns before the throne of God, acknowledging God to be their sovereign ruler (see. 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). Then they all join in worship as described in 5:9-10. The third contribution is made by the vast angelic voices (5:12). The final worship is **subjective worship** about us and what God has done for us in Christ. There is no place for confusion and disorder in the worship of a God of such meticulous order.
- 4) Human worship is described before the angelic worship!
- 5) Both human and angelic worship is composed of excellent **words**. They said or spoke or sang such words that honour and exalt and glorify the Lord God and each case the Name of God takes a very central place in the songs or words spoken to Him. Public worship is primarily done in words.
- 6) The human worship is also accompanied with prostrating before God (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). Worship literally means bowing before God.
- 7) The heavenly worship does not concern itself with the accomplished work of Christ on the cross, of His reign and His glory.

THEREFORE THE HEAVENLY WORSHIP IS:

- 1) **TRUTHFUL** – Biblical truths are at the centre of heavenly worship
- 2) **SPIRITUAL** – The Holy Spirit is the instructor and director of worship. There are no externals in heaven except the prostration because it is in the spirit.
- 3) **IT IS SIMPLE AND UNADORNED** – there is no human inventions.
- 4) **IT IS ORDERLY AND DECENT** – **NO CONFUSION:** our worship must be **predictable** so that everyone composes Himself for the next item (1Corinthians 14:33,40)
- 5) **THOUGHTFUL AND SERIOUS** – no place for inordinate jesting.

Conclusions:

- 1) Nothing should be done to attract men or make the worshipper feel better – worship is directed at God not men. We must always go home asking ourselves if our worship was acceptable and pleasing to the Lord.
- 2) We must make sure that the songs we use are very Scriptural
- 3) They must be Trinitarian and Christocentric (not man-centric)
- 4) We should be thoughtful and fully involved at heart in the worship
- 5) We should employ reverence and holy joy in our worship (Hebrews 12:28)
- 6) If body movements like raising of hands (1Tim. 2:8), kneeling or prostration (no dancing, as this will take away thoughtfulness and reverence), then such must not be to excite human emotion but to show the awfulness and reverence to God.
- 7) If instruments at all, then they should be used to aid singing and must not overwhelm it.

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COMMON QUESTION NO. 1

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY IN PUBLIC? *Keith Underhill*

Many Churches today have a lengthy time of 'praise and worship' which is made up of singing followed by a time of prayer in which everyone prays their own prayer aloud, usually making much noise. This is a new practice which was not there 50 years ago. Is it to be encouraged? Is this the right way to praise and worship our God? What does the Bible teach? We shall deal with the question by giving a series of propositions.

The real question is not 'How would I like to worship God?'
The real question is: 'How does God want me to worship Him?'

1. **God must be praised and worshipped only as He has commanded!**

Throughout the Bible praise and worship are offered to God alone. The Psalms have many exhortations for us to worship the Lord with our whole soul (Psalm 103). The real question is not 'How would I like to worship God?' but 'How does **God** want me to worship Him?' We dare not come before Him in any other way than He instructs us in the Bible, His word. There is abundant instruction throughout the Bible (read John 4:24, Hebrews 10:19-22, 12:28-29), and so many examples of such worship as in the Psalms. Remember what happened to Nadab and Abihu as they offered "unauthorized fire" (Leviticus 10:1-3); and to Uzzah when the ark was carried on a cart instead of on the shoulders of the Levites (1 Chronicles 15:12-15). King Uzziah became a leper because he attempted to burn incense in the temple of the Lord (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). Remember what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4); and to Christians who ate the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:29-32).

2. **There are no examples in the Bible of such 'praise and worship'** where everyone prays out loud their own individual prayer. In Acts 4:24-30 it says "they lifted their voices together" but because only one prayer is recorded it must have been one person praying and all joining with their 'Amen' at the end (as 1 Corinthians 14:15). In fact Paul imagines everyone speaking in tongues at the same time, and an unbeliever entering and pronouncing the assembly mad (v. 23).

3. **In all our Christian assemblies we are to strive to edify one another.**

1 Corinthians 14 is a great chapter about worship and the one principle that should guide everything done is *edification* (see especially vv.12,26). This is why a tongues' speaker had to be interpreted or keep silent (vv. 27-28). We do not assemble as God's people to do our own thing, but to use our gifts to benefit our brethren. There are those who are more gifted to pray publicly and they should lead and be heard by everyone. The congregation then responds with 'Amen' which means 'I agree with this prayer, may the Lord answer.' "All things should be done decently and in order" (v. 40). Why are the clear instructions of this chapter of the word of God so consistently ignored?

*We do not assemble as God's people to do our own thing,
but to use our gifts to benefit our brethren.*

4. Our Lord instructs us how we should pray in the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord's Prayer is given to us as a pattern prayer, not just to be repeated but as an outline of what we ought to be praying for (Matthew 6:9-13). This is the way to overcome that temptation to pray for the same thing over and over and get louder and louder as we do so (v. 7). We must remember that we are coming to God who is our Father in heaven. Would you keep on repeating yourself with increasing volume to your earthly father? It would be taken as great disrespect.

5. Our Lord clearly tells us the kind of worshippers His Father is seeking, those who worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). The Samaritan woman wanted a debate about the proper place at which to worship. But with His coming what matters is "spirit" = the proper attitude of the heart in dependence upon the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18), and "truth" = worship that follows all the teaching of the Bible, and so is in conformity with who God is in His holiness, and with who man is as a creature in his sinfulness. Any worship that suggests God is like one of us, or that tries to manipulate God by noise or repetition or by a group agreeing on something, is false. Any worship that seeks to use another mediator than Christ (1 Timothy 2:5), such as Mary, is an abomination. What is most important in worship is the truth, not 'having an experience'. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13). How do you know that your emotional experience is of God if it is not on the basis of the Scripture? You may have participated in 'praise and worship' and feel good, but that is no evidence that God is pleased. Did you approach God with reverence, were you depending only on Christ's sacrifice to bring you into His presence, and were you praying for requests that the Bible tells us we may pray for?

*What is most important in worship is the truth,
not 'having an experience'.*

6. 'Praise and worship' is more like the prophets of Baal than Elijah. This is shocking but look at 1 Kings 18 and you will see the truth in it. It is the prophets of Baal who prayed for hours repeating the words, "O Baal, answer us!" "They limped around the altar that they had made." After Elijah mocked them, "They cried aloud and cut themselves" and then "raved on..." Elijah in contrast simply told the people to come near him and he spoke a few words of prayer. God does not need to be shouted at as if He is deaf; there is no need of endless repetition as if He has to be persuaded against His will; we do not need to throw our bodies around to add weight to what we are praying. We come as a servant to his Master whom he loves and respects; and as a son to his father.

7. **We have forgotten who God is.** Even the pure angels who dwell in God's presence cover their faces and feet in deep respect before God who is thrice holy (Isaiah 6:1-3). Yes, God is to be worshipped with great joy, with all the heart, but a joy which is characterized by reverence (Psalm 96:1-6). Both joyless and irreverent worship are alike unacceptable to our God. Let us never forget that we come as creatures before the Almighty Creator (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2); and we come as unworthy sinners before an infinitely holy God, and only through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. In the presence of God the godly prophet Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, ..." (Isaiah 6:5); Peter exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). Even Jesus addressed His Father as "Holy Father" (John 17:11).

8. **Let us not confuse boldness with brazenness.** We would accuse a student of disrespect who addressed his teacher like one of his fellow students without customary forms of politeness such as "Teacher" or "Sir". But a student who humbly comes to the head teacher with all due respect with a request we would say is bold. And this is how we are to come to God, recognizing His incomparable greatness, never forgetting that it is only through our Lord's sacrifice on the cross that we can come into God's presence. The same letter to the Hebrews that encourages "confidence" (4:16, 10:19) also warns us "to offer acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire" (10:28-29). May the Lord give us grace to worship Him in a way that is acceptable to Him, so for His glory.

Salvation Applied: *(continued from page 9)*

Justification and Adoption - Justification is an act of God's free grace by which He pardons all the sins of His people, past, present and future, and reckons them as righteous in His sight on account of the righteousness of Christ imputed to them and not because of anything done in them or by them. Faith in Christ is the only instrument of justification. All those who are justified in Christ receive the promised Holy Spirit of adoption, so that they are truly sons of God.

Sanctification and Perseverance:

Sanctification is two-fold -

Definitive: at conversion believers are united to Christ in His death to sin and resurrection to new life. As a result the rule of sin in their lives is broken and they willingly seek to be ruled by the Word of God.

Progressive: sanctification, which is the process of being entirely conformed to the image of Christ, will be perfectly completed only on the last day. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us through our mortifying sin and obeying the commands of God. Because of indwelling sin, all believers experience a constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. However, the indwelling of the Spirit is the seal and guarantee that every true believer will persevere in the faith until the end.

From the Trinity Baptist Church Constitution. (4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7).

Children are not free from the inheritance of sin from our father Adam. In Scripture we do not have a contrast between innocent children on the one hand and sinful adults on the other. Rather, the contrast is between immature sin in the child and mature sin in the adult.

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.” – Proverbs 22:15

A child never needed instruction on how to sin; it comes naturally. How many parents have had to teach their children to lie? Or how many fathers have had to teach their sons to lust?

The effects of the fall are clearly visible in young children and every parent must take this into account. A neglect of this reality will result in a multitude of difficulties.

Children, like the rest of us, are by nature objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). Parents need to understand this fact and appreciate that how a child is brought up has eternal consequences. *“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.”* (Proverbs 23:13-14). In addition, a child’s upbringing also has temporal consequences (Ephesians 6: 1 – 4). That is, how a child is brought up affects his life here on earth. The parents are to require a child’s obedience and this is in turn blessed by God.

Cuteness is Not Goodness

The first appearance of sin in children will often come as a shock to Christian parents. The first time the eldest child tells a lie, the parent will be devastated. Despite a Biblical understanding of man’s sinful nature, we still tend to believe that sin is merely a learned behaviour. We think that Bobby is a sinner because he has sinned while the reality is that he sinned because he is a sinner.

When Bobby comes up with a foul word at home, two things initially come to the parent’s mind. First, that he does not know what the word means and would never have uttered it if he did. And secondly, he must have picked it up from Brian the neighbour’s child, at school or from the nanny. He must have picked it somewhere else, anywhere else. It never occurs to most of us that Brian’s parents may also be complaining about our cute Bobby. Bad companions indeed will reinforce the sin in the heart BUT they are not the cause of it. It comes from Adam.

It is easy to understand this initial reaction of parents towards their children when they sin because a parent has affection for her child and in addition, the baby is cute.

A one year old still looks adorable when he is frowning, yelling and kicking. But we must remember that every moral monster our race has ever produced was once a cute baby. Iddi Amin probably ran around the homestead delighting grown-ups with his antics. The same is a strong possibility with sweet baby Hitler. It is hopefully clear that the natural affection towards our children must be tempered with a sober Biblical understanding of the evil that they, just like any one of us, are capable of.

This tension between the sweetness of little children and their sinfulness must constantly be held in view as we raise them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. For example, children are generally curious and this is of great advantage to them when it comes to learning. On the other hand, because of the fall, children have an aversion to work which cannot be overcome by their sweet natural curiosity. This tendency towards laziness must be remembered and checked at home, at church and even at school if we are serious about godly parenting.

The Socratic Solution

Many years ago, Socrates addressed the problem of the nature and origin of human evil. He believed that man is basically good and pointed his finger at ignorance as the cause of evil in human beings. The salvation of man, according to this view, lies in education.

Many, including Christian parents, have unfortunately embraced this Socratic prescription for the salvation of their children. After a child does something 'horrifying' many parents will make a call for...what? Repentance? No, many will call for more education. Take the child to boarding school. Enrol the boy into a different school. This is, more often than not is the Socratic solution.

And just because the person who will teach the child is a Christian does not solve the challenge of their sinfulness. Education, whether Christian or not, cannot root corruption out of a child's heart. The real solution to a child's problem of sin is the grace of God. Godly parenting prepares the heart for the grace of God, and it follows up the grace of God. It does not replace it. And this is true whether the child-raising effort is being employed by the parent at home, the Sunday school teacher on Sunday or the Christian teacher in the classroom.

Why then should we bother with godly parenting if it cannot save? What is its advantage? Are we not employing born-again brick layers to build the Tower of Babel? Well, we have already stated that Christian parenting is not a substitute for grace. It can never do the work of regeneration. Nevertheless it has an important role. Properly understood, godly parenting – whether at home or by the Sunday school teacher – is a preparation for those children who have not received the grace of God, and it is instruction for those who have.

Effective godly parenting is one that strives to help the child to clearly see God's requirements (the Law), the child's consistent failure at reaching the set standards (Romans 3:23) and the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way to attain forgiveness of sins and the righteous requirements of God.

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.
Hebrews 12:14

HOW TO LIVE A TRULY PEACEFUL LIFE *Sakwa Buliba*

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18).

Millions of dollars are spent around the world in peace building processes. Thousands of students and scholars are spending hours and hours in books researching and theorizing about peace and peace making strategies. Universities are dishing out scholarships, setting up courses and churning out graduates in Conflict Transformation. Governments are establishing peace institutes with huge budgetary allocations and sending out peace ambassadors to bring peace in the world. The UN itself exists for a single purpose of maintaining peace. Article 1 of the UN Charter is replete with phrases like, ‘international peace...friendly relations...international cooperation...harmonizing the actions of nations...’

Looking around the world, it appears like the whole world is set out on a mission impossible. Squabbles in families, fights between religions, ethnic conflicts, civil wars and incessant bloody confrontations all around us tell us that our well-staffed, heavily-funded and well-equipped institutions of peace are just a total failure. While the world is advancing on all fronts, peace has largely become elusive. Looking at South Sudan, Syria, Egypt, and the future is not promising. Taking a glance at Iraq, Libya, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia makes the promises of peace a mirage. It is all gunshots, bullet wounds, grenade attacks, bomb explosions, mass rape, senseless killings and plunder of human life and property.

Watch the Seven O’clock news. It is either an enraged husband strangling the wife to death in Canada, or a wayward student mercilessly shooting fellow students and teachers in a US academy. The newspapers are awash with horrible tales of massive suicide incidents in Japan or homicide cases in Germany. Can this world ever experience peace, real peace, tranquillity and harmonious existence between men, communities and nations? How can this be?

In Romans 12:18, Paul continues the theme that he began in the previous verse concerning living at peace in the midst of a crooked and fallen generation. In the previous verse (17), he warned: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody." Paul sums this thought here, when he exhorts that: "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all.*" Paul recognizes that it is not easy to be at peace with one another, nor is it always possible. But each one is to strive to live at peace with everyone. We each must make the effort towards this end.

To be at peace with one another may imply not having something against another person. It means that you do not hold a grudge, that you do not resent a person, that there is no spite or hatred in your heart towards others. It means that there is no lingering bitterness that remains unsettled between you and another person. To be at peace with one another means to accept one another as we are. This is easy to do when we recognize that we are all sinners saved by grace.

1. First, Pursue Peace with God

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1).

The Scriptures abundantly speak about reconciliation between God and man. It is important to note that the Scriptures are not concerned first of all with relationships among men. But they are at the foremost concerned with the relationship between men and their Creator, God. It is clearly underscored that it is only when things are made right between God and man that life among men can be right. Being at peace with one another is only important because it tangibly demonstrates that we have experienced peace with God.

In this verse, peace describes our legal and forensic standing before God. It is similar to the signing of a peace treaty between two warring groups. Peace is officially declared and two antagonists are no longer at war. Hostility is removed and weaved into reconciliation. When we receive Jesus Christ as the Saviour, we make peace with God. This means that, we are no longer the objects of God's wrath. Before we received Christ's forgiveness, we were sinful. Because God is holy, and therefore hates sin, every sinner is an object of His righteous anger and stands condemned under His wrath. With Christ's forgiveness, we are now holy in God's sight and no longer under His wrath. Believers have their sins forgiven, a necessary step in reconciliation with God. Colossians 1:21-22 says, "*You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.*" We are no longer "alienated"; we are now forgiven, transformed, and reconciled. Because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, we can have fellowship with God.

Peace with God also means that we are now the objects of God's love. He has made us His children and members of His family. He wants to give us every good gift. Every single person that ever lived on this earth is under God's condemnation. "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness*" (Isaiah 59:2-3). Whereupon he receives Christ as Lord and Saviour, he is immediately reconciled to God; his vile sins are forgiven, thereby becoming His beloved child and a member of His family.

Our real problem of brawls, wrangles, scuffles, wars and disputations lies in the fact that we are sinners before a holy God. Forsake your sin, cease your hostility against God, and throw down your weapons of rebellion. Be reconciled with God. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was given, not to make your life manageable, nor to give you positive vibes, nor excite you up in worship. But it was given to declare the only way of reconciliation with God. For if you are not truly, really, personally reconciled to God, all of your life is full of worthless quarrels and empty disputes. It is a life camouflaged in sentimental peace but innately ravaged by incessant hostilities. It is simply a life at enmity with God! Friends, be ye reconciled to God! Reconciliation is only possible through the way of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Next, Pursue Peace with Yourself

At some point in our lives, we come to realize how inadequate we are to deal with all that life throws our way. At some point we realize the things we scrambled so hard to attain simply did not satisfy the cravings and expectations of our hearts. At certain points, we realize we cannot fill the lingering void in our heart on our own. While the pursuits of pleasure, relationships, money, power, and other things may satisfy us for a while, we ultimately find that the emptiness of life is right inside us. God created us to have a relationship with Him and to experience true, lasting peace and fulfillment in this life; we must find peace with Him first. That “missing peace” inside every man was caused by our separation from God as a direct consequence of sin. In Isaiah 59:2, the Bible says, “*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*”

Once this barrier erected by sin is broken through a simple and genuine faith in the Lord Jesus, we are now at peace with God and this realization floods our souls with tranquillity and serenity, never experienced before. As we enjoy the freedom we have with God, through Christ, we feel set free from our sins and their power. We now can do what we know is right. The burden of guilt has been removed. The heavy load of transgressing has been lifted. The chains of slavery to sin have fallen off. We don't have to succumb to the powerful impulses of sin anymore. We are finally at peace with ourselves.

This type of peace speaks of our inner feelings when we know that God accepts us as His dear children. We experience this peace through our conscience which no longer condemns us. Since our sins are forgiven, we are not guilty of any sin before God. We for once realize that we can come to God forgiven, clean and pure in His sight. We do not stand guilty as sinners before Him, but stand completely cleansed, washed and accepted. The removal of enmity, the covering of the breach between us and the living God through His Son Jesus Christ becomes the enduring joy of our hearts. We marvel at the enormity of our offense removed, the multitude of sins cancelled, the greatness of our vileness shattered; all by the grace of a loving Father!

3. Then, Pursue Peace with Everyone

It is the inner peace that was derived from the Cross that propels us, to seek peace with everyone. We who had offended the holy God, cast off allegiance, profaned His name, despised His authority, trampled upon His commandments, yet now at peace with Him and with ourselves! Not only do we enjoy peace with God as a result of Christ's sacrifice, we also have peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Varied backgrounds, natural antagonisms, old grudges; none of these matters to those who have been born again. “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28).

In Romans 12:18, Paul does acknowledge that pursuit of peace with everyone cannot always be done in this fallen world. He says: “If it is possible...” Paul is conceding that a failure at peace is not necessarily the fault of the Christian. There are times when it is not possible to keep peace because to do so would be inconsistent with following God's commands. For instance, if keeping peace requires that we explicitly approve of someone else's sin, we should choose holiness rather than peace. We should keep the peace as long as it is consistent with God's higher laws, without compromising holiness and truth.

There are times when peace is not kept because the other party is just not willing to live at peace. Sometimes, our service for God, in itself, can inadvertently cause dispute and unrest. Witnessing for Christ can ruffle feathers. Living for Christ can cause resentment. Love for God can bring strife. At such times, peace may fail. When it does, though, let the failure be on the part of those, who for some reason, are offended by Christ.

In general, however, you and peace should be constant companions, as Paul says, "as far as it depends on you." You are to "seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11). This means going out of your way to keep the peace. It means swallowing your pride and letting someone else have the final say. It means conceding your rights, at times, as Abraham did in avoiding conflict with Lot (Genesis 13:8-9). It means controlling your temper, putting off arguments, waiting until you cool off before dealing with controversy, and not dwelling upon wrongs committed against you.

Unfortunately, many present day Christians are argumentative, disputing everything on sight. Some Christians, find cause to heatedly bicker over every aspect of Christian doctrine. It seems that they would rather win arguments about theological proofs than to edify each other and bring each other into a deeper knowledge of God. Christians, as well, are notorious these days for arguing politics, forcefully declaring how they feel the nation should be run. Why should citizens of heaven be getting overly heated up about the affairs of this world (Philippians 3:20)? So far as "we" are concerned, we are to seek peace.

But then it does not always depend on us. Others may oppose and persecute us; they will hate the faith, they may slander, revile, and injure our reputations. For "their" assaults we are not answerable; but we are answerable for our conduct toward them; and on no occasion are we to commence warfare with them. It may not be "possible" to prevent their injuring and opposing us; However, it is possible for us not to begin a contention with them; and "when they" have commenced a strife, to seek peace, and to manifest a Christian spirit of forbearance. This command doubtless extends to everything connected with strife; and means that we are not to "provoke" them to controversy, or to prolong it when it is commenced (Psalm 34:14; Matthew 5:9, Matthew 5:39-41; Hebrews 12:14). If all Christians would follow this command, if they would never "provoke" to controversy, if they would injure no man by slander or by unfair dealing, if they would offend no one through dishonesty, if they would do nothing to irritate, or to prolong a controversy when it is commenced, it would put an end to a large chunk of the violence that exists in the world today!

All those who profess the true religion, who share a spiritual relation, as members of Christ's body should be at peace among themselves, (1 Thessalonians 5:13). Peace should rule in their hearts, (Colossians 3:15), and they should study to keep "the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace", (Ephesians 4:3). Christians should live peaceably in the neighbourhood, towns, cities, and countries, where they dwell, and show themselves to be quiet in the land; praying for the peace of the place where they are and doing all that lie in their power to promote peace. They should live themselves peaceably and quietly, in all godliness and honesty; yea, they should live peaceably with their very enemies, "if it be possible". Nothing should be lacking on our part; every step should be taken to cultivate and maintain peace; the blame should lie wholly on the other side; it behoves the saints to live peaceably themselves, even if others will not live in peace with them.

WHY IS THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT THRIVING IN AFRICA?

Conrad Mbewe

Many explanations have been given for the explosion of the Charismatic movement in Africa. Many have seen this as a powerful visitation of the Holy Spirit. Whereas there is probably more than one reason, I want to add my own observation to this for what it is worth. In this (article), I do not refer to the old conservative form of Pentecostalism once represented by the Assemblies of God churches. I have in mind the current extreme form that is mushrooming literally under every shrub and tree in Africa.

How can one explain this phenomenon? I think that one reason why the Charismatic movement in Africa has been like a wild bushfire is because it has not challenged the African religious worldview but has instead adopted it. It has simply baptised it with Bible verses and Christian words that previously meant something totally different.

The African Spiritual Worldview

Let me explain what I mean. The African spiritual worldview consists of four tiers.

1. God
2. Angels and demons
3. Ancestral spirits
4. Human beings

It is because of this reality that Africans do not question the existence of God, as is the case with many people in the Western world. To an African, God is there. He is the Creator and ultimate Governor and Benefactor of the whole universe. Rather, in our spiritual worldview, although God is there he is very far away. Between him and us as human beings lie two layers in the spirit world. One is that of angels and demons (i.e. bad angels) and the other—which is even closer to us—is that of the spirits of the departed.

So, although God is a benevolent, loving, and caring Being, unless the beings that dwell in these two layers that lie between him and us are appeased, his blessings cannot reach us. It is, therefore, important to appease the ancestral spirits and defeat the demons. Only after that will God's blessings come upon us. This is where in African traditional religions witchdoctors come in. They are the people with the mysterious power to break through these two layers. They tell us what we must do in order to appease the spirits of our forefathers. They also engage the demons for us through their midnight trances, dances, and incense.

So, a person who is beset with perennial illnesses, failing to get a job, failing to find a spouse or to have children, whose business is failing to thrive, etc., simply goes to the witchdoctor who alone has the key to look into the spirit world. He is told that it is either a deceased person or an evil spirit who is frustrating him.

Sometimes the enemy is a person who is alive. However, the reason why this living individual seems to have a mysterious hold over your life is because he has plugged into those two layers (of either dead ancestors or evil spirits) and you have not. With the help of a powerful witchdoctor you can outsmart him in those two layers, and the

blessings of God can once again begin to flow into your life. Whichever way, the power of the witchdoctor is not in explaining truth but in mindless frenzy. His grip upon the popular mind is his eerie mysteriousness and his capacity to knock you out of your senses and then pronounce you delivered. Of course, this is never done by benevolence. You pay for his services.

The Charismatic Movement's Rendition

I do not mean to be unkind, but what the modern Charismatic movement in Africa has done is to simply take this entire erroneous superstructure of African religious worldview and baptise it with wrongly applied Bible verses and Christian language. The only difference is that the layer of dead ancestors and evil spirits is now one hotchpotch of confusion. This is why the nonsense of demons becoming spirit husbands and wives, and wrecking havoc in marriages, is taken for granted! This is also why the heresy of generation curses has become so popular. In our minds, bad luck can be passed on from that layer of dead ancestors.

In the African Charismatic circles, the "man of God" has replaced the witchdoctor. He is the one who oozes with mysterious power that enables him to break through those two impregnable layers, which us lesser mortals cannot penetrate. So, when blessings are not flowing our way despite our prayers, we make a beeline to his quarters or his church for help. This explains the throngs in these circles. The crowds are not looking for someone to explain to them the way to find pardon with God. No! They want the "man of God" to pray for them. This also explains the stranglehold that "men of God" have on the minds of their devotees in these circles. In the Evangelicalism of a former generation "men of God" were primarily preachers of the word of God, but in the new setup they are primarily priests who enter the inner sanctuaries to bring down blessings to us.

This also explains why the answer to almost any problem that you take to these "men of God" is "deliverance" and "breakthrough". God wants to bless you, but you need to break through these impregnable layers before those blessings can reach you. The prayers of the "man of God" will bring deliverance because at the overnight prayer meeting or on the hill he will bring about a breakthrough. Who can doubt that these two phrases have become the key words of this movement?

This also explains why prayer in the modern Charismatic movement in Africa is literally a fight. In fact, the people praying are called "prayer warriors". Although they begin by addressing God, within the first few seconds they divert from God and begin to fight the spirits in these impregnable layers with their bare knuckles. The language is almost always, "We bind every unclean spirit in Jesus' name! We loose the Spirit that breaks the yoke in Jesus' name!"

The "prayer warriors" scream at the top of their voices and chant the name of Jesus. They sweat as they put up a gallant fight with these spirits, straining every muscle of their beings until they prevail (so they think). That is when they reach through to God and his blessings begin to flow. This is nothing more than the African traditional religious worldview sprinkled with a thin layer of Christianity.

Notice also how teaching is not the strength of the modern Charismatic movement in Africa. Its chief proponents survive on a few, well-worn, tortured verses: "By his stripes we are healed," "We are not the tail but the head," etc. There is absolutely no effort to properly exegete Scripture. Rather, by chanting phrases and making people drop under some trance, in witchdoctor fashion, they are holding sway over the

popular mind. The people love it and are paying for it! The “men of God” are becoming stinking rich as the crowds just keep on coming.

This is not Christianity

What worries me is that this is so obvious that I am wondering why we are not seeing this. Or if we are, why we are not warning Christians against this. For the love of crowds, we have allowed African traditional religion to enter the church through the back door. Like the Arabian camel, it has since kicked out the truth. This is why I am not excited by the multiplication of churches—or ministries—under this banner.

We need to sound the warning that this is not Christianity. I know that this approach is filling our church buildings and classrooms to overflowing, until we have to multiply church services in order to accommodate the crowds. But this is not Christianity. It does not lead to heaven. It is a thin coating over the religion that has been on African soil for time immemorial, which Christianity was meant to replace. We have lost the Christian faith while we are holding the Bible in our hands and using some of its words. This is really sad. The religion of the Bible does not teach a God who is so far away from us that unless some powerful humans come in and give us a breakthrough he cannot bless us. No! The Bible teaches a God who is near us. The only barrier between God and us is our sin, and Jesus has dealt with that by his death on the cross.

When we pray, we are in the throne room of divine grace talking directly to God. We do not need to address demons and ancestral spirits before we break through to him. We do not need to chant and jump around like witchdoctors around their fire under the midnight moonlight. God is our heavenly Father. Only our sin can hinder our prayers. Listen! Angels and demons exist, but they are not an impregnable spiritual strata that needs someone reeking with anointing to breakthrough their layer before we can access God’s blessing. They are simply beings that either carry out God’s commands or the devil’s commands. They are not between God and us!

Finally, we do not need “men of God” to lay hands on us every Sunday (or at Friday overnight prayer meetings, or on hills in the outskirts of our cities) in order for us to know God’s blessings. There is only one Mediator between God and us—it is the man, Christ Jesus. All others are imposters and must be rejected with the contempt they deserve.

Conrad Mbewe is Pastor of Kabwata Baptist Church, Lusaka, Zambia

THE ANNUAL TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' CONFERENCE *Vincent Kajuma*

The years in secondary school are very decisive for many people. These are the years of what is commonly called adolescence, when one's transition from childhood to adulthood is remarkably fast-tracked. These are four critical years, and their influence often last the rest of the students' life. The fact that they are removed from their parents during a time of often great personal crisis, and handed over to themselves, their peers and the occasionally concerned teacher in secondary school, begs for events such as the conference we had this month.

This, however, wasn't the main aim of the conference. Many of the students who participated attend Reformed Baptist churches all around the country. The camp provided an opportunity for the students to meet and know one another, and draw warmth from the mutual fellowship with others from similar backgrounds.

The six days they spent boarding in the Church compound was occupied with activities to this end. They had devotions in the morning, sessions of teaching, workshops and discussion, and fun and games in the evening. Some work was also found for them, to help them appreciate the necessity of this pre-fall mandate. They cleaned the church compound and hostels, arranged seats, cooked some of their meals and cleaned the cutlery, etc. The Lord's Day marked an interval of cessation of the sessions and work. They joined the rest of the church in worship and fellowship.

The Sessions

The teaching sessions covered the foundational doctrines of salvation- Grace, Faith, Scripture, Christ and God's Glory.

Sadly, some of those who attended do not profess the faith. Some showed clear disinterest in the theme, especially when left to themselves to discuss the topics. They preferred the breaks when they would socialize with those of the opposite gender and listen to music in huddles. We hope that God will bless our anguished labor in preaching the gospel to them during these sessions, and bring them to Christ.

On the other hand, there were a number of them who had such an appetite for the teaching. A group of ladies from could not hide their excitement and impatience for next year's conference. They talked of how the sessions were a blessing, and the many notes they took. One of them talked about their wonder at how salvation was by grace alone. Two talked about the 'mathematical formulas' they learnt during the session on 'Christ Alone': quoting that Jesus + anything = nothing, and Jesus + nothing = everything.

Two young men I talked to were seriously concerned about the fate of infants. They were already convinced that even infants, like them, were sinners and deserved God's judgment. They simply wanted me to confirm it! As we conversed I was so pleasantly amazed by their interest and aptitude in spiritual themes, though they were only Form 1 and 3 students. Commenting on 'Grace Alone', one of them was very clear that faith, too, was a gift from God, and not a work of man.

Commenting on 'Grace Alone', one of them was very clear that faith, too, was a gift from God, and not a work of man.

Plans For Next Year's Conference

We hope to hold these conferences annually, alongside the Grace and Truth conference (see the last issue of Grace & Truth) as we have for the last 2 years. Every year is a learning experience. We are greatly helped by the feedback from those attending and those involved, to improve the conference. If you desire to attend or bring a student in High School for the conference next year (December 2014), please contact us in good time. It's better to be too early than too late.

MY TESTIMONY

My name is Edwin Kabui Karuga. I am 22 years of age. I was born and brought up in Murang'a Town in a family of 3 children. Having been brought up in a Christian family, my parents took me to church. We used to fellowship in an Anglican church. I was very active mostly in the children's Sunday school. I thank God for having been exposed to his word at an early age.

I did enjoy listening to Bible stories from my Sunday school teacher and reading them when I got home. At that time I did not understand what salvation meant. I basically thought that through my good deeds such as going to church, reading the Bible and memorizing scriptures made me saved. Indeed, I was lost in my own ways.

I had been living in deception for a long time. It was until 12th June 2013 when God drew me to himself. This happened after hearing the sermon that was preached the previous Sunday i.e. on 9th June. It was drawn from **1 John 1:5-10** and the topic was **God is Light**.

vs 5-6 says, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

After listening to the sermon, the Holy Spirit convicted me of sin. I repented my sin to God and accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour over my life. I believe that he died on the cross for my sins. I now understand that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ. It's not my own doing; it's a gift of God, not a result of works that I should boast (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

I do thank God for his grace and mercy. I know that he who started a good work in me will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (**Philippians 1:6**). In Christ alone my hope is found. To God alone be the glory. Amen.

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Grace & Truth is a quarterly magazine that promotes a deeper understanding of the Biblical truth so as to know the Triune God in order to love Him more and serve Him better. It is sent to you free of charge through the generous contributions of other Christians.

We pray that the Lord will greatly profit you through this magazine. Please pray that the Lord will use this periodical for His glory.

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THE EDITOR,
GRACE & TRUTH MAGAZINE
P.O. Box 57907 00200 NAIROBI

Chief Editor:
Keith Underhill

Editor:
John Muketha

Producer:
Ken Sakwa

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P.O. Box 57907 00200 NAIROBI.
Tel: 0202626016 or 0202626023
Cell Phone: 0728 431067

E-mail: info@trinitybaptistkenya.com

Website: www.trinity.or.ke

You may obtain your virtual copy by logging to our website.