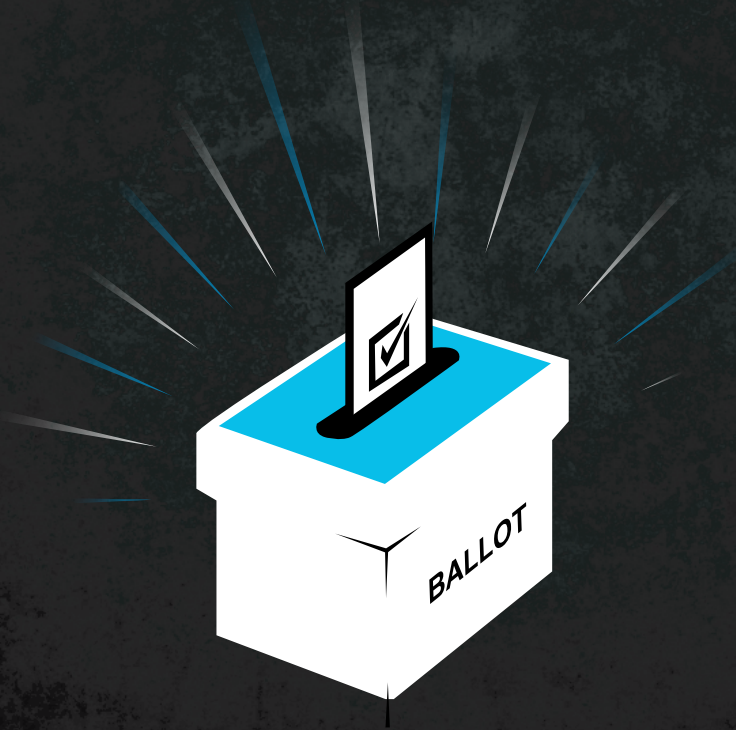


GRACE & TRUTH



ELECTIONS

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision
is from the LORD

Proverbs 16:33



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



Cover: "How thankful we must be that when men and women are making such important decisions it is not a matter of blind chance as we might think the number thrown on a dice is. It is the LORD who is sovereign, who is in control, and whose decision is carried out, whether it is for judgment or blessing. As God's people we are sure "that for those who love God all things work together for good".

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

THE COMING ELECTIONS (Adapted from Grace & Truth 102, 2002)

On Monday 4th. March 2013 Kenyans will go in large numbers to elect leaders at all tiers of Government. These will be men and women who will be entrusted with the task of making and reviewing the laws governing our country. These laws will be binding on our consciences and we break them only at the cost of incurring God's wrath (Romans 13:5). Because of this, how prepared are you to elect leaders who are worthy to occupy such important positions of authority? Please think seriously about the following 3 things:

1. ***God has an interest in our Government***, and so you also ought to have an interest. Some professing Christians will have nothing to do with such 'filthy things' as elections! Some may not even have bothered to register as voters, while others who did may not vote on the actual day. This is wrong. God not only recognizes human governments; He is the One who sovereignly appoints them (Romans 13:1)

2. ***You have a say in who should govern you for the next 5 years.*** In countries ruled by military regimes, or by monarchs, like in Rome in the days of the Apostle Paul (Romans 13), there was no choice of leadership. It was imposed. Yet, the Biblical command is, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1). In Kenya we are privileged to help choose our leaders every 5 years. The election will be an opportunity to wade through a long list of aspirants and to cast your vote for the one you want.

3. ***You must be wise and responsible for the choice you make.*** The campaign period leading up to March 4th. is marked by a lot of empty promises which are not going to be fulfilled but rather renewed 5 years from now! (see Psalm 118:8-9) There are also attempts to bribe potential voters and sadly many succumb to this temptation. Did you know that God hates bribery? Bribery blinds the eyes... The giver and the receiver of a bribe are both an abomination to God (Exodus 23:8, Psalm 26:9-10). Kenya remains ranked among the world's most corrupt countries. One of the ways to fight this evil is to seek to elect more upright and honest leaders. This is your responsibility and you must take it seriously.

Finally, we must clearly point out that even the best government in the world cannot eradicate corruption, wickedness, immorality, etc. This is because the problems of society reside in the heart of all men and women (Jeremiah 17:9). Our great hope must not be in a new Government, as important as it is. The hope of Kenyans must be in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which can alone change the wicked heart. This is why we continue to emphasize that it is the Word of God that must continue to be proclaimed up and down the land.

PREDESTINATION IS A BLESSING!

Keith Underhill

EPHESIANS 1:5-6

A young man inherits a fortune and starts to plan the rest of his life as to how he will use the money. He is not married but he plans the education his son will have and the career he will take up, and so on. Would you object to being that son, that such good things were planned beforehand? We Christians are so blessed by God that He thought about us even “before the foundation of the world” (v. 4). First, *He*

***Do not be afraid of the word
'predestination' as it is in the Bible!***

chose us, He selected us from out of the world of sinners to be in Christ and so to make us saints. Second, *He predestined us*, He made plans

for our future, to adopt us into His family (v. 5).

Read these verses about predestination in their context: Acts 4:28, Romans 8:29-30, (“decreed”), Ephesians 1:5,11. The difference between the plans of the young man and God’s plans is that what God plans always succeeds (see Isaiah 46:10-11). Our blessings are not an afterthought with God, not ‘good luck’, but the fulfilment of God’s eternal purposes. This gives us even more reason to bless God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3).

1. GOD PREDESTINED US “FOR ADOPTION”

God “predestined us for adoption ...” (1:5a)

Can you think of a greater blessing than to be adopted, of being made a member of *God’s* family? What a blessing for AIDS orphans to have a family where they are loved and cared for. In the Roman society of Paul’s day an older rich man might choose to adopt someone to be his heir. So Abraham said that Eliezer of Damascus would be his heir if he had not son of his own (Genesis 15:2). In adoption one who is not born into the family is taken and given all the rights and privileges of a naturally born child. So Israel under the old covenant was adopted and given a status before God above all other nations (Romans 9:4). Consider what it means for God to adopt us into His family. We have a new –

- Father. Now the eternal God acts towards us as a father. This is the closest possible relationship in which we receive all we need (Matthew 6:32, 7:11).
- Name. If someone gives her name as Grace Obama you might think she is closely related to the U.S. President. We have a name that shows who our Father is, and what a high status we have.
- Family. There are many siblings in the wonderful family united in the chords of Christ-like love (Mark 10:30).
- Image. We are to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). As the hymn says, “Adam’s likeness now efface, stamp Thine image in its place”.

- Inheritance. We are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17), and we have an inheritance that is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1 Peter 1:5).

2. GOD ALONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR ADOPTION

“In love ... (He predestined us for adoption) through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, ...” (1:4-5)

In the text there are three prepositional phrases that give us the details about how and why God predestined us for adoption.

(1) God’s **love**: “in love”. It is only deep, deep love that could make such a glorious plan for such unworthy sinners who deserve eternal rejection. We have not shown any love to Him to make us worthy of such adoption. God has no need of us, He is complete in Himself as the eternal Trinity, yet He wants us as part of His family forever.

(2) God’s **Son**: “through Jesus Christ”. Blessings only come to us because of Jesus Christ. We are not sons of God because God created us; that privilege was forfeited by of father Adam through sin. In fact, before we become Christians the devil is called our father (John 8:44, 1 John 3:10). We need to be made fit to be a part of God’s family, and only Jesus Christ can do that by His re-deeming work. Only those who believe in Jesus’s name have “the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

Predestination is not a cold unfeeling decision that God made. Rather He made the plan with a heart of love.

(3) God’s **will**: “according to the purpose of His will”. We have done nothing. It is not by our will that somehow we persuade God to adopt us as His children. We have no claims on God. It is not even because God has foresight, looking into the future and seeing that we will believe. No, it is God own sovereign will. His will includes all things (Ephesians 1:11), creation (Revelation 4:11), showing mercy in salvation (Romans 9:16,18), and even everyday events so that we say, ‘If the Lord wills’ (James 4:15). We joyfully recognize that it will come to pass only if it is the will of God. “Purpose” may also be translated ‘gracious will’ or ‘pleased you well’ (Matthew 11:26). God takes delight in His predestination of many for adoption. He is most willing and needs no persuasion. The emphasis is that it is the will of God alone, no consultation outside the Trinity. It is nothing like a referendum, or a calling of representatives to agree on a decision. Whatever God Himself wanted, whatever was pleasing in His sight, that He planned, and that is done. You ask, ‘Why?’ There is only one answer, ‘So it pleased Him to will for His own glory’ (see Romans 9:19-24).

3. SO GOD ALONE MUST RECEIVE ALL THE PRAISE

“... to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.” (1:6)

When we begin truly to understand the blessing of “predestination for adoption”, then we will clearly see –

(1) **Grace.** The grace of God shines so brightly in His plan to adopt many children. Think about a magistrate who not only pays the huge fine for the convicted street boy but also brings him into his own family as his heir! So God did to Israel (Ezekiel 16:4-7). We are all descendants of rebellious Adam, children of the devil, whose hearts are inclined to sin, and who are unable to please Him (Romans 8:8). Why should He not throw us into the lowest hell? Yet He has granted us the highest privilege (see Ephesians 2:5,8)!

(2) Grace in the **Beloved.** This blessing of grace is only in God's Beloved One, the Lord Jesus Christ. What did it cost Abraham to sacrifice his only son, therefore his beloved (Genesis 22:2)? How hard it was for Jacob to send Benjamin whom he love to Egypt (Genesis 44:20). "In this is love ... that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation" (1 John 4:10).

(3) **Glorious** grace. That God is a gracious God is all part of His great glory (Exodus 34:6-7). Joseph Hart's hymn has it, 'The bright glories of Thy grace among Thine other wanders shine'. God has no lack in Himself, He has no need of us at all, yet He abounds all the more in grace (Romans 5:20). For us sinners, God's grace is the brightest jewel in God's kingly crown. What did John see around God's throne? "A rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald" (Revelation 4:3), a sign of God's grace that there would never again be a flood.

(4) **To the praise of God.** This is the result, so it must be God's ultimate purpose. God shows such grace to sinners in order to display His glorious character so that He, and He alone, might be praised. God forbid that any other should be praised (1 Corinthians 1:31). Our hearts should be filled with wonder and our lips with praise. Are you thinking that all this is too much talk about doctrine? But do you not delight in the Father's plan and purpose and to give glory to Him for it? Are you not full of enthusiasm that God has predestined you for adoption?

Those who watch Premier League soccer see an amazing goal scored and they keep talking about it. What is that compared with the immeasurable grace of God? And do

With reverence we say that it cost God everything to adopt anyone into His family, because He did not even spare His own Son (Romans 8:32).

not stop at praising God for your blessings; praise God for Himself. There is none like Him. Exalt His name above all.

PREDESTINATION IN HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY

Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He hath constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. (Chapter 17, in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church)

THE FIRST GENTILE IS SAVED *Keith Underhill*

ACTS 10

Our third example of salvation from the book of Acts is the Roman centurion, Cornelius, found in chapter 10. He is a very different person compared to the 3,000 Jews who were converted on the Day of Pentecost, or the bigoted Phari-

see Saul of Tarsus. He is a soldier and a Gentile, the first real Gentile in Acts to be converted. The Ethiopian was a proselyte to the Jewish religion. But Cornelius, despite being a soldier, is described as very religious, “a devout man, who feared God ..., gave alms liberally ...,

and prayed continually to God” (Acts 10:2). Although a Gentile, he had embraced the monotheism of the Jewish religion, was familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures, and practised at least some of the Jewish rites. So he was well prepared to receive the gospel. Once again conversion is seen to be a process and all non-Christians are in different states of preparedness (or lack of) for the gospel. Where are you?

The Sadducees were sceptics, the Pharisees were formalists, most Gentiles were profane like the tax collectors, but there were other actually seeking the truth like Cornelius and the Ethiopian

The experience of Cornelius shows how near a person can get to being converted, yet remain unconverted.

1. DID CORNELIUS NEED TO BE CONVERTED?

Being a religious man already, one whose “prayer has been heard” and whose “alms have been remembered before God” (Acts 10:31), and to whom an angel of God appeared in a vision while he was praying (v. 3), did he really need to be converted? He is described as “an upright and God-fearing man, ... well-spoken of by the whole Jewish nation” (v. 22). Does such a well-respected man need to be converted? Yes, he had received the true faith as revealed in the Old Testament, but the record makes it quite clear that what he experienced that day when Peter came to his house was conversion. Consider the following statements:

- “To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name” (Acts 10:43). It is the gospel of the forgiveness of sins that is preached to him.
- “And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18). His receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44) was evidence of repentance.

- “... and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9). In the Jerusalem conference Peter again states that having been given the Holy Spirit showed that God had cleansed their hearts by faith.
- Christ’s return as the judge of all men (v. 42).
- The good news of the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ, according to the witness of all the prophets (v. 43).

You are reading these very words today and they can be the means of your genuine conversion just as they were for Cornelius and those in his house. What a great privilege it is to hear the good news! We must pray for the Lord to use such preaching in a mighty way.

Note that the central place of the public proclamation of the gospel is unmistakable.

3. WHAT DID CORNELIUS EXPERIENCE IN CONVERSION?

(1) He experienced the *powerful work of the Holy Spirit* (v. 44). Note the emphatic language: the Spirit “fell” (v. 44, 11:15), was “poured out” (v. 45); they “received” the Spirit (v. 47), were “baptized” with the Spirit (11:16); God was “giving” them the Spirit (15:8). Just as to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, the gift of the Spirit was evidenced in “speaking in tongues and extolling God” (v. 46). This was irresistible proof to Peter that these Gentiles had become Christians equally with believing Jews, even without receiving circumcision and submitting to the law (v. 47, 11:15, 15:8-9). Such a manifestation of the Spirit was necessary to convince the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles could enter the kingdom directly through faith in Christ. This shows the very specific role of the tongues speaking in this case. It is wrong to use this event to teach that the evidence that anyone has received the Spirit is that they have spoken in tongues. The Bible does not teach this. Speaking in tongues is only referred to 3 times in Acts (2:4, 10:46, 19:6). What about all the other conversions recorded where tongues is not mentioned (2:41, 4:4, 6:7, Ethiopian, Saul, etc.)? Because of a false emphasis on tongues one clear truth is often missed – to be “baptized with the Holy Spirit” = conversion!! In 1 Corinthians 12:13 this baptism is shown to be the common experience of **every** Christian, that which unites us together in Christ. It is not to be identified with speaking in tongues. The Holy Spirit’s powerful work is what changes a sinner into a saint. Without this ‘baptism’ there is no true conversion.

(2) He repented and believed the gospel. Peter told the brethren in Jerusalem that the gift of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius proved the genuineness of his repentance (11:18) and faith (15:8-9). The Spirit given by God is His own ‘witness’ that the person belongs to Him (see Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 1:13). Peter had preached the necessity of faith (v. 43), and we are told they believed (11:17, 15:9). This is always the simple man ward response in conversion – by repenting of sin and turning to God, a person believes and trusts in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of those sins (see Acts 20:21). Genuine faith and repentance always occur together, like two sides of the same coin.

You cannot come to God and still cling to your sins. You must confess and forsake them in repentance. And yet you will not confess your sins to God unless you know there is a way of forgiveness, the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done on the cross for sinners. All who thus repent and believe give evidence of the Spirit's powerful work in them. This is the way God 'grants' repentance to sinners (11:1); it is a gift of God.

4. CONCLUSIONS

(1) The record of the conversion of Cornelius is of great importance. Why is it related in such detail in Acts 10, and then referred to again in Acts 11 and 15? His conversion so convincingly shows that **all** the old covenant distinctions between Jew and Gentile have been removed under the new covenant. This was the conclusion the apostolic church formally agreed upon in Jerusalem (Acts 15), where the experience of the Gentile Cornelius was used by Peter as his major piece of evidence (15:7-9, see Ephesians 2:11-22). Only in this way was the true Biblical doctrine of conversion preserved against the false teachers, who said concerning the Gentiles, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). Peter refuted this by declaring, God "made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by *faith*" (v. 9), and concluded, "... we (Jews) will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (v. 11).

The real and certain evidences of the work of the Spirit of God are repentance and faith.

(2) Cornelius is an example of a man so near the kingdom of God, and yet not actually in it (Mark 12:34). So take

heed to yourself. Your interest in the gospel, your praying, your studying of the Bible are good things, but they do not go far enough. Have you actually turned away from your sins to God in dependence wholly and only upon Christ and His saving work?

(3) There is so much confusion about the work of the Holy Spirit. It is so important to compare Scripture with Scripture, instead of just drawing your own conclusions from a passage. It is especially dangerous when you draw conclusions from an *event*, such as the conversion of Cornelius. Many falsely teach that 'Holy Spirit Baptism' is a second work of grace after conversion, evidenced by speaking in tongues. But the *teaching* of 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 8:9 make it clear beyond any doubt that receiving the Spirit (being baptized with the Spirit) is the mark of genuine conversion. It is not something that happens after **conversion**. Again, tongues must be seen as a very special sign, even in apostolic days, for they only accompanied conversion in special circumstances. The real and certain evidences of the work of the Spirit of God are repentance and faith, which continue to be exercised through the Christian life to the end. So do not be so concerned about your particular conversion experience in the past. It is more important to ask yourself if you are living a life of repentance and faith *today*. If not, may the Lord give you grace to begin that life today in true conversion.

Pastors' Theological Course *Murungi Igweta*

There is a great need in Kenya for churches to have pastors who are well grounded on the Word of God. Men who hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that they may be able to effectively give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:9). Pastors are there to build up the church in the truth of Scripture and to deal with false teachers who invade the church with an intention of deceiving the believers so that they can lead them astray.

The Kenyan church is as it is, imbibing false teachings, because, first of all, many *pastors do not devote themselves fully to a thorough study of the word of God*. So they do not know the truth well enough as to distinguish it from error. For a bank cashier to be able to distinguish genuine currency from the counterfeit, he has to be thoroughly trained with the genuine currency. In the same way pastors have to fully devote themselves to sound teaching so that they may be able to distinguish false teachers, even when their language appears spiritual and biblical.

Secondly, *many Christians do not know their Bibles well enough*, yet it is the word of God that is able to make people wise for salvation. They assume that everyone who is preaching in the TV and is constantly mentioning the name of Jesus is truthful; they hope that every book that mentions the name of God is good.

The word of God is the final rule of a Christian's faith and practice. For this reason faithful men ought to be well trained in Scriptures so that they may equip the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Trinity Baptist Church runs *a three-year church-based theological course to equip pastors* or would be pastors for the work of ministry. It is in the Church premises in Greenfields, next to Donholm Primary School. Pastors' Theological Course (PTC) has been running since 1985 and has produced many men who are pastoring throughout the country and beyond.

The institution is producing men who need not to be ashamed but faithfully and rightly handle the word of truth, competent for every good work (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:17). Men are trained to delve deep into the Bible by thinking clearly and biblically. Many institutions of learning produce people who are only good in regurgitating what they have heard; not so with PTC. It is aimed that those produced are able to think biblically for themselves, so that they may be profitable to the churches that they would lead.

The Curriculum: The course has 26 units, A-Z as follows:

YEAR 1

- A. NEW TESTAMENT GREEK
- B. DOCTRINE (1): SCRIPTURE
- C. DOCTRINE (2): GOD
- D. CHURCH HISTORY (1): EARLY CHURCH
- E. NEW TESTAMENT (1): GOSPELS & ACTS
- F. DOCTRINE (3): MAN & SIN
- G. CHURCH HISTORY (2): REFORMATION
- H. APOLOGETICS

YEAR 2

- I. NEW TESTAMENT (2): PAULINE EPISTLES
- J. HERMENEUTICS
- K. PREACHING
- L. OLD TESTAMENT (1): HISTORY & THEOLOGY
- M. DOCTRINE (4): CHRIST- SALVATION PLANNED & ACCOMPLISHED
- N. DOCTRINE (5) THE HOLY SPIRIT - SALVATION APPLIED & FINISHED
- O. CHURCH HISTORY (3): MODERN
- P. NEW TESTAMENT (3): GENERAL EPISTLES AND REVELATION
- Q. OLD TESTAMENT (3): PROPHETS

YEAR 3

- R. RESEARCH PAPERS: EXEGETICAL & PRACTICAL PAPERS
- S. DOCTRINE (6): ETHICS
- T. CHURCH HISTORY (4): MISSIONS, AFRICA AND KENYA
- U. DOCTRINE (7): THE CHURCH
- V. OLD TESTAMENT (3): POETS
- W. EVANGELISM & MISSIONS
- X. DOCTRINE (8): ESCHATOLOGY
- Y. CULTS & OTHER RELIGIONS
- Z. PASTORAL THEOLOGY

The course is not only concerned about learning theology deeply. It is more like an apprenticeship or in-service course. It is meant to prepare such men to for self-study because pastoral work is all about self-study. A pastor who does not study by himself will not be competent in his work. Therefore, the students are in class for six days (Wednesday - Wednesday) six times a year, i.e. January, March, May, July, September and November. The weekend between is spent in personal evangelism on Saturday, with the church members. Then on Sunday, the students together with the church join in worship.

After this week of lectures, the students are provided with books and study resources that they carry home to study. While at home they are supposed to answer questions that help them provide a thorough research on different subjects of study. As they do their work they are supposed to preach the same and carry on with their ministry making their study relevant to their ministry. By the time they resume classes they have completed the previous unit ready for its exam.

Being such an intensive course, PTC has about 10 students each time for the close monitoring of students in their work. This is a lot of commitment on the part of both students and tutor so that a high discipline of study is forged and developed. The course provides books and study materials, accommodation, and food for the weeklong stay in Nairobi. The students are expected to contribute KShs. 1000/= each time they come.

Who qualify to apply? All those who have the basic qualifications for pastors as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-6 and Titus 1:5-9 are eligible with the recommendation of their local church. Even those from non-Baptist backgrounds could apply, as long as they have the recommendation of their respective churches. We have therefore trained students from various denominations.

How to apply: Send an application letter together with a recommendation letter from your church to:

Upon the receipt of your letter, we will contact you and seek to know more about you and your church. We may require a face to face interview with you. After that, if one is accepted, then a fill-in form will be provided. We further expect to be in contact with you for about a year before considering to admit you.

The PTC Coordinator

P.O. Box 57907, 00200 Nairobi.

Or an email at:

tbc_kenya@ymail.com

You may call: +254 728431067



The PTC Students (January 2011)

PREACHING POLITICS

In his sermons on Ephesians 5:18, preached in London in 1959, Martyn Lloyd-Jones criticizes those who are so often preaching politics as sermons. Remember that London is the hub of the political life of Great Britain. "Do you find here (the book of the Acts of the Apostles) that the Apostles were always preaching about affairs of state? Did they spend their time in preaching about the problem of slavery? or in passing resolutions and sending them up to the Roman government and to the Emperor in Rome? That is what the modern church is doing.

The time is given to politics and social matters, and we are given the impression that unless we are constantly preaching against armaments and bombs and wars and about the race question we are really not Christian." (Life in the Spirit, p. 29) He goes on to ask how the church can most influence society. "So if the church is anxious that her teaching should permeate the life of society, the quickest and shortest way to accomplish that is not to preach politics, is not to preach about social matters, is not to be for ever protesting against this and that; it is to produce a larger number of Christians. And how is that done? By preaching the pure Gospel, by preaching a Gospel that can convert people. To preach against war and against bombs does not convert anybody. So this very teaching defeats its own end. Very many of our churches are empty today because so many preachers have preached nothing but sermons on politics and social matters." (p. 30)

Coming Face to Face with Sin at Workplace

Sakwa Buliba

“.....Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me”. But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Genesis 39: 6-9).

Jacob’s son Joseph is sold by his brothers to a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants. Potiphar, an Egyptian official, buys Joseph from these merchants. Potiphar, being a captain of the guard, probably chief of security or head of Pharaoh’s personal security service, was a highly influential official in the government of Egypt. When Joseph arrives in Egypt he is at the bottom of the ladder, a slave, sold into captivity. But soon he starts to rise. We see several stages in Joseph’s climb. Firstly, he is moved into Potiphar’s house. Next, he is put in charge of everything in the house. Within a span of time, everything Joseph touches just blossoms into success. The credit for Joseph’s success is given to the Lord. Whether Potiphar recognized this or not is not said, but verse 3 implies that Joseph must have told him his secret. “When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did..”

Imagine Joseph as a hard worker for about 11 years in Potiphar’s house. When he came to Egypt, he was at a great disadvantage. He knew nothing of the language, culture, customs, or ways of doing business. He had to get up early and stay up late to both do his job and to learn Egyptian ways. Luther said, “Accordingly, Joseph was not only good and chaste, and not only diligently poured out prayers to God for his master, for the king, and for the whole land of Egypt, but he was also a most vigilant overseer and manager of the domestic tasks” (cited in Boice).

Even at this early point when it seemed Joseph had no control over circumstances - and indeed, he had none - God overruled the evil or capricious choices of man to accomplish His eternal purpose. The most striking feature in this passage is Joseph’s attitude. He would have all kinds of reasons to be upset about his circumstances. We would understand it if he would turn his back on God. Nobody had more reason to feel miserable than Joseph. In just a few days he turned from a prominent father’s favourite son to a slave, a non-entity. His freedom and his human rights had been taken away from him. But Joseph does not show any sign of being dejected. The beauty of his character shines through the most miserable circumstances.

His reaction to his suffering makes him one of the most beautiful characters in the Bible. Joseph had taken Paul's advice in Colossians 3:23 to heart - "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." This must have been the motto of Joseph's life. He considered himself a slave of the Lord, not of Potiphar.

Mrs. Potiphar should be a real schemer. She knew how to lure, trap, challenge and intimidate a man to surrender, "Lie with me!" This was bold and strong temptation to Joseph. It reminds us that when we face strong temptations, others have faced the same or even worse. Satan wants you to think your temptation is terribly unique; that no one you know could understand what you are going through. But there is no temptation that has overtaken us except what is common among men (1 Corinthians 10:13).

1. "How Can 'I'?

"How then can I do this ...?" (v. 9a)

When lust has raised its ugly head, it will stop at nothing, blush at nothing; decency, and reputation, and conscience, are all sacrificed at the altar of lust. It is worth noting that Mrs. Potiphar was urgent and violent in the temptation. Often she had been denied with the strongest reasons, and yet as often renewed her vile solicitations. She spoke to him day by day (v. 10). The temptation he was assaulted with was very strong, with charming pleasures and attached amusements. The sin he was tempted to was uncleanness, which considering his youth, his beauty, his single state, and his plentiful living at the table of a ruler, was a sin which, one would think, might most easily entice him and bring him tumbling down.

The tempter was his mistress, a person of quality, whom it was his duty to obey and in his interest to yield to, whose favour would contribute to his comfort in the home, and by whose recommendation he might reach the highest level of honour with the master. On the other hand, it was at his utmost peril if he slighted her, and made her his enemy. The tempter was in the house with him; his work allowed him to be here, without any suspicion, where she was; none of the family was within (v. 11). There appeared no immediate danger of it ever being exposed or, if it should be suspected, his mistress would protect him, why not? To all this was added persuasion, nagging, seduction and, frequent constant urging, to such a degree that, at last, she laid violent hands on him. His resistance of the temptation was very brave, and the victory truly honourable. The almighty grace of God enabled him to overcome this assault of the enemy. He argues from the respect he owed both to God and his master, (vs. 8,9).

He would not wrong his master, nor do such an irreparable injury to his honour. He considers, and urges, how kind his master had been to him, what a confidence he had reposed in him, in how many instances he had befriended him, for which he abhorred the thought of making such an ungrateful return. "Is none greater than I? Then I will bend to do such a wicked thing; it is below me to serve a base lust; I will not disparage myself so much," he seems to argue with himself. His aversion to sin leads him to exclaim,

“How can I do this?” Not only, how shall I? Or, how dare I? But, how can I? It is imperative to shut out sin with the strongest bar, even that of an impossibility. He that is born of God cannot sin (1John 3:9). Joseph aptly considers who he was that was being tempted. “I; others may peradventure exercise their freedom of choice, but I cannot. I that am an Israelite in covenant with God, I that profess the true religion, and in fellowship with Him, to commit such a heinous crime? No, not me!”

2. “This Great Wickedness?”

“...do this great wickedness...” (v. 9b)

Our society may dismiss this ‘attempted rape’ as a small matter, a trick of youth, a domestic misdemeanour, or just an unreturned love affair; but Joseph had another idea of it (Romans 7:13). He called it by its own name, and never went about to sugar-coat it. Particularly, he looked at it as utter uncleanness, sexual perversion, a great wickedness, an exceedingly sinful sin.

Joseph’s mistress was daring and shameless in the sin. With an impudent face, and a harlot’s forehead, she said, “Lie with me”, having already, by her wanton looks and unchaste desires committed adultery with him in her heart. He hearkened not to her, so much as to be with her (v. 10). Those that would be kept from harm must keep themselves out of harm’s way. Avoid it, pass not by it. When she laid hold of him, he left his garment in her hand (v. 12). He would not stay so much as to parley with the temptation, but flew out from it with the utmost abhorrence; he left his garment, as one escaping for his life.

Joseph resisted this tremendous moment of temptation when he ran outside. Joseph did what we are all supposed to do when faced with this kind of situation: he fled and ran. 2 Timothy 2:22 makes it clear: Flee also youthful lusts. Joseph’s virtue in resisting the solicitations of his mistress was truly exemplary. Had he reasoned after the manner of men, he might have soon found that the proposed intrigue might be carried on with the utmost secrecy and greatly to his secular advantage. But he chose to risk all rather than injure a kind benefactor, defile his conscience, and sin against God.

Such conduct is so exceedingly rare that his example has stood on the annals of history as almost without a parallel, admired by all and applauded by most. Joseph fled and got out. To know when to fight and when to fly are of great importance in the Christian life. Some temptations must be manfully met, resisted, and thus overcome; from others we must fly. He who stands to contend or reason, especially in such a case as that mentioned here, is infallibly ruined.

3.“Against God”!

“....and sin against God?” (v. 9c)

Charles Spurgeon once wrote, “When I regarded God as a tyrant, I thought sin a trifle; but when I knew Him to be my Father, then I mourned that I could ever have kicked against Him. When I thought that God was hard, I found it easy to sin; but when I found God so kind, so good, so overflowing with compassion, I smote upon my breast to think that I could ever have rebelled against one who loved me so, and sought my good.” The dominating theme in the success of Joseph is undoubtedly the blessings that God mercifully bestowed upon him. We read, “*The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man*” (Genesis 39:2); “*His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand*” (Genesis 39:3); “*The LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had*” (Genesis 39:5). Joseph was fully aware of the presence of the LORD in his life as he laboured as a slave. He was away from all his friends and relations; he had none to help or comfort him; but the Lord was with Joseph, and showered him with mercy. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph’s authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

This is the God against whom Joseph was being tempted to sin... *against God*; not only, “How shall I do it, and sin against my master, my mistress, myself, my own body and soul; **but against God?**”. This is the most dreadful and worst thing to ever happen to a child of God: sin against God, against His nature and His dominion, against His love and His sovereignty.

When Nathan exposed David’s sin with Bathsheba, the king’s reply was, “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:13). Later, when David was reminiscing about his awful deed, he reflected, “Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight ...” (Psalm 51:4). Did David’s sin not affect others - of course it did, in many ways, but he realized that most importantly he had sinned against his God. When the prodigal son finally returned to his good senses, he vowed, “I will get up and go to my father and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight’” (Luke 15:18).

Applications

- *Flee from Sin*: We have a tendency of running towards sin or at least lingering in its presence. But we are commanded to do the only safe thing: run away from these lusts of the flesh, and run as fast as we can. In Genesis 39:12, we read, *He left the garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out*. Joseph got him out. No one else was going to get him out. God provides a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13), but you have to take the way out. He left his garment that is his outer garment was stripped off. Essentially, he left in his underwear. Fled and ran outside. Joseph had to know this stand for purity would cost him dearly, but he considered it worth it. . This sin was one which might most easily beset him. The time and place favoured the temptation.

To all this was added frequent, constant urging. The almighty grace of God enabled Joseph to overcome this assault of the enemy. “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16).

- *Do not compromise:* Joseph gives two most powerful reasons for his non-compliance with the wishes of his mistress: 1. *Gratitude* to his master, to whom he owed all that he had. 2. *His fear of God*, in whose sight it would be a heinous offence, and who would not fail to punish him for it. With the kindness of his master and the displeasure of God before his eyes, how could he be capable of committing an act of transgression, which would at once have distinguished him as the most *ungrateful* and the most *worthless* of men?
- *God will punish sin:* It is no new thing for the best of men to be falsely accused of the worst of crimes by those who themselves are the worst of criminals. As this matter was represented, one would have thought holy Joseph a very immoral man and his wanton mistress a virtuous woman; it is well that there is a day of discovery coming, in which all shall appear in their true characters.
- *Christ shall come:* A faithful Christian will do good wherever he is, and will be a blessing even in bonds and banishment. Let us not forget, through Joseph, to look unto Jesus, who suffered being tempted, yet without sin; who was slandered, and persecuted, and imprisoned, but without cause; who by the cross ascended to the throne. May we be enabled to follow the same path in submitting and in suffering, to the same place of glory.

PREDESTINATION IN HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY

[From chapter 3 in The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, rewritten in Modern English. It is very similar to chapter 3 in the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647.]

3. By His decree, and for the manifestation of His glory, God has predestinated (or foreordained) certain men and angels to eternal life through Jesus Christ, thus revealing His grace. Others, whom He has left to perish in their sins, show the terrors of His justice.
5. Before the world was made, God's eternal, immutable purpose, which originated in the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, moved Him to choose (or to elect), in Christ, certain of mankind to everlasting glory. Out of His mere free grace and love He predestined those chosen ones to life, although there was nothing in them to cause Him to choose them.
7. The high mystery of predestination needs to be handled with special prudence and caution, so that men, being directed to the will of God revealed in His Word and obeying the same, may become assured of their eternal election through the certainty of their effectual calling. By this means predestination will promote the praise of God, and reverential awe and wonder. It will encourage humility and diligence, and bring much comfort to all who sincerely obey the gospel.

The God Who Legislates *Chris Kiagri*

(Exodus 20, Leviticus 16, Exodus 32-34)

The following is a summary of part 4 of a 14-part seminar by Don Carson entitled “The God Who is There” aimed at simultaneously evangelizing non-Christians and edifying Christians by explaining the Bible’s storyline in a non-reductionistic way. The original content is available in its entirety in both audio and video form at <http://thegospelcoalition.org/thegodwhoisthere>

Recap

Many people are repulsed by the depiction of God as one who legislates, who declares “Thou shalt not...” One of the major objections against Christianity is that Christians are narrow-minded, divisive and intolerant - that it is arrogant to exclude people from their religion for not believing certain things. Yet the Bible portrays God and his Law differently; there is a joyful freedom in a life lived under the God who legislates.

The Exodus and the giving of the (Mosaic) Law

Abraham’s lineage runs through Isaac, then Jacob, then Joseph who God uses to spare his family by bringing them into Egypt, where they multiply and are brought into captivity by a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph. As these descendants of Abraham - God’s chosen people - cried out, God raises Moses, a deliverer, to bring them out of Egypt.

God identifies himself to Moses as I AM - a name that does not confine God, but describes him as who he says he is. Moses leads the people out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, to a mountain called Mount Sinai. It is here that God enters into a covenant with the people, and at the heart of this covenant is a group of verses called the Ten Commandments. In Exodus, they are recorded as follows:

And God spoke all these words, saying,

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity

of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

“Honour your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour’s.” (Exodus 20:1-17)

The first commandment shows God’s exclusiveness. He insists that he is the only God and there are no others. He is a jealous God, not in any negative sense, but in the sense of protecting his relationship with his people and not tolerating disloyalty. The reason this is not negative is because God is the only one who deserves his people’s loyalty. The God who created everything cannot let idolatry slide, or else it would deny who he is. If he gave his people free reign to do as they pleased, how would they be any different from their pagan neighbours? Thus we see that God’s law is an act of his great love and generosity.

The second commandment shows God’s transcendence over his creation, and the third commandment underscores his importance. We must not misuse his name, as it is tied to his very character. To make his name something that is not in his character would be to reduce him to something that he is not. Using God’s name, and meaning nothing by it, reduces him to nothing. Using God’s name in a common way makes him something that he is not; God is not common.

The fourth commandment deals with God’s right to reign even over every function of life, even over the aspect of time in which we live and move and have our being. He sets a pattern in creation which we are to follow. He did his creative work in six days and then he rested on the seventh. He also dedicated a day to devote to the Lord.

The following six commandments flow out of the first four and they deal with relationships with other people. When we revere God for who he is, we act in certain ways among ourselves.

The Ten Commandments flow out of God’s gracious redemptive act of bringing them out of slavery (Exodus 20:2). He brought them out of slavery; therefore, he calls on them to act a certain way.

These Ten Commandments do not introduce a new way of behaviour; rather, they codify the way God calls his people to act within the covenant relationship with him. These laws cannot transform us or free us from our slavery to sin and rebellion; rather, they point out our shortcomings and teach us that we are sinners.

The Sacrificial System

In addition to these laws, God gives instructions for a structure called a tabernacle to be built and used as his dwelling place among man. It is built to the exact specifications God gives to his people. Within it was a room called the Most Holy Place and within that room was the Ark of the Covenant, where the tablets of the Ten Commandments were kept. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would go into the Most Holy Place and sprinkle blood from a slain bull and goat on the ark, while another goat was sent into the wilderness, bearing all the sins of the people of Israel.

The significance of the sacrificial system is developing here and we see that a substitute sacrifice is required for the sins of the people. People deserve to die for their sins. God gave a sacrificial system cannot deal with sin fully. These two extremes will not reconcile themselves until the death of Christ. The entire sacrificial system points to this. Even in his legislation, God points us to Jesus.

Christians' Attitude Towards Politics and Government

Sakwa Buliba

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right (1 Peter 2:13-14).

Kenyans are once again faced with the daunting task of electing leaders at national, sub-national and local levels to steer the country for the next five years. Those who have been involved in conducting civic education with the local population would hardly forget the myriad of questions that are posed by a distraught electorate casting doubts on whether the vote of an ordinary person actually determines who rules the country. To them, it appears it is those who offer themselves to be elected who eventually decide among themselves who emerges the winner and rules! This may seem unacceptable to the champions of democratic elections but it raises questions as to what is the place of God in all these!

Is God just sitting helplessly somewhere wishing that the best candidate wins? Is He really bothered by politics and elections and government and service delivery? Is God involved in the election, existence and disposal of political powers? Is He shaping the destinies of nations, controlling the course of democracies and determining the limits of military regimes?

Let’s suppose for a moment that all divine restraints are removed. That man is now left to himself to do as he pleases. That the Lord exercises no control over the human race. Would the whole world not turn into barbarism, anarchy and total confusion? Why, for instance would one nation, seeing that its neighbor has overthrown the rule of law and every man is absolutely free to do as he pleases not turn around and discard its constitution as well and run headlong in the same direction of self-destruction? The reason is simple; the Lord is on the throne. He has taken the governments of men upon His shoulders and He governs and rules according to His counsel and purpose for His people. Having considered this, there are three lessons we can draw from this passage:

1. Government is God’s Institution

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men.....” (v.13a)

Scripture is full of God’s providence and interest in civil government. In Romans 13:1, He ordains civil powers, in Daniel 2:20-21, God removes and sets up rulers, while in Proverbs 21:1 he turns a ruler’s heart. Clearly, government is not a human institution but God’s institution.

Civil government exists and functions by God's command, not because men formed good constitutions or crafted clever manifestos or established colorful social contracts. In this passage, submission to civil authorities is tied to the interest, will and purpose of the Lord. It is not because of the power wielded by the leaders nor their military might or speaking prowess, it is for the sake of the Lord. Being such evil men with a propensity for exploitation, lying, malice and committing other unspeakable acts against fellow men and against God, the joy of Christians submitting to such authority squarely lies in the believers' obedience to the Lord.

Most Christians are quite familiar with Biblical expectations for the family and the church. Yet many are amazed to realize that many of our country's laws and civic codes are based on or derived from the Bible. But would we allow Biblical Christianity to be excluded from our homes or churches? Of course, No. So why quietly agree that we should keep God's Word and loudly argue that we should get God's people out of God's institution of civil government?

Most world constitutions derive their provisions from Biblical injunctions. For instance, Exodus 21-22 addresses manslaughter, premeditated murder, assault, kidnapping, abortion, infanticide, property crimes, criminal negligence, assaulting parents, robbery and bestiality. Leviticus 13, 20 address such issues as public health laws and homosexuality. In Deuteronomy 17-22 we find laws regarding violation of a court order, perjury, malicious accusations, building codes, juvenile delinquency and rape. God also gives qualifications for leadership, both in the church (1 Timothy 3:1-7) and in civil government (Exodus 18:21). Imagine our state and nation under leaders with these Biblical qualities: "able" and "fears God" and speaks "truth" and "hates covetousness"! This is God's standard for government, which has been, is and will remain His institution.

2. Elections are Super-directed by God

*"....whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him...."
(vv. 13b 14a)*

God has every right and power to direct His creatures and His institutions. Indeed, Scripture reveals God's will, rules and leadership qualities for the home, the church... and the government. All kingdoms have been created by God (Colossians 1:16-17; Romans 13:1-5). Indeed, God even determines when and where people will live, setting the boundaries of nations, so the people might find Him (Acts 17:26-27).

Since government leaders are ordained and sent to us by God, we should not trust in human institutions or human understanding to resolve all the problems that bedevil the human governments. We are urged in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 to pray for our leaders and show our total dependence on our Lord who directs, chooses, ordains and sends those who would eventually rule us. Challenges of electoral violence, manipulation of electoral systems, vote rigging and corrupt leadership will always be with us as long as sin remains the master of the heart of man.

We live in a representative democracy. As such, it is our responsibility to vote. In general, the most votes wins. It is appropriate to vote based upon what you think is the best thing – but if one claims to love God, those thoughts should be influenced by what God has said. Anyone who claims to love God and believe in Him should be influenced by what God has said when they make choices that affect their daily lives. This would include voting for a candidate or a constitutional amendment or a law. Their vote should be influenced by the standards God has set.

We need to pray as we chose the leaders that the Lord may give us a leader of His choice, not necessarily a good one, but that whom the Lord has ordained for us. Although it is hard to know what is right, and it is even harder to choose what is right, we ought to pray that the Lord may be our guide as we make these choices.. Our only hope is a right relationship with God -- living each day dependent upon Him for wisdom to know the right choice to make and courage to do the right thing. Don't fear the political party leader, do not fear the tribal chief, do not be afraid of the crowd around, but fear God!

3. Government Officials are God's Servants

*"...who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right"
(v. 14b)*

It is abundantly clear from Scripture that civil leaders are "ministers of God" (Romans 13:3-4). The role of a civil leader is to enable government to fulfill God's purposes. Civil leaders are doing the will of God in establishing justice and maintaining civil order. They are accountable to God for the faithful discharge of their ministry responsibilities. It is important also to note that a civil leader serves at God's pleasure. We read, "...He (God) removes kings, and sets up kings..." (Daniel 2:21). "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Psalm 75:6-7 KJV). God places people in leadership for His specific purposes -- for His divine purpose, not for their interests! "...Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

Government is supposed to punish those who do wrong and commend those who do right (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14). In fact, one of the purposes of government is to provide an environment so we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (1 Timothy 2:1-2). More than that, government is a minister of God for good (Romans 13:4-5). Certainly, we are subject to the government (Titus 3:1; Romans 13:1-2; Peter 2:13-14), and should pray for the governmental leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2) and pay taxes (Matthew 22:17-22; Romans 13:1-7), all the while being people who live for God (Micah 6:8). In fact, to resist authority is to resist the ordinance of God (Romans 13:2). But there are apparently limits – when a law would cause us to disobey God, then we must chose to obey God rather than man's law and take the consequences of choosing God over man (Acts 5:17-42; Daniel 3:10-18).

What is God's purpose for government? Looking at the creation story, man began in a state of innocence, and all was good. There was no need for government (Genesis 1:27-28, 31). But sin entered the picture (Genesis 4:3-10, 6:1-6) and God ordained civil government (Romans 13:1). It is God's institution, begun by His creative act. Further, God is in control of government. "The king's heart..... is in the hand of the Lord, : He turns it whenever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). Being servants of the Lord, political and civil leaders must acknowledge that they are ultimately answerable to their Master! The authority of government is legitimate, established by God, sustained by God and collapsed by God. Governments exist to restrain evil by punishing the wrong doer, and to promote good by commending those who do right. Submission is therefore not merely pragmatic; it's a matter of obedience to the Lord, a matter of acknowledging the sovereignty of God in human governments, a matter of conscience. It is therefore imperative for a Christian to dutifully pay taxes, respect authorities, and participate in the civic life of his nation including electing leaders.

35TH ANNIVERSARY

We thank the Lord for He has been faithful and gracious to us at Trinity Baptist Church for over 35th years since it was established in 1978. Through a faithful ministry of the gospel, many sinners have been brought to faith, many equipped for the work of ministry, many churches planted in different places and much glory to the Lord.

We have a thanksgiving weekend from 15th – 17th March 2013, where there will be a Dine & Listen on Friday Night, in which both the imperishable food (the Word of God) will be served by Pastor Geoff Thomas of Alfred Place Baptist Church in Wales. The Perishable food (Delicious meal) will be served and a time of fellowship provided.

Saturday will be a time of many activities and warm fellowship for the TBC members to remember, thank and praise the Lord for what He has been doing in the church for the last 35 years. A time renewing the covenant and the day will not be complete without Remembering the Lord Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd of His church in the Lord's Supper.

Sunday we invite all who have been part of TBC at one time or another to praise the Lord with us – all are welcome for good preaching and good meal so as to be together the whole day.

Jubilee Year? *Murungi Igweta*

In many churches in Kenya there is a lot of talking about Kenya being in the Jubilee year. Even the politicians have picked up this shibboleth so one of the major political coalitions has named themselves ‘The Jubilee Coalition’! They are all saying that the Kenyan people must expect “great and good things to happen”! The discovery of oil in Turkana, the commissioning of Thika Super highway, the groundbreaking ceremony of the construction of Konza Techno City, nicknamed the Silicon Savanna etc., are all some of the ‘evidences’ that indeed it is the Jubilee year! All this is packaged in a very spiritual manner because a passage from the Bible is pulled out – Leviticus 25:8-22, and it is flashed it whenever they are talking about it.

Surely we all want great and good things for this country. So is it true that this is the Jubilee year for Kenya? Yes, because Kenya is celebrating 50 years since it attained independence from the British colonial masters. But is it true that Kenyans need to mark 50 years by implementing Leviticus 25:8-22 and expecting all the promises therein? I mean, should Kenyans blow the trumpets; have a day of atonement (v. 9); proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; return everyone to his property, and to his clan (vv. 10,13); neither sow nor reap only eat the produce of the land (vv. 11,12); determine the prices of produce by the number of years after the jubilee and in accordance to the number of years of the produce (vv. 14-16)? Is it true that such obedience will lead to God making Kenyans to dwell in the land securely, the land being more productive? Is it true that God will automatically more His blessings?

I want to point out four things you must notice about this passage and then you will discover at least three errors when this passage is applied literally for Kenya.

1. Notice that this passage is contained in the Law. It is part of the Bible that lays down the law. It is called the Pentateuch, the Law of Moses.
2. Notice the purpose of the passage is to list the feasts of the Lord. From Lev. 23 – 25, various feasts are recorded, but these feasts are no longer applicable to us. Why? We read that these feasts were shadows of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ (Col. 2:17).
3. The Israelites themselves were unable to perfectly obey these laws. They broke these laws again and again and the result is that they were punished by exile in Assyria and Babylon. No one can be justified or saved or even be blessed on the basis of keeping the law, *“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His (God’s) sight, since through the law comes the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20) and “yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, ...*

because by works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal. 2:16).

4. Finally, notice the New Testament does not mention the Jubilee at all!

Therefore, this passage is part of the old covenant that was faulty (Heb. 8:8), obsolete and growing old and ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). It is a shadow of the reality, which is Christ. Christ is its fulfillment. Its importance is to point to Christ – the true Jubilee for sinners. Notice the errors being propagated in talking about the jubilee for Kenya:

First, the Old Testament is being applied now and here as if there is no New Testament. The basic rule of interpreting Scripture is that Scripture interprets Scripture. The Bible itself says of the Old Testament, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.” (Heb. 8:7). The point is you cannot apply it without a regard for the New Testament.

Secondly, Kenya is not Israel and the times we are living in are different - within the New Covenant. This means that we cannot apply such a passage that had specific instructions to national Israel to Kenya without considering the context and the time. We have to see the freedom for the Israelites as pointing to the freedom of sinners from sin through Jesus Christ because Jesus Himself said that all Scriptures point to Him (Luke 24:27). For example, we do not celebrate the Day of Atonement because Jesus, by His atoning work on the cross did it all, so that there remains no longer a place for sacrifices and feasts – Jesus paid it all perfectly (Heb. 9:13; 10:4)

Finally it is illogical to apply everything in this passage in wholesale to everyone. Are there slaves in Kenya? Not every Kenyan is a Christian. Who is going to accept to either sell or buy on the basis of the number of years of the jubilee? So how many Kenyans are not going to plant? This manner of applying Scripture makes it impossible to be completely consistent with the rest of the Bible and so it is wrong.

It is particularly disturbing that even Christians have imbibed so much materialism. ‘Great and good things’ to many of them are economic development for the country, and financial prosperity for the individual citizens. Is this the will of God for each one of the believers? Is it not godliness and content, which is of greatest value (1 Tim. 6:6) for a heavenly-minded person? Is it not Christ who is the riches of surpassing worth for Christians? Christ has fulfilled the greatest Jubilee in that He has reconciled sinners to God, by His single sacrifice and has ransomed people from every nation, tribe, language and race.

Is not your delight and satisfaction only in God? May it be that you will ever be satisfied only in God, in Christ alone, in His grace only? Do not let false teachers, who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16) deceive you. Do not let politicians take you for a ride imagining that they will fulfill the wonderful promises they make. Rather, put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and depend only in His word for instruction in faith and practice.

This is a quarterly magazine to promote a deep knowledge of the Bible. It is sent to you free of charge through the generous contributions of other Christians.

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gntmag@gmail.com

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P.O. Box 57907 00200 Nairobi.

Editor:

Keith Underhill

Producer:

Ken Sakwa

Design:

David Kuria

Published by:

Trinity Baptist Church

P.O. Box 57907 00200 Nairobi.

Tel: 020 2626 016 or 0202626023

Cell phone: 0728 431067 (for M-Pesa)

E-mail: info@trinity.or.ke

website: www.trinity.or.ke

You may send your questions, comments and compliments to:

THE EDITOR,

GRACE & TRUTH MAGAZINE

using the address above.

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