

GRACE & TRUTH



PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Luke 11:9-10



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 visit us on the web at:

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Keith Underhill

GRACE & TRUTH Magazine



Cover: Prayer is one of the most important subject in the life of a Christian. It is given great prominence in the Bible. Prayer in the spiritual life is like breathing in the physical. Christians are encouraged to “*Pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)

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

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING!

John Muketha

Prayer is the most important subject in the life of a Christian which is given great prominence in the word of God. In Genesis 4:26 we read, *“At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD”* and the closing word is the *“amen”* of an earnest supplication (Revelation 22:21). There are numerous instances of God’s people praying. Here we find Abraham interceding for Sodom; Jacob wrestling in prayer; Daniel praying three times a day and David who with all his heart called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elijah and in the prison there is Paul and Silas. The Bible contains many commands and promises on prayer which stress its importance and necessity to the Christian. If God has said much about prayer in His Word, it is because He knows that we have much need of it.

Prayer is absolutely necessary to the salvation of a sinner because *“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* (Romans 10:13). No one can have salvation without asking for it. We must never cease to pray because of the depth of our needs. Prayer on earth precedes praise in heaven. Prayer in the spiritual life is like breathing in the physical life. The Spirit who makes sinners a new creation in Christ, also makes them cry *“Abba Father”* (Romans 8:15). These recognize their need of grace and mercy and feel their weakness and emptiness which drives them to call on the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26; Psalm 14:4; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Peter 1:17).

The habit of prayer is a sure mark of a true Christian and prayer itself is a good indicator of the intimacy of our relationship with God. When there is laxity and lukewarmness regarding the things of God, then prayer becomes a challenge. Can we be too busy to pray? It happens and it is an indicator that our priorities are misplaced. Do we honour God in our lives and are we submitting to His will? To be prayerless is to be without God, without Christ, without grace, without hope and without heaven. A prayerless soul is a Christless soul, heading towards hell.

The Word of God encourages us to pray as individuals and corporately as a church. As a church, we have committed ourselves to pray earnestly in 2014. As God’s people, we must seek our Father’s face and live in His love. Pray that this year you may be holy, humble, zealous, and patient and have closer communion with Christ. Pray that you may be an example and a blessing to others and that you may live more to the glory of your Master.

We long to see souls saved and added to the membership of the church. We desire for revival in our midst. But how can these happen unless we plead with Him who alone can save sinners? We must pray for loved ones and friends who are still strangers to the grace of God. We must pray for those God has called to His service. We must pray for those in leadership positions in our country. *“Pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)

THE BLESSING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT *Keith Underhill*

EPHESIANS 1:13-14

This is the sixth and last of the blessings which Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, and all Christians describes, and for which we bless God. It is most assuring and comforting and has to do with the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself. It is sad that the subject of the Holy Spirit is so often controversial, giving rise to arguments and even division. This is because the focus is on the gifts the Spirit gives, rather than on His indwelling in all believers. We should first appreciate who the Spirit is for *all* Christians, rather than emphasizing the gifts that make differences between Christians.

Paul writes specifically of the Gentile believers (“you also”), and then returns to the normal first person plural (“our”) that includes himself. This is his way to show conclusively that Gentiles are equal with the Jewish believers having the same gift of the Spirit (see Acts 11:17). Gentiles and Jews are united in Christ.

The great question after considering the fifth blessing of the inheritance is, ‘How can I really be sure that I belong to the Lord and will finally receive the inheritance promised?’ God is so gracious that He not only gives His word as One who works all things according to His will (v. 11), but He also gives special evidence to add to assurance – the gift of the Holy Spirit. For example, your father tells you that over the December holidays he will take you to a special place. Of course you believe because it is your father who told you. But because it is the first time for him to do this, and he wants to leave no doubt in your mind, so he shows you the receipts for the bookings. The gift of the Holy Spirit is like those receipts.

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SEAL

“..., *were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit*” (v. 13)

Seals have many inter-related uses – to show ownership, to prove genuineness, and to protect. The brand on an animal shows its true owner; the seal on a document shows its genuineness (Ezra 3:10,12); the wax seal on an electricity meter shows if it has been tampered with (so Jesus’ tomb, Matthew 27:55-56). Here the emphasis is on protection of the Christian in order to receive the full inheritance on the final day (so also 2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 4:30). Note that the seal is the Holy Spirit Himself by virtue of His indwelling the believer, and not something that the Holy Spirit does in the believer. He is given as the One “promised”, in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28), by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11), by Jesus Himself (John 7:37-39, Acts 1:4-5, compare 2:33,39). So the gift of the Spirit is the fulfilment of a great expectation. There is special emphasis on His being “holy”, for His presence separates us from the world.

It is not true to Biblical teaching that this sealing of the Spirit is some special experience *after* conversion, so only for those who qualify to receive it. The

extended passage from 1:3 is an exhortation for ALL Christians to rejoice in the blessings they have in Christ. How important it is for you to know that you have the Spirit, for then you know you belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19), that you are truly a son of God (Romans 8:16-17, Galatians 4:6), and you will be sure of receiving the inheritance. How can you know if the Holy Spirit indwells you? How do you know if there is life in a tree? You look for the fruit, for the effects of that life. The Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8) – have you been convicted? The Spirit produces fruit (Galatians 5:22) – do you have any such fruit? Natural man, without the Spirit, is unable to produce such fruit.

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT SEALS BELIEVERS

“In him you also, when you heard the words of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, ...” (v. 13)

Who experiences this blessing of being sealed with the Holy Spirit? It is all those, and only those, who believe the message they hear.

(1) *You hear the message.* In the days of these Ephesians hearing was almost the only way you got to know anything. We do not know who first went with the gospel to Ephesus, but we know Priscilla and Aquila were there when Apollos arrived (Acts 18:24-26), and afterwards Paul himself came (19:1). They brought the gospel of “salvation,” for the Ephesians were idolaters worshipping a stone that had fallen from heaven (19:35), and they had a life-style that corresponded with idolatry, as described in Ephesians 4:17-19. The message the servants of God brought was good news of a rescue operation to such in spiritual death, under God’s wrath, and in bondage to evil powers, to sin and the flesh. For example, Lot was dwelling securely in Sodom but he was rescued by the angels (Genesis 19). Like Lot, you may not realize that judgment is determined, but you are in the most dangerous predicament needing rescue. The good news is that Jesus Christ has come to save even the foremost of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

(2) *You believe the message.* The Ephesians believed in Christ when they heard the message. What is this response that is called ‘believing’? It is to say to God: “I have sinned, my conscience testifies against me, and I know that whatever is called righteousness is rubbish before God, so I put all my trust in Christ for forgiveness and acceptance.” Think of the tax collector, filled with shame and sorrow, crying out, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Luke 18:13). Cry out to God as he did, but do not say in your heart, ‘I am not a sinner like others; I am not willing to give up those things I enjoy (you do not call them sin); maybe later I will give some thought to the matter.’ That is foolish. If you are drowning and I throw two things to you, a bag with one million shillings and a rope, which one will you hold on to, the money or the rope?

(3) *You are sealed with the Holy Spirit.* All those who hear and believe are sealed. In giving His Spirit to indwell you God is assuring you that you really belong to Him, that you are a true Christian, and that He will protect you to the end so that you will receive all promised blessings. It is not a matter of spiritual gifts you might think you have, for these can be counterfeited (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The devil has such great power that he can do wonderful things (remember the magicians in Egypt, Exodus 7:11-12,22, 8:7). But the devil cannot produce

holiness because he is evil. Take note of Jesus' warning about what surprises will take place on the Day of Judgment – Matthew 7:21-23. But if you continue to put all your trust in Christ then it is the evidence that you are sealed.

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SEAL TO GUARANTEE THE INHERITANCE

“who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,” (v. 14)

Sometimes when a person sends a letter through the postal service he adds cello tape to make sure it arrives at its destination unopened. In the same way, the indwelling Holy Spirit is God's guarantee to us that we shall arrive safely at the final destination. The word translated “guarantee” is an interesting one (see also 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5). If you obtain a loan from a bank you may be required to deposit a title deed as security should you fail to repay the loan. The title deed is worth at least as much as the loan but it is different in kind, and when the loan is repaid the deed is returned to you. The Holy Spirit as the guarantee (*arrabōn* in Greek) is also a deposit, but it is the same in kind, a down payment, added to when everything is finally given. Like the “firstfruits” (Romans 8:23) it is a guarantee of the ingathering of the rest of the harvest. So the gift of the Holy Spirit is a foretaste of the inheritance. In other words, then we are going to know the indwelling of the Spirit in all possible fullness. It includes receiving a “spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44), a body totally controlled by the Holy Spirit. Presently the body is dead because of sin; then life will be given through the very indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:11). This is why we will have no sin, and be able to dwell in God's immediate presence, and so worship and serve Him. This is the final act of ‘redemption’ (alternative translation in ESV footnote) for which Christ died, for we are God's possession and He must bring to the end He has determined what belongs to Him.

Who now dares to proclaim that a true believer may be finally lost? How can one be lost who is sealed with the Holy Spirit from God? If God has sealed, who has power or authority to unseal? If you are a sincere believer in Christ this gives you absolute assurance of perseverance in the faith. What hope is here when you are in the midst of so many trials and temptations! So strive from the Scriptures to be sure that you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you.

4. PRAISE BE TO GOD!

“to the praise of his glory” (v. 14)

For the third time in this section (vv. 3-14) the Scriptures emphasize that God does all this first of all for His own glory. He is to receive the glory for we are totally unworthy and it is all of Him. He is to receive the glory for the blessings are so large. He is to receive the glory because these blessings stretch from eternity past into eternity for ever and ever!

These six blessings ought to be the constant theme of our blessing God, yet listen to our poor prayers. We seem to be much more concerned about the physical, outward and temporary, things like sickness, travel and money. We are more like one who begs for a shilling when he has millions in his bank account. Because God is our Father in Christ nothing is too little to ask, but we should

always remember that the blessings we have are at the cost of the sacrifice of His own beloved Son. You hear that there are precious rubies in Pokot North. What does it matter if you have to struggle to get there, walking long distances, facing hunger and thirst, enduring many dangers, if finally you get those rubies in your hand? Our eternal inheritance is not to be compared with all the rubies in the world, so what does it matter if I face so many difficulties on the way so long as I finally arrive? In the Hymn, *The sands of time are sinking*, there is the following lines of assurance:

*The King there in His beauty, without a veil is seen;
It were a well-spent journey, though **seven deaths** lay between;*

And when we finally enter our promised inheritance we shall for ever sing His praises (Revelation 5:13-14).

Every true Christian ought to be a man of prayer. All his views, all his affections, all his desires, hopes, and joys, ought to be constantly mounting on the wings of devotions and flying before him into heaven. Every rub that he meets with in this thorny wilderness, every outward combat, every inward struggle ought to make his groans and prayers rise incessantly, as memorials before that throne from which he expects aid and deliverance. Without this, he is only a nominal, not a real Christian...If [he is] not addicted to prayer, [he] is a man without any interest in Christ, without hope, and without God in the world. —John Smith

I believe that no man can have any evidence in his own soul that he doth conscientiously perform any ministerial duty toward his flock, who doth not continually pray for them. Let him preach as much as he will, visit as much as he will, speak as much as he will, unless God doth keep up in him a spirit of prayer in his closet and family for them, he can have no evidence that he doth perform any other ministerial duty in adue manner, or that what he doth is accepted with God.

—John Owen

HOW THE THESSALONIANS BECAME CHRISTIANS

Keith Underhill

If you have read the previous articles on conversion you ought to be able to give a Biblical answer to the question, What is True Conversion? There are at least 5 ingredients:

- It is a process, sometimes involving a long period of preparation.
- It is a powerful working of God, in providence, conviction of sin, and new life.
- The immediate means is always the word of God in some form.
- God's work leads a person to repentance and faith, and so to justification, adoption and receiving the Holy Spirit.
- The result is a total change of life.

In this article we bring to you one last example in which many of these ingredients are specifically noticed.

1. GOD'S CHOICE IS THE SOURCE OF CONVERSION

"For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you,..." (1:4)

Paul begins his letter to the Thessalonians in his usual way by thanking God for them, and especially the faith, love and hope that he knows they have. Where does such a Christian character come from? It cannot come from the native soil of a person's heart. These people were idolaters (v. 9). It can only come from God, and God's sovereign choice. Paul is sure that God has chosen these believers, and that is the reason why they are believers. Read the following verses where God is said to have chosen people: Matthew 24:22,24,31, Luke 18:7, Romans 8:33, 9:11, 11:5,7, 16:13, 1 Corinthians 1:27-28, Ephesians 1:4, Colossians 3:12, 2 Timothy 2:10, Titus 1:1, James 2:5, 1 Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 1:10, 2 John 1,13, Revelation 17:14. Conversion is the result of God fulfilling His eternal plan.

It must be emphasized that it is God and not man who initiates the process of conversion, a plan He started before the world was made (Ephesians 1:4). Many do not like this emphasis and complain that God is unfair, arbitrary, and that the doctrine cannot be true because it hinders salvation. It is true that every question you might have about election cannot be fully answered, but this does not mean it may be rejected. To those who continue to press their questions Paul responds very strongly, "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?" (Romans 9:20). Rather look upon this unfathomable teaching as a great source of joy and comfort! It will force you to look to the Lord in total dependence. It will assure you that He will complete the work He has begun (see Romans 8:28-30). It is because God so graciously chose the Thessalonians that Paul can call them brothers "loved by God". The fact is that if God had not chosen anyone to be saved, then no one would be saved. Who else but God can overcome our sin?

2. THE GOSPEL IS THE MEANS OF CONVERSION

“because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit” (1:5)

How did the Thessalonians become Christians? At the ordained time, in His providence, God brought His messenger to the town. Paul had been entrusted by God with a message (2:4). He was not a social welfare activist, or a political reformer. Nor did he come with a healing crusade. He came with the gospel, the good news about Jesus, His sufferings and resurrection, that He is the Christ (Acts 17:2-3). The purpose of Paul’s coming to Thessalonica was but **one** – to bring the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2:2,4,13, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

There are many great and genuine needs in society. But it is to the church and its messengers that the gospel has been committed, and to none else. If the church does not take the gospel to the world then who will? None can be saved without receiving the gospel. Brethren, let us put the gospel of Christ first in our lives. It is the means God uses to save His chosen ones. So preach, witness, bring people to hear preaching, give out CDs and literature. How much of this you are seeking to do shows what you believe about the means of conversion.

Yet it is sad that multitudes who do hear the gospel are never converted. Something more is needed. The gospel must come to a person, not only in word, but also “in power and in the Holy Spirit”. This equals the power of the Spirit, divine power. Only with such power can human words make any impression on a sinner’s heart and change the life (see also 2:13, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Paul remembers how powerfully God spoke through his preaching by the effects of that word.

3. CONVICTION IS THE NATURE OF CONVERSION

“and with full conviction” (1:5)

Some of the Thessalonians who heard Paul’s preaching were fully persuaded that the message about Jesus as the Christ, the Saviour from sin, exactly suited their need, and so they wholeheartedly embraced it. They received the message as a Divine message, the very word of **God**. Someone comes to your house with a message, and when you find it is from one who was your best friend but from whom you have heard nothing for 5 years, you get excited. What a difference it makes when you are convinced that the word you have heard is God Himself speaking to you. That is what happens in the experience of conversion. You begin to take what God says seriously, as more important than anything else. This is why some of you have never experienced this life transformation because the Bible is just one voice claiming your attention amongst so many other competing voices.

This full conviction led the Thessalonians to a thorough repentance, a complete change of life. Like the Romans they changed masters (Romans 6:16-19). It was not just a matter of throwing away their idols, but of a total life change. They began to speak against idolatry, they were no longer present at idol ceremonies, they refused to identify with other idolaters, and they had full allegiance to their new Master, Jesus Christ (vv. 9-10). What would it mean if you began to take the

word of God seriously, instead of just paying lip service? God's word would now direct you, and not culture, relatives or the desire for advancement or riches. You now live for God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). You will turn back from all sin, and especially specific sins that characterize you. It may be anger, lying, immorality or corruption; it may be the way you live at home, or conduct yourself at work. And you will now live a life centred around God's people in worship, fellowship and service. This is true conversion!

4. AFFLICTION AND JOY ARE THE RESULTS OF CONVERSION

"you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1:6)

(1) Too often becoming a Christian is seen as a wide opening into health and prosperity in the world. But not so to the Thessalonians, they received the word "in much **affliction**". For their experience of affliction see also 2:14-16, 3:3-5, and remember the account of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-9. In some measure affliction must be the experience of every true Christian. This is because conversion means changing sides in the battle, enlisting in the Lord's service against the powers of darkness. If your Master was hated, you must expect to be treated the same way (John 15:18-21). So do not be surprised if you are not understood, if people cannot agree with you though you have been so reasonable. You may be mocked and opposed even (and especially?) by those who say they love you most. Rather be surprised if they say nothing (so Luke 6:26). When affliction has come what has been your reaction? Capitulation? This is what the rocky ground hearer does (Matthew 13:20-21).

(2) The true convert has **joy** even in the midst of affliction (so the disciples in Acts 5:41, 16:25). This is the work of the Holy Spirit and is one of the great evidences of true conversion. How is it possible? It is when you know that afflictions are necessary for spiritual maturity (Romans 5:3-5). James goes so far as to exhort, "Count it **all joy**, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds..." (James 1:2-4). Knowing that you must face afflictions will help you not to relax in this world, and it will fan the flame of eternal hope. Afflictions cannot prevent the return of our Saviour for which we are eagerly waiting (v. 10). So there is nothing that can take away the joy of this certain hope.

Conversion begins with God's electing plan in eternity and is completed by God in eternal glory. Are you part of this process? Have you received as the word of God the word about Christ preached? Have you whole-heartedly embraced that word? Have you turned your back on your old way of life? Are you serving God with joy in the midst of afflictions?

COMMON QUESTION NO. 2

ARE THERE APOSTLES TODAY?

Keith Underhill

In seeking to answer this question the first thing to do is to think exactly what you mean by the word ‘apostle’. Do you mean what the Bible says, or do you use the word as commonly used today? Obviously there are apostles (in some sense) today as there are many in churches that so call themselves. But is today’s use also the Biblical use? If you mean by the word apostle someone like the Twelve and Paul then there are no such apostles today.

1. **The Twelve are unique.** Jesus chose 12 men from amongst His disciples and named them *apostles* (Luke 6:12-16). He did this after spending a whole night in prayer which shows how important this group of men are. Jesus did not add to their number. Why did He choose just 12 and not 10, for example? It is because, like the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 apostles represent the new people of God. This is why “the twelve apostles of the Lamb” are the foundation of the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14).

2. **No one today can have the qualifications necessary to be one of the Twelve.** When Judas forfeited the office Matthias was chosen to complete the number. But he had to be one who “accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us” (Acts 1:21-22). Who alive today was with Jesus in His three years of ministry in Israel! Further, an apostle had the special position of being “a witness to His resurrection” (Acts 1:22, see also 2:31, 4:33). Who alive today has such a genuine testimony? Paul says he is the last (1 Corinthians 15:8).

3. **Paul had to defend his claim to being an apostle.** One of the reasons surely was that he was not one of the Twelve. Paul clearly claims to be an apostle of *Jesus Christ*, that is, chosen by Christ as the Twelve were (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:6, 1 Timothy 1:1, 2:7, 2 Timothy 1:1,11, 2 Timothy 1:1, Titus 1:1). Peter uses the same self-designation (1 Peter 1:1, 2 Peter 1:1). Further, Paul definitely claims to be a witness to the resurrection, having seen Jesus on the Damascus road (1 Corinthians 9:1, 15:8, see Acts 9:5, 22:8,14). True he was not with Jesus in His earthly ministry, which is why he says he was “untimely born”. It is probable that the Lord taught him much in the deserts of Arabia after his conversion (Galatians 1:17). Paul also states that the existence of the church in Corinth is ‘the seal of his apostleship’ (1 Corinthians 9:2).

4. **There are false apostles.** Even in apostolic days there were those who falsely claimed to be apostles. Every claim must be evaluated according to Biblical standards! He mockingly calls them “super-apostles” because of their great claims (2 Corinthians 11:5, 12:11, see 11:13). Read Paul’s refutation of these false apostles, and his defence of his true apostleship in 2 Corinthians 10-13. He notes that “the signs of a true apostle were performed among you” (2 Corinthians 12:12). “Signs and wonders” are almost always tied only to the apostles (see Acts 2:43, 5:12). It was God’s way of bearing witness that their message was true (so Acts 14:3, Heb. 2:4). But take care! There are also false signs and wonders (Deuteronomy 13:1ff., Matthew 24:24, 2 Thessalonians 2:9),

so by themselves they do not prove the person performing them is genuine (remember Matthew 7:21-23, and the magicians of Egypt).

5. **Apostles are the foundation of the church.** This is the honoured place apostles have in the church (Ephesians 2:20). They are joined with “prophets”, the New Testament and not the Old Testament prophets (see 3:5). “Apostles and prophets” probably means, ‘apostles and (other) prophets’, as apostles are also prophets. They are the foundation, the beginning of the building of the church. Just as we do not expect the foundation to be the whole building, so we expect the apostles to be the foundation on which the building of the church is laid. The apostles have a unique role, as prophets they were the recipients of revelation from God that completed the Old Testament Scriptures. All the writers of the New Testament were either apostles, wrote under the direction of an apostle (Peter and the Gospel of Mark), or were close companions with the apostles (James). The foundation has been laid once for all (see Jude 3) for the Holy Spirit revealed to the apostles all the truth needed (Jn. 14:26, 16:13). If it is claimed there are genuine apostles today, then it is a claim that the foundation is not yet complete, that God is still revealing truth that should be incorporated into the Scriptures!!

6. **‘Apostles’ are a modern phenomenon in the church.** Outside of the Twelve and Paul the church of the first few centuries knew nothing of apostles, although it invented many other titles. Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church sought to revive the apostolate in the 1830s as have some sections of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in the 20th. Century. Their claim that all the spiritual gifts in the New Testament *must* still be present forces them to include the apostolic gift (Ephesians 4:11). But if apostles are foundation in the church of Christ, then there are no more apostles, but the Twelve and Paul do function **today** through the inspired writings of the New Testament. May we suggest that many are taking the title ‘Apostle’ because it gives them unquestioned authority over the lives of their followers. Who would dare question an Apostle?

7. **Objections answered.**

- *‘Ephesians 4:11 teaches that Christ gave the gift of apostles to His church.’* And the Twelve and Paul still function in the church of the 21st. century through the New Testament scriptures. Note that while we know the qualifications for a pastor and teacher (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9) we do not know the qualifications for appointing an apostle, prophet, or even evangelist.
- *‘Other men are called apostles, so the group is wider than the Twelve and Paul.’* Appeal is made to Acts 14:4 to include Barnabas, to Romans 16:7 to include Junia, but neither of these is conclusive. The word ‘apostle’ is used in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25 and is translated “messenger” (ESV) for that is the basic unofficial meaning of the word.

8. **Application.** The writings of the apostles are the very word of God and they are to be submitted to without question. Note the absolute authority with which Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14:37-38) and the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 3:6,14). Whatever others say, even if they style themselves apostles, must be subject to the apostolic Scriptures (so 1 John 4:1-6). This is why in his letter to the Galatians, who were turning to a false gospel, he establishes his genuine apostleship. If he is an apostle of Jesus Christ then his word is Christ’s word.

Has God given a Biblical model for church leadership in Scripture or has He just left the church with prudence and discretion? God has clearly revealed from His Word, the Bible, how His church is to be governed by men. Bearing in mind that the church is the most important institution on earth that God has given us, how can He leave it to the discretion of mortal, fallen, fickle and finite human mind?

The fact that there are so many models adopted by various denominations does not mean that they all are Biblical. We have to regard the many models of church leadership as tragic. There is only one model of church leadership that God has appointed in the Bible. This is why you will notice that while there are various models adopted by men, yet there are similarities, because I believe, every church is trying to conform to the Biblical model.

The issue of church leadership is so important that Paul tells Titus, “*This is why I left you in Crete so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.*” (Titus 1:5)

The church that is without elders is not in order! It may have the most wonderful congregation, the best building and in the best location; it may have deacons, and it may even have one elder, yet it is not in order until it has elders (plural)! From among the membership, (either within or without) the church identifies men who qualify and appoint them as their pastors or deacons, by laying hands on them.

What is the Biblical leadership?

The New Testament church only knows *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers* (Ephesians 4:11) as the leaders in the church. It says nothing about a pope, cardinal, archbishop or a bishop over many churches, priest, archdeacon, etc. and these must only be considered as an invention of human mind.

- a) ***Extra-ordinary officers like Apostles*** (the Twelve chosen by Christ and Paul), the Prophets (like Moses, Jeremiah, Agabus, inter alia.) and Evangelists like Philip, Mark, Timothy and Titus. It is not possible that any one today can fulfil the qualifications of an apostle (see. Acts 1:21-22). The Bible does not give us the qualifications for a prophet or an evangelist, and we assume that these offices have been withdrawn together with the apostles, having served their purpose in the apostolic church [of laying the foundation for the church (Ephesians 2:20)].
- b) ***Ordinary officers*** who lead the church today and include the Elders, which is synonymous with bishops/overseers or pastors, and the office of the deacons.
 - 1) ***ELDERS (this is the most common title in Scripture)***

This office has a number of titles to show the various functions. Pastor is also called ‘bishop’ or ‘elder’ (Acts 14:23, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1, 5:17, Titus 1:5, 7, James 5:14). When Paul spoke with the ‘elders’ of the church in Ephesus

in Acts 20:17-35, he called them ‘bishops’ (or overseers), and commands them to “care” for the church. This literally means to ‘shepherd’ or ‘to do the work of a pastor’ (v. 28). Peter also addresses the ‘elders’ in 1 Peter 5:1-4, commanding them to ‘tend’ (shepherd) the flock as pastors, and have ‘oversight’ as bishops (v. 2).

The word ‘minister’ means servant. It applies to anyone doing a work of service within the church, and every spiritual gift must be used in the context of a local church and never for individual use. There is no Biblical warrant for any church leader to take the title ‘reverend,’ as it should only be reserved for God – only God is to be revered or feared! Clearly, the elders of a local church are the only leaders with authority in the church today. They are to only take orders from the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His Word and are to be answerable to the local church not some bishop or denominational headquarters in Nairobi or elsewhere! This ensures the independence of each local church from external influence of men.

Pastors are expected to be faithful shepherds over the church as laid down in such passages as Acts 20:20,21,28-31; Hebrews 13:17; and 1 Peter 5:1-3. This is done in:

- ❖ Prayer and preaching (Acts 6:4)
- ❖ Visitation for the purpose of watching over individual souls (Acts 20:20; Hebrews 13:17), private instruction, encouragement and dealing with any problems. The sick especially should be visited (James 5:14)
- ❖ Arranging and presiding over congregational meetings
- ❖ Appointment of those who perform an official function in the church
- ❖ Maintaining discipline by teaching, rebuking and the recommendation of discipline to the church
- ❖ Interviewing applicants for membership

It should be observed that all elders ought to have equal authority, being subject to one another, and they should regularly meet together to pray and discuss the spiritual matters of the church (Acts 13:2). While every elder is a ruling pastor, one or more of the elders will be more fully devoted to formal and public teaching of the Word of God (1 Timothy 5:17). Other gifted men may publicly teach the Word of God under the direction of the elders.

Qualifications of the elders: (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

Personal: *Not a recent convert, above reproach, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, not arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, a lover of good, upright, holy, and disciplined.*

Domestic: *The husband of one wife, hospitable, manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?*

Pastoral: *Well thought of by outsiders, able to teach, must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*

2) **DEACONS** (Acts 6:1-6, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Deacons are helpers of the elders, who assist them by relieving them of the more material affairs so that the elders may concentrate on their spiritual duties (Acts 6:1-4). However, deacons have no authority to rule, and no responsibility to teach and preach, although some like Stephen and Philip preached (Acts 7 & 8). Depending on the needs of a local church, these are some of the needs that deacons can meet:

- ❖ Ministry to the sick and needy, especially those who are members of the congregation, including visitation and, if necessary, provision for their material needs from the church's funds
- ❖ Collecting, distributing and accounting for the church's finances
- ❖ Looking after their pastors and other workers of the church financially, from the church funds
- ❖ Waiting on tables, i.e. administering the practical affairs of the church, such as preparation for the Lord's Table
- ❖ Maintenance of the church property
- ❖ Preparation for meetings

What are the qualifications for deacons? (Acts 6:3-5; 1 Timothy 3:8-13)

Good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, full of faith, dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain, hold firm to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, blameless. With wives who are dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things, husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.

Can women be in the leadership?

Women have a significant role of *supporting and complimenting* the male leadership by biblically using their spiritual gifts, rather than from the frontline. They are to be involved in the education and instruction of other women and the children; hospitality ministries, bringing up children, washing the feet of the saints, caring for the afflicted, or generally *devotion to good works*. This is the delegated responsibilities from either the eldership or diaconate. Definitely the work they have at home of supporting their husbands and the children is very important (1 Timothy 5:10; Titus 2:3-6).

However, there is no example of an apostle or elder in the New Testament who was a woman. It is clearly written, *"I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men"* (1 Timothy 2:12). Women cannot lead the church as elders. They may possibly be deacons, if Romans 16:1 and 1 Timothy 3:11 are interpreted to refer to the office, which comes with great hermeneutical difficulties.

Reading 1 Corinthians 14:32b-40 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14, some suppose that these passages of Scripture were only meant for the women at Corinth or Ephesus, or that Paul was a male chauvinist. If you take these myopic arguments seriously, you will be left with a Bible that does not have 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus – if this happens then you will have to throw away the whole Bible because it will be that you no longer believe in the inspiration, authority, sufficiency and finality of Scripture. The reason why women cannot be leaders in the church is because God has said so in His Word which is authoritative and the reasons given are universal – applicable in Jerusalem and Corinth in the first century and in Nairobi and Beijing today!

You cannot ignore this clear instruction of God and have a godly ministry – even if I know women with assemblies with thousands of people. Do not be as pragmatic as they are to say that if people are being saved in their ministries, that it is fine. It is not fine because it is done in rebellion – while God can use even a donkey to speak His oracles (he did with Balaam, who for this is condemned, see 2Peter 2:15-16 and Jude 11), we must not put God to tests as many others have done in rebellion!

MY STORY

Edward Mbogo

I first came to the knowledge of the Cross back in September, 2010. I thought I was born again when I said the sinner's prayer. I thought it came right from the bottom of my heart. But to be honest with myself, I was unchanged! I calmly stroked my sinful pleasures as I worsened. I kept running back to the same empty dry well that had nothing to offer. I was drenched in sin, and my transgressions had gotten the better of me, rather, all of me.

I would from time to time display the 'model' Christian before others, but the darkness in my heart knew not the light. Hypocrisy was the order of the day. I would read several verses that rebuked my evil tendencies, and I would quickly grab my phone and text a few friends on what I read, I would 'be happy' that they got convicted of their sin... funny I never was deeply convicted by it, God's Word. Truly, I was dead in my transgressions. I could not simply make a decision to change, God was the only one capable of giving me a heart transplant.

A few friends I had would have bible discussions regularly, and I started attending a few of them. They always challenged me, and revealed a truth I so vehemently denied at first. I was not a Christian. The Lord opened my eyes to the truth, I saw my sin, ugly as ever! I was deeply convicted, and I hated being me. Who would deliver me from this body of sin...

But God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:5). He made me alive! The God I shunned, made me alive. The God I rebelled against, breathed life through me! The God who I so actively dishonoured, made me a new creature. What love is this that a God I was at enmity with, would die for my sins and grant me His righteousness...

I thank God for His mercy. I thank Him for placing me in a Christ-centred church that delights in glorifying Him. I thank the faithful God, who will sustain me to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:7).

A Case for Christian Education

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

The truth that parents have a primary responsibility over the education of their children is a Biblical fact. Parents, and especially fathers, do not have the option of abdicating this responsibility. Even where fathers rightfully delegate the education of their children to responsible school teachers, church leaders or even their wives, they still must remember they are primarily responsible before God when it comes to ensuring their children are effectively nurtured in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

There are some parents who think that it is enough to consistently drop-off their children in church on Sunday morning, drive-off and then come back to pick them after the worship service. Such parents believe they have expended sufficient effort towards what is required from them by God. There are others who even go as far as attending church with their children. On getting to church they dispatch their young ones to Sunday school and know almost nothing concerning what their children are being taught or who teaches them. Is this parental effort a sufficient stewardship of God’s call on them to properly steward the spiritual nurture of their children? Many believers would generally be apt to admonish such parents for their below average involvement in the training of their children. My question would be concerned with what happens in the academic arena?

In the academic area of child training a very similar thing happens. We however tend to respond differently. Instead of correcting the partially engaged parent we hold in high esteem one who pays tuition fees, ensures the child gets to school on time and comes back home safely even if he knows very little concerning the education or educators of his children. If the child is performing well in academics, such a parent is even more respected in society.

While I appreciate the efforts of parents who strive in any way to give their children good education, I need to ask a question. What is the required scope of concern for the parent who would like to honour God as he or she nurtures their child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord? I suggest that there are several. I list some of them below.

The Cause of the Education

The committed parent must clarify, *‘What is the primary reason for education?’* I suggest that if education fails to achieve everything else, it must not fail to prepare the learner to carry out the chief end of man. Sunday school, primary school or even tertiary education must ensure the learner is equipped to love God above all else and to love one’s neighbour as oneself.

Passing KCSE, getting good college education and a high paying job has unfortunately become the main reason why parents take their children to school. Important as these goals are, they are by far not the number one reason for educating our children. As you pay tuition fees to ensure your children get an education that will increase their odds of passing national exams and getting a good job, you must of chief importance ensure your children get equipped to love God above all else and to love their neighbour as themselves.

The Content of the Education

Does your child only *learn how to count or does she also learn what counts?* As you evaluate your obedience to God's call, ask yourself about the content and the methodology being employed in the teaching of your child.

Most of the content being taught in schools today is child-centred but not God centred? Being child focused is ok as long as we ensure we are God centred in our content and approach.

If a school's approach is not Biblical and we still hope that by using it we will bring up our children in the fear and admonition of God then we are misguided. Can you make a good omelette with rotten eggs? Does your Sunday school teach religious propaganda or Biblical truths?

The content employed in the nurture of our children should ensure they grow up, '...in wisdom, in stature and in favour with God and man.' (Luke 2:52)

Is it not true that most of our nurturing effort only focuses on mental growth and demeans physical, social and spiritual growth?

The Context of the Education

Is there anything like a religiously neutral school? Knowingly or unknowingly, all schools have a religious agenda. All schools are therefore religious and all school going children are receiving a religious education. Even in the common situation where schools seem silent or apathetic about the matter of religion, they will usually be training their students in secularism – which is by the way a religion.

The question that parents must ask concerning the school that their child attends is, which religion are they promoting? There is a religious war that's going on in the schools. It is the battle of the world views.

Parents must appreciate they are in a battle for the minds and souls of their children. All our school-going children are receiving religious education which either honours Christ or glorifies man and ultimately the devil.

Christians are called to love the things that God loves and to hate what He hates. We know that God only loves those institutions that would give glory to His Son. We know that a love for the world is tantamount to enmity with God. How then can a parent who desires to honour God fall in love with education systems that seek to demean the Lord Jesus on almost every single day of the week?

In addition, do you know who teaches your child? Many parents invest heavily in profiling the care-taker whom they leave at home with their child and then rely almost entirely on their child to know about the class teacher. Is the former more important than the latter? Is it that we fear the physical harm that could befall our children in the hands of evil caretakers more than the spiritual harm that would come their way from sinful tutors? The successful caregiver will hugely be focused on replacing diapers while the successful teacher on changing destinies.

If your child walks with the wise he will be wise. If he becomes a companion of fools he will be destroyed.

The Custom-fitting of Education

Parents must not provoke their children to wrath. A one-cut fit all approach to education can be one of the most discouraging and ultimately wrath provoking thing to a child.

Parents have a responsibility to train their children in the way that they should go. To properly do this the education must be in certain ways tailor-made to fit the child's God given competencies and capacities.

Must all children go to the university? Must all children train for white-collar jobs? Must all children have stellar athletic performance records? Must all our children be great in public speaking and such performance arts? The answer is clearly no.

A parent who fails to consciously custom-make the child's education will unconsciously find out that the child is being forced to fit the world's mould of who he should turn out to be.

From where do we get our marching orders as Christians? Is it from the world or from God's Word? We get our directions for life from God's Word. If the world sets out to offer a solution – in this case the education of our children – will we embrace the worldly method just because it produces 'results' even if the Bible suggests a different method from the popular one?

The commands of Scripture must be obeyed by faith. There are some difficult things that we are called to do in God's Word. Things that would swim against the tide of our culture but which must nevertheless be obeyed by all those who seek to honour the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer should be the natural outflow of the soul: you should pray because you must pray, not because the set time for praying has arrived, but because your heart must cry unto your Lord – Charles Spurgeon.

He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD (Proverbs 17:15).

The world has created the Age of Compromise. Human society has made every effort to get rid of all absolutes. Wicked men are excused and exonerated, and even protected; just men are criticized and condemned. But the LORD Jehovah hates both kinds of compromisers – those who justify the wicked, and those who condemn the just. The living and true God of heaven has absolutes, and He expects men to abide by them and enforce them. When He commanded judges to be appointed in Israel, He ordered, “*If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked*” (Deuteronomy 25:1 KJV).

The Bible is a collection of God’s absolute standards, which He requires, upheld without hesitation (II Chronicles 19:10; Nehemiah 8:8; II Timothy 2:15). Jesus Christ authoritatively declared that violating even the Bible’s least commandment was an abomination (Matthew 5:19); and breaking one commandment of God is tantamount to breaking all the commandments in God’s sight (James 2:10). It’s clear from Scripture that God makes absolute distinctions. Ask those that doubted Noah’s edict about the flood. Find out from the lesbian and gay population of Sodom! Inquire from Pharaoh and his army about the plagues! These illustrations which could be multiplied indefinitely, point to one fact: Jehovah God condemned the wicked.

God cares about details. Observe Cain offering his sacrifice to the LORD at the right time and place. Look at what happens to Moses in his fit of anger when he smote a rock instead of speaking to it. Ask Nadab and Abihu about their strange fire. Ask David about moving the ark on a new ox cart. Ask Ananias and Sapphira about fudging their giving. Ask the Corinthian church about having a little fun at the Lord’s Supper. Ask Peter about compromise with Jews at Antioch. It is clear that in matters of judgment and relationships, the wicked are to be despised and rejected, and the righteous are to be loved and received. David hated the wicked like God does (Psalms 5:5; 11:5; 139:21-22). And David loved the righteous like God does (Psalms 119:163; 146:8). The animosity and conflict between the righteous and wicked will never end (Proverbs 29:10).

Justice is vindication of good and condemnation of evil. It takes place in courts of law, in the home, in the workplace, in churches, in schools, and even among friends. In these and other situations, just men are to be honoured, and wicked men are to be condemned. It is sad that in most of the world’s legal systems, the laws are no longer the paragon of justice. From lower to higher courts, the wicked are excused and the just punished. Judges are chosen and approved, not for their personal integrity but for other political and social considerations. For example, abortion is legalized in many Western jurisdictions to justify cruel and wicked women and to condemn their innocent unborn children to death. The profane murderers are given ‘choice-rights’, while the murdered innocents are condemned to early bloody death!

In the world today, criminals enjoy unfettered rights unlike their victims. Employees have more rights than their employers. Husbands must bow to the

whims of their wives. Authoritative parents are despised and undermined. Looking much closer home, in the local churches, there is much compromise than even in the secular world. Just as Paul prophesied and warned Timothy (II Timothy 3:1 – 4:4), false doctrine and teachers must be named and condemned; true doctrine and faithful teachers must be defended and honored.

Many say, “Let’s agree to disagree.” But the fact is that God does not have such a loose approach to truth. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, and every moral issue has one right and many wrong positions. David said, *“Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way”* (Psalm 119:128 KJV). Others say, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1, 6 KJV), missing the Lord’s command, in context, to pass righteous judgment (John 7:24). They value peace over truth, though God puts truth over peace (Amos 3:3; I Timothy 6:3-5).

Paul described the rise of an effeminate brand of Christianity that would despise those that are good and flatter lustful and sinful women (II Timothy 3:1-7). They would have a form of godliness – a religious ritual – but they would have no authority or judgment in their gospel or lifestyle. They would love pleasures more than God, and it would show by coddling of sinners. The political and religious situation today is the same as in first century Palestine. The conservative religious leaders and the political appointee of the greatest nation on earth cooperated to justify the seditious murderer Barabbas and condemn the innocent and just Jesus of Nazareth. Live and speak like Jesus Christ today, and they will crucify you as well, while they excuse evildoers in court and promote them via the entertainment media.

Reject the pleasure seeking churches of today for they have watered down Biblical standards to where almost anything is allowed and tolerated, or even defended and protected. Pulpits are used for a mushy concept of love and peace rather than God’s truth of holiness and judgment. The day is coming in which all judgment will be according to truth in the most absolute sense. The books will be opened, and there will be no mistrials, plea-bargaining, hung juries, pardons, or acquittals. The righteous will be given eternal life in heaven, and the wicked will be cast into hell forever (Matthew 13:41-43; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15).

You cannot be neutral, for neutrality is rejection of the Bible and rebellion against God, for He and the Bible are not neutral. Folly and wickedness are condemned, and wisdom and righteousness are exalted. Sinners are to be despised, and good men are to be honored (Psalms 15:4; 31:6; 101:3-8). Reject this effeminate generation and its compromise. Take a stand and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).

This Article was adapted from LetGodBeTrue.com ministries and reviewed for relevance.

SO GREAT A SALVATION! *John Muketha*

The gospel of salvation centres on the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Through the gospel, God offers salvation to all who believe. He reconciles us to Himself through His Son. This is the only way a sinner can be reconciled to a thrice Holy God. The writer to the Hebrews warns that: “*we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?*”(Hebrews 2:1-3). Paul tells us why this salvation is great in 2 Corinthians 5:21: *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us (Sinners), that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* This great salvation involves three persons: God the Father, God the Son and the sinner.

The God of Scripture is a sovereign God with absolute authority and absolute power to do what He pleases. He is a God of inflexible justice who will truly punish sin. As a sovereign God, He made Christ to be sin so as to satisfy His inflexible justice. The God of the Bible is also a God of grace, mercy and love, who does not rejoice in the death of sinners but that such should turn from their wicked ways and live (Ezekiel 18:23). This God of illimitable sovereignty, inflexible justice and unfathomable grace is the one who made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us.

Human beings are by nature dead in trespasses and sins; are under the control of the prince of the power of the air; are sons of wrath (Ephesians 2). In such a state how can they save themselves to be acceptable before God? Thank God for He is rich in mercy! He loved us with great love even when we were dead in trespasses. *For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9). Listen to Paul again – *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.* How can one in such a state be saved? Paul continues – But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:3-4). Brethren, rejoice for so great salvation, which is all ours by the grace of God.

The sinner stands before God condemned. God is gracious, and he desires to save him; God is just, and he must punish him. The sinner is to be tried; if there be a verdict of guilty brought in against him, how will the two conflicting attributes work in God’s mind? God is loving and wants to save the sinner; but He is just and He must destroy him! The sinless Son of God became the substitute as God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.

Salvation is great because it centres on Jesus Christ the Son of God. According to the text, Christ “knew no sin,” and this points to the sinless nature of His inner being. There was no sin outwardly because there was no sin inwardly. When Jesus Christ walked on the earth, he was perfectly righteous without fault, without sin, and without evil. He was pure, perfect, spotless and utterly incapable of committing anything that was wrong. He never broke any laws of God, and never deviated in the slightest degree from the path of God’s will. Christ knew all about sin, but he never sinned—not even once. He lived in a sinful world, but the

stain of sin never tarnished his character. He saw sin in others but He did not know it by experience. Christ is the only one about whom it can be truly said that he never sinned in word, in thought or in deed. If Christ had sinned he could not be our Savior since a sinner could not pay for the sins of another sinner. Christ is the “Lamb of God” who by his, sacrificial death would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

How do we know that Christ was without sin? The angel who announced his birth said: “*that Holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God*” (Luke 1:35). At His baptism God’s voice was heard saying “*This is my Beloved Son with Whom I am well pleased*”(Matthew 3:17). When Pontius Pilate examined Him, he declared, “*I find no guilt in this man.*” “*You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him*”.(Luke 23:4,14,15). When Herod and the Jewish leaders put him on trial, they could find no witnesses against him so they rounded up false witnesses who lied under oath (Matthew 26:59-60). When Christ hung on the Cross, the Roman centurion cried out, “*Truly this was the Son of God*”(Matthew 27:54).

Only Jesus could ask: “*Which of you convicts Me of sin?*”(John 8:46) and neither His enemies nor His friends could convict Him even of a single sin. Jesus claimed power which uniquely belonged to God. Jesus’ friends and enemies were staggered again and again by what he said and did. He would be walking down the road, seemingly like any other man, then turn and say something like, ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’ Or, ‘If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.’ Or, very calmly, after being accused of blasphemy, he would say, ‘The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.’ To the dead he might simply say, ‘Come forth,’ or, ‘Rise up.’ And they would obey. To the storms on the sea he would say, ‘Be still.’ He alone could make a thousand meals out of a loaf of bread.

Christ faced temptation head on, full strength against all that the devil could throw at him, but having felt its full weight, he never gave in, never flinched, never even came close to sinning. *Christ was tempted in all ways yet without sin. Christ partook flesh and blood and in all things, He had to be made like His brethren* (Hebrews 4:15; 2:14, 17). He never confessed a fault because he had no faults to confess. He never asked for a pardon because he never needed one.

Christ was a perfect human being. Why then was He condemned to die a shameful death on a Roman cross? The three crucified from a distance would all appear to be criminals who deserve such a death. If you were to judge from a distance you would most likely conclude the fellow in the middle was the chief criminal. Christ suffered like a sinner yet He was without sin. Jesus the sinless Son of God became sin for us. How could this be? Paul is not suggesting that Christ literally became a sinner. Such a thing would be not possible. Christ remained personally sinless while hanging on the cross. Yet God treated his Son as if he were a sinner. He so identified with sinners that he was numbered among the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12). He not only died between two sinners, he was numbered with them and died as they died—a criminal’s death on the Cross.

As He hung on that cross, He experienced the full wrath of God on sin hence the cry: EloiEloi lama sabachthani? My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me? If you want to know the extent of God’s hatred for sin, look at Christ dying on the cross. The thick darkness is evidence that God had completely

abandoned His Son. Truly God made Christ to be sin – to die like a sinner that we might become the righteousness of God.

God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin **for us**. When Christ died on the cross, He took our place and became our Substitute. Christ died in place of guilty sinners. He never sinned but fully kept the Law of God. Listen to Peter – Christ *committed no sin nor was guile found in His mouth* (1 Peter 2: 22). *He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree that we might live for righteousness* (1 Peter 2:24). In the words of Isaiah 53:4-6: *Christ has borne our grieves and carried our sorrows. He was bruised for our iniquities. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to His own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* He took my sins and my sorrows and made them His very own; He bore the burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone. On the cross Jesus became the sinless Sin-Bearer and paid the price we owed to God; the debt we could never pay. His death satisfied God's righteous decree that sin must always be punished.

Why did God inflict His Son so painfully? Here we see the great love of God for sinners. Romans 5:8 – *God demonstrates His own love towards us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. When we were still without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Yes God made His Son to be sin that WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. Righteousness – right standing = uprightness before God. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. God is Holy. So when God looks at you what does He see? Consider yourself standing before the majesty of God. How would you feel? Listen to the Preacher: 'Truly this only have I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes'* (Ecclesiastes 7:29). We cannot blame God for our loss of righteousness!

Isaiah 64:5b-6: You were indeed angry for we have sinned – in these ways we continue and we need to be to be saved. But we are all like filthy rags. Philippians 3: Paul speaks of a righteousness that is based on the Law. He was a zealous Pharisee – who concerning righteousness based on the Law was blameless. Yet Paul discards all of this as rubbish and counted them as loss for the excellence of knowledge of Christ, so that he may be found with righteousness of Christ. All my good works, efforts in keeping the Law apart from Christ, are worthless. The only righteousness that counts is ***righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God.***

What are you counting on? Is it your good works, or your family heritage? Or may be you don't consider yourself to be so sinful? Nothing really counts when you stand before a Holy God. The only righteousness that is acceptable to God is His righteousness, which He provides through Christ. Christ is the Branch of righteousness who executes judgment and righteousness on earth. He is the Lord our Righteousness (Jeremiah 33:15, 16).

At the cross, God treated Christ as though He had committed our sins even though He was righteous. When we believe in Christ, God treats us as though we were as righteous as Christ. Because of what God has done, we can sing ***My sin O the bliss of this glorious thought, My sin not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more; Praise the Lord praise the Lord O my soul.*** When we trust Christ our sin is credited to Christ's account and his righteousness is credited to our account. He takes our debt and we get his credit.

He paid what we owed (and could never pay) and he gives us what he has (and we could never earn).

Salvation is only in Christ alone. *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God* In Him. 1 Corinthians 5:17,19: – If anyone is *in Christ* – a new creation. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Ephesians 1: God has blessed us with every blessing in the heavenly places. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. We have redemption in Christ. Christ says ‘I am the Way the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except by Me’ (*John 14:6*). What a great salvation we have in Christ! Is your faith and hope resting on Christ alone? Can you say **“My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus’ blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.** If you can answer with a big shout **YES** !then join Isaiah (Isaiah 61:10) and say: *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.* Yes Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. When Christ appears, we shall be like Him.

In Christ alone there is salvation. Outside of Christ you are on your own. You will pay for each and every sin you have committed. Every sin is infinitely wicked before God and that is why hell is a place of endless torment. On the cross Christ experienced hell as He was completely abandoned by God His Father. God forsook His Son for our sakes. Remember what God has done to His Son so that you may become the righteousness of God in Him. Don’t wait till you are older. Don’t wait till you complete school. Don’t wait till you get married. Don’t wait till you get a job. Don’t let this opportunity pass by, this free offer of salvation. God says *in an acceptable time I have heard you, in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time behold now is the day of salvation.* (2 Corinthians 6:2) Will you repent of your sin and receive the free gift of salvation, which God is offering you because He made His Son Jesus Christ to be sin so that you might become the righteousness of God. Is Jesus Christ your righteousness?

EVENTS: CONFERENCES *Vincent Kajuma*

There are a number of events happening this year that will interest many readers of the *Grace and Truth* magazine. These are mainly conferences. These conferences are aimed to serve as settings in which some topics that are of particular interest to us as Christians in Kenya can be addressed.

Last year

Last year we had conferences in Nairobi, Mumias and Mombasa. In Nairobi we held the ‘Grace and Truth Conference’, which addressed the ‘Five *Solas*’. The Five ‘*solas*’ (meaning ‘alone’, or ‘only’) are the five undebatable, distinctive beliefs of the Protestant Christian faith – Faith, Grace, Scripture, Christ, and God’s glory. The ‘Reformation Conference’ in Mumias addressed the theme: ‘What is wrong

with the gospel? We also had a conference/camp for high school students. You can read more of this in the last issue of *Grace and Truth* (issue 120).

This year

(i) April: The Reformation Conference (Mumias)

The yearly Reformation Conference takes place in Gospel Missions Agency, Lumino, a reformed church in Mumias. The theme was **‘WILL THE CHURCH OF CHRIST SURVIVE?’** In almost every age, there has seemed to be a force, either a heresy or ideology that has blown like a strong wind and the church seemed like a smouldering wick, sure to be snuffed out completely. In the face of such popular beliefs, how do we know that what we have is the true doctrine? This conference sought to address some of these ideas and winds of doctrines, particularly in Kenya.

The conference ran from the 16th – 19th April, from 9AM to 4:30PM every day. Entrance was free.

(ii) June: The African Pastors’ Conference (Nairobi)

The APC is a continent-wide conference that is coming to Kenya for the first time. The theme of the two day conference is **‘PREACHING CHRIST CRUCIFIED’**. All pastors and aspiring pastors as well as seminary/theological students, and people in ministry are especially invited. The Guest Speakers will be Dr. Grave Sigongo of Lusaka, Zambia and Pastor Irving Steggles of Birchleigh Baptist Church, Kempton Park, South Africa.

As far as we are aware, neither of these brethren have ministered in Kenya before and we warmly welcome them to profit what the Lord has to say to us through them.

There will be some very good books for sale at very reasonable prices (subsidized by the publishers like Banner of Truth, Evangelical Press, I.V.P, and others). Come prepared to buy these too.

It will be on the 10th and 11th of June, at Trinity Baptist Church, Donholm. Attendance is free.

(iii) August: The Reformation Conference (Mombasa)

The heart-warming, soul-assuring, Christ-endeared doctrine of the church will be revisited in Mombasa. The very same topics and list of speakers as in Mumias are expected in Mombasa for a repeat of the Reformation Conference. This coast version will take place between the 21st and 24th of August. There will be no charges.

(iv) October: The Grace and Truth Conference (Nairobi)

What is a good church? How do I choose and where do I find one? Do I really have to belong to a church when I already attend a weekly Bible study, have a discipleship relationship, attend prayer meetings, and give my money to support Christian causes? If one is an active member of ‘the universal church’, does it matter that they are not in a local one? Is the Bible really clear in this matter? What is a church, anyway? This year’s Grace and Truth Conference will address the theme **‘THE CHURCH’**.

The Grace and Truth conference is an interactive 3-day event designed for all who are interested in matters of the Christian faith. Many university and college students attend, and so the dates have been scheduled to fit with as many of them as possible. Everyone is welcome.

This year's conference will be from the 3rd to 5th October 2014. Accommodation will be provided. Attendance cost is 1000, inclusive of materials for the conference.

Thanksgiving

We thank the Lord God, the only One because of whom we are able to do anything good. The events that we have successfully organized thus far, and those that are being organized by various men in various parts of the country, are only possible through His help. These conferences labour to hold out the church as the pillar and buttress of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). I have no doubt that these men's most foremost aim is to make God known, extend His kingdom and bring Him glory.

Please email Grace and Truth for more details.

Welcome.

What is Prayer?

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to His Word, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the will of God. John Bunyan

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.

Subscription to *Grace & Truth* is free but if you are able to help towards the costs then please send Kshs.50 a copy of Kshs.200 for the year through the provided address below. You are also welcome to give donations as well.

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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