

GRACE & TRUTH



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**WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM  
THE LOVE OF CHRIST?**

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Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine,  
or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

**Romans 8:35**



## 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](http://www.trinity.or.ke)*

**Keith Underhill**

## GRACE & TRUTH Magazine



**Cover:** Suffering is part of the Christian experience. Sin is the root cause of all the suffering in the world. God's remedy to human sin is the death of His Son on the cross. The Cross of Christ provides answers to all of our questions regarding human suffering. (Colossians 1:19-20)

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

# THE GARISSA MASSACRE

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The memory of those awful events continues to haunt us and we begin by expressing our heartfelt sympathies with surviving witnesses of the atrocity and with bereaved relatives. Jesus Himself wept outside the tomb of his friend Lazarus and onlookers saw how much he loved him. May God grant that comfort in Christ that is so sorely needed.

It is not our purpose to start thinking about how the terrorists were able to get away with such wickedness on a human level. We certainly see the depth of sin as such things are planned in detail, and we see the impotence of even the best government to prevent it. There are far deeper questions. Where was God? Was He unable to prevent it? If He was not unable then why did He let it happen? Can there be any good purpose in such a thing?

We are so affected by what happened because it has come home to so powerfully. It happened on Kenyan soil, it specifically targeted non-Muslims, and there were mobile phone conversations as it happened. Yet, sad to say, history is littered with such massacres. Boko Haram has been slaughtering thousands in northern Nigeria. Little more than 20 years ago 800 thousand are reckoned to have been killed in Rwanda. During World War II, 6 million Jews suffered in what is known as the Holocaust. 2015 marks the centenary of what many call the Armenian genocide when around 1 million or more perished.

Let us not pretend we have all the answers. The mysteries of why such things happen go right back to the very start when Adam and Eve fell, and the whole human race with them. God made a creation that He described as “*very good*”. Why did sin come in to spoil it? And the evil consequences remain with us today! Was God just an observer, unable to control creatures He had made, Satan, and the first couple? You do not get rid of the problem by declaring that God gave them ‘free-will’. At the very least surely God knew what they were going to do, for He is omniscient. He could have prevented the serpent from getting near Eve, or made it unable to speak, or used another animal to speak opposite words; in fact He left Eve completely to herself.

No, we must rather confess 3 things: God has all power (omnipotent), and all knowledge (omniscient), and His ways are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9), and past finding out (Romans 11:33). God has purposes of judgment as well as blessing, of warning as well as comforting, purposes for the future as well as for the present, for others as well as for myself, for His own glory as well as for our good. Read the Bible and see how God perfectly weaves together all events, both good and evil, to fulfil His gracious plans that finally brought His Son our Lord Jesus Christ into the centre stage of world history. You do not have to understand how the weaver so expertly manages his loom in order to appreciate the finished product!

Even if we do not have all the answers, there are some very important things we must say about which we have no doubt.

(1) **God is just**, despite what has happened. *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”* (Genesis 18:25), proclaimed Abraham when God revealed to him that He was about to destroy Sodom. Measured on the time line of eternity, and weighed in the balances of God’s law, God never acts unjustly in punishment, although He acts mercifully times without number.

(2) **Sinners deserve eternal hell**, whether those carrying out atrocities, or those on the receiving end. Sin is nothing less than rebellion against God. David confessed his adultery as *“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, ...”* (Psalm 51:5). Adam was threatened with death (Genesis 2:17); Ezekiel reiterated that *“the soul who sins shall die”* (18:4); the New Testament teaches *“the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23); and the last book of the Bible tells us of *“the second death, the lake of fire”* (Revelation 20:14). It is this death as hell, as separation from God, that our Saviour had to undergo on the cross, as He cried out of the darkness, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46). Anything we experience less than this is less than we deserve.

(3) **The response must be repentance**. Jesus was told of a massacre and this was His warning. *“There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:1-3). We must stop asking the question ‘Why?’ because we do not have all the answers. We must not suppose that such an awful death is a punishment for specific sin, because Christ denies it. We must stop just focussing on what happened, or those who were involved. Jesus says that we must start to think about ourselves and our readiness to face the judgment when we are summoned sooner or later from this world. Someone might say that this is not very kind, that much more comforting words need to be given. But apart from the fact that would be to impugn Christ Himself, consider that such a warning is great kindness. If during the post-election violence you were warned not to go to a certain place because of trouble there would you not have been profoundly grateful. The Lord Jesus, who infallibly knows all things present and future, had graciously warned you.

(4) **The Christian has great hope**. Thank God that all those who die in Christ, have the assurance of eternal life (John 10:28). Death is but a short sleep for them, when they are absent from the body but present with the Lord. The terrorist’s bullet may kill their body but it cannot kill their soul. For this reason Christ told us to love our enemies and not to fear them. Christianity is the only religion that gives this assurance of resurrection, *“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

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## EPHESIANS 1:18b-21

It is everywhere recognized that ‘knowledge is power’ so there is a great emphasis on education. Wisdom is stronger than might. “A wise man scales the city of the mighty...” (Proverbs 21:22). As Paul turns in this letter to pray for the Ephesians Christians he believes their greatest need is for knowledge. It is knowledge that impels us into action, even to change our course of action. A new year comes around and many people determine to change their lives with the knowledge that life is short, God requires the change, and it is for their benefit. The Holy Spirit comes to give us such knowledge (see verse 17). What specific knowledge must we have? Having listed the blessings (verses 3-14), our need is to understand, appreciate and live by them. There are three.

### 1. YOU MUST KNOW GREAT HOPE IS YOURS IN CHRIST

The word ‘hope’ can be used in two ways, either to refer to the activity of hoping, or to the thing being hoped for. We will take it as the activity, grace of hope, expectation, assurance, as in Romans 5:4 and Acts 16:19. This is because the second thing that must be known is the thing being hoped for, i.e. the inheritance. For example, a farmer hopes that he will get a good harvest, but his hope or expectation fails when crops start drying and he gets discouraged; but when rain clouds are again seen on the horizon his hope revives. To have ‘great hope’ there must be reasons or grounds, otherwise such a person is to be pitied as deluded, as having false hope. If a Form Four student has great hope that he will become an Engineer yet consistently fails in his science exams there are no real grounds for his hope. So, on what ground may we as Christians stand having ‘great hope’, assurance. If we look at ourselves we only see continuing sinfulness despite God’s grace, and weakness revealed by constant failures. We must consider the fact that **God** has “called” us, and this will give the ‘great hope’.

(1) *Consider that God has called you.* You were dead in sin, so this calling is all of grace (2 Timothy 1:9). As when Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus, so God sent a messenger to you and gave you spiritual life. If God did this to you when you were His enemy, surely there is nothing He will withhold now that you are His friend! If a person is called by God it is because He was foreknown and predestined (Romans 8:29-30) and so in God’s eternal saving purpose. What evidence do you have that God has called you (see 2 Peter 1:10)? Has the gospel of Jesus Christ so come to you to convince you that only God’s judgment awaits you because of your sin, so that you have responded by coming to Christ and continuing to walk with Him? Being called by God leads to a total change of life, as Peter explains (2 Peter 1:3-9).

(2) *Consider what God has called you to.* We have been called to participate in the most desirable things every Christian longs for. If you call me to a football match I might go just to keep you company, but if you said ‘Let’s go to hear Spurgeon preach’ then I would be full of eager anticipation of the blessing of God! Listen to what God calls you!

- To belong to Jesus Christ (Romans 1:6)
- To be saints (Romans 1:7)
- Into fellowship with Him (1 Corinthians 1:9)
- Into freedom from the condemnation of God's law (Galatians 5:13)
- Into one united body of peace (Ephesians 4:1-2, Colossians 3:15)
- And then into eternal glory (1 Thessalonians 2:12, 1 Peter 5:10)
- To a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9)
- To be holy (1 Peter 1:15)
- Into suffering like Christ (1 Peter 2:21), so a privilege

Just as the smell of one's favourite food cooking excites, so the mention of these privileges to which we are called excites hope.

The world has no firm basis for any hope; it is all like quicksand. But in Christ we have a hope that can never be disappointed. It is called a 'living hope' (1 Peter 1:3) and such hope is essential to joyful, zealous and steadfast Christian living.

## 2. YOU MUST KNOW A GREAT INHERITANCE IS YOURS IN CHRIST

The "inheritance" is the second thing for which Paul constantly prays that the Ephesians might know. There are implications from the use of the word inheritance that are so encouraging:

- Of grace. The receiving of an inheritance reflects upon the giver and not the recipient (see Deuteronomy 7:6-8). The richer the giver, the greater the inheritance, so Alexander the Great was able to give the gift of a city even to a mean man. Receiving an inheritance depends upon the relationship to the giver; many inherit a fortune just because of blood relationship. We receive an inheritance just because God sets His love upon us in Christ.
- Of eternity. An inheritance cannot be taken away (Hebrews 9:15). Even an earthly inheritance is passed down in the family. The land of Canaan, as a type, was given to Israel as an inheritance for ever (Exodus 32:13).
- Of certainty. If the inheritance depends on the giver, and is given for ever, then it is certain (Psalm 94:19). This is the reason why God uses the word 'inheritance', to show the greatness of the blessing we have in Christ.

Paul is not content with using the word "inheritance" alone. He adds that it is "glorious" and that this glory has "riches". Ahasuerus "showed the riches of his royal glory ... (for) 180 days" (Esther 1:4). Royal glory is great enough, but Ahasuerus was determined to outdo all others.

(1) Consider "the riches of the glory" of the inheritance God gives to the saints. Actually, to try to describe it would be to greatly undervalue it, and we can only use symbols. So the New Jerusalem is pictured as glorious like precious jewels. The 12 gates are made of impossibly large pearls (Revelation 21:21); the city and streets are made of impossibly clear gold (verses 18,21). Not even considering what we presently enjoy as God's people, consider how the final and full experience of the inheritance is described in Revelation 21:1-4, and 22:1-5.

The idea of 'inheritance' may also be understood as the inheritance *God* has because the saints are His special possession, as well as the inheritance a *Christian* has because God gives it to him. In the Old Testament both are true of the nation of Israel (see Deuteronomy 4:20-21, 9:26). Likewise, Christians are the special possession of God (Ephesians 1:14, 1 Peter 2:9).

(2) So consider “the riches of the glory” of the saints as God’s own inheritance. God is going to be glorified “in His saints” when the Lord Jesus returns (2 Thessalonians 1:10). For example, a craftsman takes a piece of wood and from it carves a very life-like lion, and the expertise shown brings glory to him. God likewise takes us as clay and then fashions us into a vessel which is in perfect conformity to His beloved Son. There is nothing more precious to God than us His people, whom He chose, and for whom He gave His only Son as a sacrifice on the cross. The earth and its works will be “exposed” (2 Peter 3:10), but we will be with Him for ever!

Why is this important for you to know? It is because of the inheritance that Abraham obeyed God (Hebrews 11:16), that Moses was able to refuse the fleeting pleasures of sin (verse 26), and that the Hebrews had “joyfully accepted the plundering of (their) property” (10:34). How else will you be able to pursue holiness for another year and more if the Lord tarries? Jesus Himself endured the cross because of the joy set before Him (12:2). You will abound in the work of the Lord if you know it is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). It is those who are heavenly-minded who are of most earthly use. So labour to have this knowledge, prayerfully read the Scriptures, and ask the Spirit to enlighten the eyes of your heart, as it is not automatic.

### **3. YOU MUST KNOW THE GREAT POWER OF GOD TOWARDS BELIEVERS**

All over the world there is a great emphasis in Christian meetings on ‘receiving power’ (see Acts 1:8). Noting the ineffectiveness of the church, many teach that it is not enough to be a Christian, but one must be ‘filled’ with the Spirit and demonstrate it in something miraculous, i.e. powerful, such as tongues speaking. But this is not the approach of the Bible, for if one does not have spiritual power then he is not a Christian! This is because the working of God’s power is what *defines* a Christian, and this is what we need to know, appreciate and rely on in order to reach the final goal. This inheritance is too glorious and I can never be fit for it as one always failing, so weak, and with such great enemies. If I am not sure that I have adequate resources then I will have little confidence or boldness. For example, if I am going on a long journey I need to know that the car is functioning well and that I have fuel. Paul is praying that the Ephesians will know this spiritually as they seek to live daily for the glory of God.

#### **(1) *Know that God’s power towards believers is infinitely great.***

Paul cannot find enough words to give an adequate description of this power, so he piles word upon word. God’s power has a “greatness” which is “immeasurable” so that it is inexhaustible and unlimited. Supermarkets have become larger and larger; first they were called ‘mega’ and then ‘hyper’ and Paul uses both of these words here. The power is “towards us” as believers, meaning that it is for our benefit. It is not something yet to be experienced, but is already being exercised towards us and remains constant. How important it is to know you are a believer.

A question should be asked at this point. Why is such power needed towards believers? After all, it seems simple enough to say ‘Yes’ to Jesus and to decide to obey Him. So we shall consider the two aspects of our Christian experience.

- *In Conversion.* It is when we understand the true condition of the sinner before becoming a Christian that we understand the need for God’s infinitely great power to work. In the physical realm doctors work with urgency on a crash victim, but if he dies they leave him and cover the body with a sheet. Nothing can now be done. In the spiritual realm sinners are dead, having no spiritual life, absolutely no ability to hear, understand and respond to the gospel. Read Ephesians 2:1, then Jeremiah 13:23, John 6:44, and Acts 16:14. It is totally false to think a sinner can become a Christian whenever he chooses, because of ‘free will’. Like Lazarus in his tomb, your dead condition must first be overcome before you can do anything. Can a dead person do anything to make himself alive? He cannot even ask someone to do it for him! This is why the Bible refers to conversion as a ‘resurrection from the dead’, as a ‘new birth’, as a ‘new creation’. Sin has affected the mind so that it cannot think straight spiritually; the heart is affected and deceived; so the will is unable to choose the godly path. Human power can do many amazing things, but not this. Even angelic power cannot, only God’s great power.
- *In the Christian Life.* It is when we understand what God requires of the Christian that we understand the need for God’s infinitely great power to work. We are saved in order to keep God’s commandments. Far more than the Pharisees, we must keep them from the heart. If that is not difficult enough, in doing this we are constantly opposed by the world, the flesh and the devil. The world is ever near, at home, when travelling, at school and work and business. The flesh is within us ever opposing what we want to do (Romans 7:21) and so we cry, “Wretched man that I am...” (verse 24). The devil is sometimes like a roaring lion, and other times like an angel of light. He tempts, tricks and deceives. There is no hope without the great power of God. If only we know what we already have in Christ as believers! Read John 17:15, Philippians 2:13, Hebrews 13:20-21, 2 Peter 1:3, Jude 24.

Do you know what enabled you to become a Christian? Nothing less than this power of God. You know it was not you – not your deserving because you were full of sin, not your desiring because you were always fixed on worldly things, and not your choosing as you were seeking to run away from God. You know it was God who arrested and overpowered you in His love. You know it was He who opened your eyes to see.

**(2) *Know that God’s power towards believers is as great as that which raised and exalted Christ.***

- *First, consider the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.*

God “raised him from the dead” – the body of Jesus was laid in the tomb, lifeless, cold, severely mutilated by scourging, the nails and spear, a big stone was rolled against the entrance, and an armed guard posted. Although death and the devil had Him in their power they were not able to hold Him (Acts 2:24, Hebrews 2:14-15). By God’s power Christ burst the bonds of death.

God “seated him at his right hand” – He was taken bodily into God’s very presence (Psalm 110:1). Surrounding God’s throne are countless numbers of glorious angels of various ranks, but Christ is not placed amongst them, or even at their head. He is given the place of privilege and power with the Father. There He takes His seat, He alone, and is worshipped by the assembled throng that stands around the throne. He is exalted far above any other power, by whatever name they may be called, whether rule, authority,

power or dominion, whether good or evil powers (see 3:10, 6:12, Colossians 1:16). Perhaps Paul writes this because the Colossians had a background in magic and astrology, so it is being made clear they need have no fear of such 'powers'. Christ's absolute exaltation will continue for ever in the age to come. Only an immeasurably great power could exalt Christ to the very highest.

- *Second, consider why Paul uses this analogy of resurrection and exaltation.*

There is a comparison – in both cases, ours and Christ's, the very same power is at work, that shows without any doubt that conversion is a work of the great power of God, without which no one can be saved (regenerated).

There is a typical relationship – our conversion is nothing less than a resurrection and exaltation with Christ (see 2:6), so we need the same power, and one day our bodies will also be raised.

There is a causal relationship – Christ's resurrection and exaltation bring us justification (Romans 4:25, Colossians 2:12), and bring us the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33), and at last He will bring us where He is in glory.

Once again Paul multiplies words to seek to describe this power. It is literally, 'the working (or exertion) of the might of His strength'. In other words this power is not a tiny stream of water, but like a flood that carried all things before it.

We shall close with two points of application:

1. How great is salvation! We are not able to make anyone a Christian, nor can the greatest evangelist. Faith only comes by the immeasurably great power of God. If you see salvation in any way as something you have done, so that it is not something impossible, then you are the sort of person who afterwards needs to seek after special experiences, often seen as greater than conversion, and this results in a deformed gospel. If you devalue the power of God in salvation, and stop asking in amazement 'Why am I saved?' so that your mind is taken off the absolute necessity of the death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ, then you are in grave spiritual danger.

2. Seek assurance! May you come to know that this power is towards us all as believers. It is a power infinitely greater than anything else in the universe, and will ever be so. So what can prevent you from receiving the full inheritance? Christ is in total control. Far from making you lazy and careless it will make you to redouble your efforts knowing that they are not in vain.

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*.... We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Romans 5:3-5)*

# WHY WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

Vincent Kajuma

Why do we believe the Bible to be the word of God? There is a very simple and straightforward reason that it is baffling to many people. It is because the Bible says about itself that it is the word of God.

“But that is circular reasoning!” one might immediately respond, “You can’t use the Bible’s claims to prove the Bible’s claims!” But can’t we? There are a number of clear reasons as to why it is valid and tenable to believe that the Bible is God’s word and to base that belief on the Bible’s own testimony.

## 1. *Self-witness can be valid witness, depending on the person witnessing*

The reason why we say we cannot trust self-witness, so we actually need more than self-witness, is because people lie. Witnesses lower the probability of falsehood in the original account, rather than making the account true. An account can be true though it is not repeated by others. ‘The Bible may be lying in what it says about itself’, one who doesn’t believe it to be God’s word may argue. However, that argument assumes that all speakers may be lying. Sin is assumed. ‘If men were not sinners, witness to oneself would be enough’<sup>1</sup>.

The Bible itself therefore teaches that a matter is established upon the testimony of two or three witness (1 Timothy 5:19; Deuteronomy 19:15). The Lord Jesus likewise says of Himself, “If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true” (John 5:31). However, this is a concession Jesus makes because of our fallen world where we assume the possibility of people lying to us, or people not knowing what they are saying, and so we want statements to be confirmed by second and third parties. If we knew someone was all-knowing and that he has no inclination to deceive, would we require witnesses to his testimony? We wouldn’t consider it a cyclic argument if such a person made a statement about himself.

Jesus, knowing this, does not see this maxim (i.e. that there must be outside proof for a claim to be valid) to be true at all times. It is only because of the sin assumed on the part of the person making the statement. He shows this caveat to the maxim when He says that He is the light of the world (John 8:12), and is quizzed by some of His hearers, “You are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true.” He answers them: “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going...” His identity (as God, from above and headed above), if held to be true, requires that His words be true (for God is morally perfect), and needs no confirmation. (Christ did go on to appeal to the testimony of the Father concerning him, obviously not as a necessary proof of the veracity of His claims, but because ‘*in your law it is written that the testimony of two people is true*’ – v. 17.)

The fact that the Bible is the source that confirms the veracity of its own testimony does not necessarily make that testimony invalid or untrue. If we could prove that the Bible invariably lies, then we could say so, but if it can be shown that the Bible never lies, then what it says about itself is to be likewise received as true.

## 2.

### *Some truths cannot be known without self-witness*

Still arguing that the fact that the Bible says it is the Word of God is a valid reason to believe that the Bible is the word of God, is the obvious fact that some truths cannot be known except by self-witness.

Readers cannot know the dream I had last night unless I reveal it to them. The facts cannot be gained any other way. Because of the nature of the information (no one can see my dreams or scour my brain for the memory of yesterday's dream), the proof of its veracity is in my statement. There can be no other 'proof'. We all believed Martin Luther King when he said, 'I have a dream...' No one requires it, because we naturally acknowledge that fact doesn't have to rest on external evidence.

Similarly, we cannot know about what was there before the creation of man (Gen. 1), or what the Father said to the Son in eternity past (Psalm 2), or what made Pharaoh hard of heart (Romans 9), or why when people become believers in Jesus Christ we see such a radical and lasting change in their nature (Ephesians 4), unless it is revealed to us. There can be no test under which we can put these testimonies except on the credibility of the testifier. It is not against reason to believe these things, including the Bible's self-revelation that it is the word of God.

## 3. *The Bible has constantly proven itself true*

"When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken" (Deuteronomy 18:22). The Bible confirms this principle. Something is true if it can be shown to be true, regardless of who says it. The Bible has proven itself true in the areas that we can test, e.g. history, geography and prophecy, and so we have confidence to believe it in the areas that we cannot test, i.e. areas of doctrine, and that includes when it says that it is the word of God.

## 4. *The nature of the claim requires that there is none other to be appealed to*

The veracity of God's claim can be settled from the fact that it is *God* who claims it. What impartial party is there between us and Him that can confirm to us His claim?

However, one may respond by saying that we cannot settle the matter by claiming that the word of God cannot be questioned, since it is not God that says the Bible is His word, but the Bible that says it is God's word. However, this objection does not scatter the point, since the Bible by definition is God's word inscripturated (written as Scripture). The content of the text is God's claim. To state it another way, if God actually spoke and somehow got His words written down, that writing would be God's spoken word written. How would we know that the writing was actually God's word? That's the question we're addressing, because we are saying that God has spoken, and that that content is what we have as the Bible. And we are saying that we can have no one else to whom to go to confirm it. We will have to turn to other things, i.e. to internal evidence, since external evidence is a non-category if the person being investigated is the one and only God that there is.

We would need someone as true (or truer) or as honest (or more honest) than God to confirm and so validate His claims as He would have made them in that Book! The only other option would be for Him to speak separately, apart from the Book itself, to confirm that the Book is His Word. This He did in Jesus Christ, when we see Christ teach and live ‘by every word that comes from the mouth of God’. If, in our unbelief we stick to the first option, that there needs to be someone else to confirm God’s claim, again we see how God’s nature is providentially (if I may dare to say) suited to remove our grounds for unbelief. The Lord Jesus comes from God and identifies the Scriptures as God’s Word, and [therefore] lives by their authority. To the Christian, therefore, the testimony of God in the Bible is overwhelmingly valid for taking the Bible as God’s Word. This is so even if we concede to the idea that there has to be external evidence for truth, as our Lord Himself grants for His detractors’ sake, though this is not an absolute necessity but a consequent one, because of man’s ability for, even inclination to, falsehood.

### ***5. The witness of the Holy Spirit to believers***

For many people, one never has to prove to them that the Bible is supernatural. The inexplicable yet discernible intrinsic potency of its words can be attested to. There is an authority contained in the words of the Bible that sets it apart from any other book. This is not in the high standards of morality it sets or the wealth of its history or grandeur of its language, setting it above other books. The authority of the Bible is clear in that it is the only book that commands repentance and receives it. It changes the whole nature of men, and becomes to them a lifeline, even men who were once its greatest haters. The converting power of the words of Scripture, as can be seen in the transformation of many Christian converts, and these only through the gospel revealed in the Bible, prove it to be a very strange book. It is the word of the Holy and Almighty God. It is no surprise that Christianity, the religion of the Bible, elicits the strongest opposition from sinful men. The lamp shines in a dark place, but men still prefer darkness (2 Peter 1:19).

With these 5 reasons, the question then is now invited: does the Bible itself make any statement to direct us to receive it as God’s word? The answer is yes, based on the following passages, among many others. I will only list them.

(i) “All Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16).

(ii) “...no prophecy of Scripture comes from one’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

(iii) “But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”” (Matthew 4:4).

(iv) “Thus says the Lord...” (Jeremiah 9:23, etc.). The Bible, especially the Prophets, is replete with this phrase, indicating that what we read are the very words of the Lord.

God has spoken. Take up and read.

# THE CENTALITY OF PREACHING IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

*Murungi Igweta*

**2 Timothy 4:1-2:** *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

Faithful preaching of the gospel is the method that God has given His church to dispense the riches of His grace to the world. The power and authority of the church is in preaching! Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit stated so unequivocally, that he was *not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16)*. He gave at least two important reasons:

- (1) *in it the righteousness of God is revealed and*
- (2) *in it the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:17)*.

For the same reasons, I write to exhort you to take back your pulpit to the centre of public worship because there is eternal good to be gained – the righteousness of God, but also to escape the wrath of God! Therefore, he was *called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, and he was eager to preach the gospel to all (Romans 1:1,15)*. Preachers, you must not be ashamed of the gospel by turning to the man-centred ‘gospels’ like philosophy, or ear-tickling business; rather be eager to preach to all every time.

Human beings are busy suppressing the truth of God by their thoughts, words and actions. Introduce them to God by the message of the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. When there is a failure by the church at this point, the only door of hope for sinners is shut. This is the backdrop upon which the passage before us is written. Therefore,

## 1. Here is a the most serious charge to preach the Word (v. 1)

***This is a most explicitly solemn and divine charge.*** You notice it is given before God the Father and in the presence of Christ the great and eternal Judge. God’s all-seeing eye is keen to see if His Word is being preached faithfully. All this accumulation of words here is meant to show the full intensity of this instruction. This is not something that we can ignore or forget. It must be remembered and obeyed by all at all costs for God will require an account.

***This is a perpetual charge.*** Timothy, you and I are to bear in mind that this will be required by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge. For this reason, Paul mentions Christ’s second appearing and His kingdom. As long as we await this world changing event of the second coming of Christ, as long as we are part of the commonwealth of the kingdom of Christ, as long as Christ is our delight, we have both His mandate and a responsibility to sinners to make Him known. Paul charges that Jesus Christ will judge both the living and the dead. Why is Paul saying this? To make Timothy and **us** be sure that we will give an account before Christ on whether we sounded the gospel trumpet, as faithful watchmen. *If we persist in this, we will save both ourselves and our hearers (1 Tim. 4:16)*.

## 2. Here is a the most forthright charge to preach the Word

... *preach the word...*(v.2a) The Apostle does not mince the words given to Him by the Master, and in so doing sets an excellent example. He directs Timothy to preach. He is to declare and proclaim the message as one who has divine authority. The word preach here means is to be a 'herald', one who has been given both the message and the commission of the Sovereign King, to speak on His behalf, marching forth without delay with the unaltered message. In this charge authority, faithfulness and urgency are urged. These constitute what it means to be a herald. The work of a preacher of the gospel is not an indifferent thing; it is absolutely important and necessary. Woe be to him if he doesn't preach the gospel (**1 Corinthians 9:16**). The redeemed church of Christ is urged to carry on with this immediate commission – preach the word!

The church is not charged to sing or dramatize the word, or to practice a social gospel. If this is what the Lord expects of us, He would have instructed us. While philanthropic activities have their place, they must not be the central business of the church. The church must, as of first importance, deliver the message of the gospel across the world first and foremost by preaching. It is possible to have singing, music and all the rest of them mistaken for entertainment. Don't turn the gospel call into a lullaby to put the unbelieving world to sleep! The faithful preaching of the gospel cannot be mistaken by the world because it is the very equipment that the Holy Spirit uses to open the hearts and eyes of the spiritually dead sinners. Unless we use the sovereignly appointed tool of preaching the gospel, we have nothing to give that has eternal value.

History shows that there is a great need for every true church of Christ to deliberately make preaching the centre of worship. Students of history know of the effects of the Reformation and Puritan preaching in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The Great Awakening of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, humanly speaking, could be attributed to the preaching of George Whitfield, John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards and other faithful preachers. C. H. Spurgeon was such a preacher and God blessed his labours in London. The same is true of men like J.C. Ryle in Liverpool, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones in London.

If preaching is not highly valued, then churches greatly risk falling off the cliff. There are too many examples of churches that have made preaching secondary – please do not add to their number! In the Roman Catholic Church, the Lord's Table was elevated too high that it became the apex of their worship, to a point that they confused the elements of the Eucharist with Christ! In most Kenyan churches music is the main thing (considering the amount of time allocated in their worship service, in practising, in the amount of financial investment on buying instruments or paying workers and in the number of music personnel). This is not meant to question the sincerity of worship leaders. Rather it is meant to bring a redress in this area. This 'worship' sooner rather than later becomes an entertainment muddle. When the Lord Jesus, through His apostle says, "*Preach the word*", He is instructing us to put the pulpit in the very centre of church life and of worship. Nothing is more important!

## 3. Here are the most clear instructions on how to preach the word

... *be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching* (v. 2b)

It concerns both ministers and the church to seriously consider the account that they must give shortly to the Lord Jesus Christ of the good news entrusted them. The church, by her ministers, is called to press upon this world all God's message with all

earnestness. Preach the whole Bible – Genesis to Revelation, verse by verse – precept upon precept, line upon line, until the whole counsel of God is given. Do not withhold anything profitable by either adding (and so obscuring the gospel) or subtracting (by preaching what you like). Yes, exegetical accuracy is absolutely necessary. Be sure you have the right hermeneutic tools before venturing up the pulpit. This is what it means to be faithful.

The call is to be *ready in season and out of season* for very specific actions of *reproving, rebuking, and exhorting* with all fervency of spirit. Specifically, the message is to call on their hearers to be aware of sin, to repent of it, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope. The preachers are to do this *with complete patience* – do not demand immediate result always, patience is necessary with all. Paul demonstrates this when he says, “*And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faith-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all (1 Thessalonians 5:14)*.” Good preaching demands sermons that are well structured and vividly illustrated. Every sermon ought to reach every ear present and this requires pointed application. *Complete teaching* demands a well-balanced doctrinal diet or, in other words, every sermon must be saturated with doctrinal substance.

*In and out of season* means that it is to be given when welcome and even when unwelcome. There was no invitation letter from the Assyrian king inviting Jonah to preach in Nineveh, but there was the word from God. Usually sinners are not going to invite us to preach to them, although there are times when special events occur, e.g. deaths and weddings! When they come calling you for these events, milk these opportunities to the last drop.

Many are the times when we have to press the message upon them. We have to acknowledge that the world is too chained, blinded and stifled by devil’s deception to call out for help. It is for this reason that we should not sugar-coat the gospel with any worldly glaze. We must not make things comfortable for them; rather, our call is to preach pure and unadulterated Word of God. Moreover, let not any opportunity slip away. Do not shift off the duty, under pretence that it is out of season; it is a serious message that must not be delayed.

It is a direct message of “*reproving, rebuking...*” – tell people of their faults with gravity and authority, in Christ’s name. “*Exhorting...*” – Convince wicked people of the evil and danger of their wicked courses. Endeavour in teaching, by speaking simply but profoundly; directly but wisely; urgently but patiently, in order to bring them to repentance. Do not leave them in ignorance; rather instruct them so that they may be made wise for salvation.

In conclusion, you have read the most serious, forthright and clear instructions on what is to be done in the church of Christ. If you are a **pastor**, labour in preaching, because your duty and business is to preach – “*do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15). If you are **Christian**, *let the word of God dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom (Colossians 3:16)*. But if you find yourself in a church that is malnourished in God’s Word – leave it before you starve to death. Look for a church that is deliberate in the faithful and expository preaching of the God’s Word. Every true **church of Christ** must endeavour to have the pulpit at the centre – therein lies your authority and the power. The church is the beautiful bride of Christ when it is ‘*bibline*’ that is, speaking the language of the Groom as in His Word.

# COMMON QUESTION NO. 5

## IS THERE FALSE FAITH?

*Keith Underhill*

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Today, if any one says, 'I believe in Jesus Christ', then it is assumed he/she is a true Christian. Yet in the Bible the noun 'faith' and the corresponding verb 'believe' are often used of people who turn out not to be true Christians. We need to examine what is that faith which saves, both in reference to ourselves and to the church. Do you have saving faith, or is yours one of many false faiths?

### 1. There is a **faith in signs**.

(a) "Many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25). Immediately John writes about a particular man, Nicodemus, who believed Jesus was a teacher from God because of the signs He was doing (3:2).

(b) "Even Simon himself believed,..." Peter later declared, "you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:13,23). Simon was amazed by the signs and great miracles that Philip performed.

The teaching that people must see signs and wonders in order to believe is obviously wrong. If being impressed by signs and wonders is the only reason for faith then it is not genuine. Jesus clearly told Nicodemus he had to be born again to see the kingdom of God. Simon was amazed but by wanting to obtain the same power with money he showed he was not truly a believer. The emphasis today on Miracle Crusades, and people professing faith because of the miracles they have supposedly witnessed, is producing multitudes of false believers. They are impressed by what the Evangelist can do and come to Christ so that their problems in this world might be solved by this power. They do not come to Christ because He is a Saviour from sin.

2. There is a **temporary faith**. "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away" (Matthew 13:20-21). The 'rocky ground hearer' is the one who receives the word, i.e. believes, and receives it with joy. Jesus gives this as one of the three kinds of soil in which the plant bears no fruit. Such persons are not genuine believers as they only endure for a while. They get discouraged by tribulation or persecution and then give up. John refers to such people and emphasizes that they were never of us (1 John 2:19). It is not a sure evidence of saving faith that a person has strong emotions when hearing the word. Remember the hymn, "Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears for ever flow, all for sin could not atone". Thousands had sought to make Jesus king and looked for him on the other side of the Lake, but then became offended at His claim to be the bread come from heaven (John 6:41), so that many turned back (verse 66). Crowds hailed Jesus as "Son of David" as He entered Jerusalem in triumph (Matthew 21:9), yet within a few days many of them were crying "crucify Him". A faith that only lasts for a while, then gives up because of difficult circumstances, or is offended by hard teaching, is not genuine faith. True faith perseveres to the end, which is the emphasis of the letter to the Hebrews (3:6,14, 6:11, 10:39). How unkind are Evangelists when they assure a seeker he has eternal life just because of repeating a prayer. This is not the way Jesus dealt with people.

3. There is a **faith of demons**. “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe---and shudder!” (James 2:19). It is a shock to hear that even demons have a sort of faith. It does not lead them to trust God; rather to shudder in fear. It is obviously not a faith that saves, yet it is called a type of faith in the Bible. It accepts certain things about God as true, that He is one; in the same way demons knew who Jesus was (Mark 1:34). For so many people being a Christian is accepting as true certain teachings, for example:

There is only one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

There is a heaven and a hell

Jesus Christ is the Saviour who died and rose again on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. day

It is possible to be 100 percent orthodox, accepting as true everything that is taught in the Bible, and still not be a true Christian! Many children grow up in Christian families and never question what the Bible teaches, but their faith is no more than that of demons. This is how it can be claimed that at least 3 out of every 4 Kenyans are Christians.

4. There is a **dead faith**. “Faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:17,26). James is addressing Christians who are content to have a kind of faith that does not show itself in works. He gives the very practical example of one who is needy, but only nice words are spoken (verses 15-17). This was the opposite of the problem Paul was dealing with, for example with the Galatians. That false teaching insisted that works were necessary for justification before God, so Paul most strongly refuses any place for works. James also teaches that faith is the way to justification, but it is a faith that necessarily shows itself in works. He gives the example of Abraham who believed and was so counted righteous (verse 23), but it was not until he had “offered up his son Isaac on the altar” that his faith was completed (verse 22). In other words, how do we know Abraham was a genuine believer? It is when he responded in immediate submission to the command of God to sacrifice his son. Faith which is fruitless is like a barren tree, dead. So James gives a different emphasis from Paul to the doctrine of justification. For James justification is not by faith alone, that is, a faith that is alone, without works, for that is a dead faith. While it is through faith alone that anyone is justified, it is a faith which is completed by works. Because works inevitably flow from a living faith, judgment will be by works (see for example, Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus pictures many standing before Him on the day of judgment, professing His name, claiming miraculous works. But Jesus will reject them because they did not keep God’s law (Matthew 7:21-23).

5. There is a **genuine faith**. “...faith working through love” (Galatians 5:6). It is such an important question for anyone to ask of himself, ‘What kind of faith do I have?’ In the strongest teaching that salvation is through faith and not works, Paul teaches that faith shows itself to be real when it produces love (see also verses 13-14). That is expanded in the list of the fruit of the Spirit (verses 22-23). How was the writer sure the Hebrews had a faith unto salvation? Because of their work and love in serving the saints (6:9-10). John writes to give his readers assurance of eternal life as believers (1 John 5:13). How did he seek to give that assurance? By teaching them the true marks of a believer – keeping God’s commandments (2:3), loving one another (4:7), holding to the true doctrine about Christ (5:1). The faith that justifies a sinner also unites him to Christ who by His Spirit transforms this sinner into a saint. This is why it is impossible for a true believer to be ungodly.

<http://www.gracesermons.com/hisbygrace/faith.html> where you can read a sermon by Ernest Reisinger comparing counterfeit with true faith)

## WISE GIRLS IN A WILD WORLD *Eric Abwao*

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*“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.”*  
*Proverbs 31:30*

In a crumbling world where the sassy and seductive women are celebrated while the spiritually smart ones are persecuted we must remember that God’s Word still stands. It is getting harder and harder for ladies to remain Biblically feminine but one truth remains, God has a remnant. A remnant of godly ladies who will not bow their hearts to the allure of the feminist’s mistake. Yes, there are ‘girls’ who have gone wise in the world that has gone wild. These wise ladies need to remember that they are celebrated as the daughters of Sarah (1 Peter 3:6) in God’s Word.

According to research findings of the US Census Bureau, it is estimated that the average woman will expose herself to a whopping 3,596 hours of mass media in a year<sup>1</sup>. The believer knows that popular media constantly lies about the nature of truth, goodness and beauty. It is an expert at offering counterfeit versions of what womanhood, male-female relationships, romance, sexuality, marriage, family and vocation are all about. It lies to the woman about who she is, what gives her significance, what marks her out as successful and how she should spend her time and money. Mass media skilfully portrays as natural and harmless the things that God calls sin. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) are the very things it upholds as highly desired. It calls evil good and good evil and promotes sin while aggressively mocking godliness.

To think that the average woman will expose herself to 3,596 hours of this type of falsehood annually is scary. That works out to approximately 10 hours every day. Yes, sometimes the radio or TV is only in the background but can you imagine the impact of such exposure? This ingestion of a constant diet of worldly ideas about how they should think and behave right from childhood and into adulthood is not without seriously negative effects. TV alone accounts for almost 5 hours of mass media exposure each day (33 hours a week or almost 2.5 months of 24/7 TV watching each year). In a 65 year life, such a woman will have spent about 13 non-stop years glued to the “Time Vacuum”. Add to that the rest of her mass media exposure – internet, radio, women’s magazines and social media and imagine for yourself the kind of grotesque obesity in worldliness that will come forth from such a deadly life.

In a world gone wild, the girl gone wise will feel she is out of place. While everyone else is influenced by the counsel of popular mass media, the wise girl will be guided by the Bible’s time-less, flawless and sufficient principles. The wise girl does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the path of sinners or sit under the tutelage of those who scoff at God. Instead she delights in the Lord’s instructions and constantly meditates on His counsel (Psalm 1). And the fruit of her spiritual life is pleasant to God.

Think about the Biblically wise ladies (such as the virtuous lady of Proverbs 31) and the Biblically wild women (such as the one in Proverbs 7). See the differences in their

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<sup>1</sup> [www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2009/tables/09s1089.xls](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2009/tables/09s1089.xls)

lives so that you may grow in your ability to discern between what is wise and what is wild. Learn about them so that you can say yes to God’s ideas and no to the sinful tendencies in your heart. Warn your son’s about the wild woman. And encourage the wise women who are the redeemed of the Lord not to be discouraged in the teeth of persecution that would come their way because they are no longer conformed to the patterns of this world (Romans 12:1-2). Moms and Dads, are you striving to raise your daughter to be a ‘Sarah’ or a ‘Jezebel’?

Below is a table that looks at some of the differences between a wild and wise woman. May the Lord be pleased to raise and strengthen wise ladies in our wild world for His glory.

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>THE WILD WOMAN</b>	<b>THE WISE WOMAN</b>
1. <b>HEART</b> – <i>What holds first place?</i>	God is peripheral	God is central
2. <b>COUNSEL</b> – <i>Where does she get instruction?</i>	World instructed	Word instructed
3. <b>ATTITUDE</b> – <i>What is her prevailing disposition?</i>	Glamorous & defiant	Gentle, calm and amenable.
4. <b>HABITS</b> – <i>What are her priorities &amp; routines?</i>	Self-indulgent	Self-disciplined
5. <b>FOCUS</b> – <i>What commands her attention?</i>	Getting	Giving
6. <b>APPEARANCE</b> – <i>How does she adorn herself?</i>	Unbecoming, indecent, excessive	Becoming, decent, moderate
7. <b>BODY LANGUAGE</b> – <i>How is her non-verbal behaviour?</i>	Suggestive	Modest
8. <b>ROLES</b> – <i>What is her pattern in interactions?</i>	Inclined to dominate	Inclined to follow
9. <b>SEXUAL CONDUCT AND BOUNDARIES</b> – <i>What are her hedges and precautions?</i>	Leaves herself susceptible & ends up dishonourable	Safe-guards herself & ends up honourable
10. <b>AUTHENTICITY</b> – <i>How is her private versus her public persona?</i>	Two-faced	Genuine
11. <b>NEEDINESS</b> – <i>Who does she depend on to fulfil her longings?</i>	Depends on man	Depends on God
12. <b>POSSESSIONS</b> – <i>How does she handle her money and resources?</i>	Indulgent	Circumspect
13. <b>RELIABILITY</b> – <i>How is her faithfulness to commitments?</i>	Undependable	Dependable
14. <b>SPEECH</b> – <i>What are her speech habits?</i>	Excessive, manipulative, duplicitous and wily	Restrained, sincere and without guile
15. <b>INFLUENCE</b> – <i>What’s her impact on others &amp; their impact on her?</i>	Negative influence & deteriorating relationships	Positive influence & growing relationships
16. <b>TEACHABILITY</b> – <i>How willing is she to be instructed or corrected?</i>	Scornful	Teachable

These are just a few areas where the wise and wild woman will be as different as chalk and cheese. I urge you to ensure that in a world that rewards sin and persecutes righteousness you become an avid seeker of whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8).

The end of the wild woman is destruction: 'Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death' (Proverbs 7:27). The wise woman on the other hand has works that praise her at the gates. 'Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates' (Proverbs 31:30-31).

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## **MY TESTIMONY**     *GEORGE MUCHERU*

My name is George Mucheru. I was born and brought up in Ruiru. I was baptized in infancy and grew up in church and being involved in church activities and events. Involvement in church activity from an early stage in life made me think I was a good person and that God thought of me as His child: that I was simply doing a few mistakes, but my life was not so bad.

My seemingly few mistakes turned into addictions, which became a way of life for me. I would do things in secret which manifested themselves openly. I did not know it but I was as a bad tree that only yielded bad fruit. Not even the counsel and discipline of my parents could work for me. For I had not only wronged my earthly father but in truth – my heavenly Father, a thrice Holy God. So blinded was I to the fact that this was sin in action, doing in me what sin does best and heart lovingly enjoying sin.

To try and atone for this, I engaged myself in church activity which did not involve studying the Scriptures, in the wrong belief that sin would disappear if I hang around church people. However, sin remained in my flesh. To further atone for this, I engaged in more church activity only this time, I led in a Bible Study. With the reality that the souls of men were under my care, I found myself seeking resources for "Spiritual Growth".

It had not appeared to me that God was using this zeal in me to bring me to Himself. These past two years as I've listened to sermons by Gospel preachers, I was confronted with my sinfulness. That I was a sinner not only in action but from the very root of me – my heart. That I had a stony heart – rebellious to God and His Word. That I hated God and His Law and all my works of good were as dirty rags in His presence. That I was carnal, sold as a slave to sin and dead in sin and trespass. That in the place of God's love, both His anger and His hatred were directed toward me. That I had been walking according to the course of this world in the power of the prince of darkness and was eternally hellbound.

I fought against these truths for I had been thinking myself a Christian, but God prevailed against my sinfulness. I pleaded with God for life and He heard my prayer. He has given me new life and a new heart. I am a new creature. He has led me to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and His cross upon which all my sin and guilt was laid. Judgment and anger that should have rightly befallen me was laid upon Jesus Christ on the cross and now I have salvation through faith in Him. I have been put right with God, redeemed and reconciled to God and adopted as a son into His family. I have a righteousness now, not my own but in Christ into whose image I am continually being confirmed. Now I know that the Gospel alone is the power of God unto salvation for whoever believes.

By grace have I been saved through faith; and this not of myself, it is the gift of God.  
Now, I have peace with God. PRAISE BE TO GOD!

# THE ATTITUDE OF CHRISTIANS TOWARDS WORK

Sakwa Buliba

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*“Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free” (Ephesians 6:5-9).*

Today May 1<sup>st</sup>. is the International Labour Day commonly known as May Day in many countries where it is celebrated. In the late 19<sup>th</sup>. century, the working class was in constant struggle to gain the 8-hour work day. Working conditions were severe and it was quite common to work for up to 16 hours a day in unsafe conditions. Death and injury were commonplace at many work places. As early as the 1860's working people agitated to shorten the workday without a cut in pay, but it wasn't until the late 1880's that organized labour was able to garner enough strength to declare the 8-hour workday. This proclamation was made at the protest of employers, while the working class celebrated. On May 1<sup>st</sup>. 1886 more than 300,000 workers in 13,000 businesses across the United States walked off their jobs in the first May Day celebration in history. Marked by fiery speeches and revolutionary ideology, thousands of workers in the US went on strike demanding a fair wage and better working conditions to the detriment of their employers in a day that would later be celebrated in over 100 countries as an International Workers' Day. Ironically, May Day is rarely recognized in the United States, the country where it began.

As we usher in Labour Day, we are much used to the conflict that exists in the world of labour. Early in the year, we witnessed the teachers' strike, the latest in a long list of labour disputes on the front pages of our daily newspapers. We watch the struggle in the world of employment on our TVs. We read about go-slows. We hear of walk-outs and threats and management fights and retrenchments. Spiralling inflation causes workers to make more and more demands. Ironically, inflation is caused by those very demands. Employees and employers are greedy, the employer wants astronomical profits, the employee wants fat pay cheques. People spend more than they make. Inevitably they put themselves in serious long-term debt by loans and mortgages. When they don't earn enough to pay for their debts, they demand more money. Eventually the employers cave in under a hail of threats of work stoppage, pay more money and raise the prices of products. And so the people who wanted more wages end up paying more money for everything they buy. The government tries to step in to control by raising income taxes and so workers have less money again! Ultimately, it's just a kind of a self-feeding monster.

And behind it all is just sin. Greed. Selfishness. Materialism. Everyone wants more for himself. The consumer screams for lower prices, less taxation and at the same time demands more pay. We get more taxes, higher wages, more of everything we don't want and sometimes less than what we actually need. And it's all being driven by greed. All these are brought about by a failure to understand the value and the honour of work. In fact this explains the Biblical assertion that the love of money is a root of all evil. It is no longer the love of work or the nobility of service. It is the love of money, the desire for pleasure, the craving for entertainment.

Based on this misconception, some people feel that work is a punishment God imposed on Adam and Eve as a result of their disobedience to Him. Although Adam

was to labour to provide food "by the sweat of [his] brow" (Genesis 3:19), the Bible portrays work as beneficial, productive, and noble. God Himself creates, forms, builds, and plants (Genesis 1:1, 2:7,19; Psalm 127:1; Amos 9:15). "On the seventh day [God] rested from all his *work*" (Genesis 2:2). And the result of His work was very good!

However, due to the fallen nature of man, work has been reduced to become an attempt to amass wealth in order to achieve more pleasure, or to attain a higher standard of living. There are three lessons drawn from Ephesians 6:5-8; and these are:-

## 1. Obey Your Earthly Masters

*"Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers...." (vv.5, 6a).*

In the same way God has designed authority in marriage, in the family, in the local church, in civil governments, He has ordained authority at workplace. It is noteworthy that when Paul addresses these workplace attitude principles, he doesn't use the words "employee" - "employer." He instead uses "slave/bondservant" - "master". This was the most common labour relationship that existed in the Roman Empire during Paul's time. It has been estimated that when Paul wrote these words as many as half of the populations of major cities like Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus, were slaves. So in his day perhaps half the people were slaves of the other half. This is important for us to note because it means that within the membership of the churches that first received this letter there were both slaves and masters. Effectively meaning that we could have a slave as deacon serving in a church where his master was a member; both rejoicing in the fact that at the cross of Jesus, the ground was level for all.

When 'performance contracting' was introduced in the public sector in Kenya, the sole motto was stated as "what gets measured, gets done"! The upshot of this is that workers produce impressive results if their progress is tracked, evaluated and weighed. In other words, performance is pegged on prying eyes of the boss. Christians ought not to be diligent only when under observation. Paul's command to servants, slaves or employees to obey their masters "**with fear and trembling**" connotes obedience with a deep sense of humility and dependence upon the Lord. It is not living in perpetual terror of your boss or cowering servility in abject fear but recognition that it is God who has ordained these relationships. It is a healthy fear of offending the employer who has been given the place of leadership in your life in the work place by God. "**With a sincere heart**" indicates a singular pure purpose, of pleasing the Lord as opposed to mixed motives. "**Not by way of eye-service, as people pleasers**" implies not putting on a show while the boss is watching, or when it's time for somebody to come and evaluate you, or because it is the month that's just before pay increases. Don't just do the minimum and get by, don't be marginal, don't be watching to see who is looking, don't just try to look good on the surface to make impressions for your master. There is a spirit of submission which is to attend a worker's actions, and which inspires the godly worker to go above and beyond the minimum requirements of his master. Peter writes. "*Servants. be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust*" (1 Peter 2:18).

On the contrary, the ungodly servant may appear to be obedient, but his spirit may well be in rebellion. He will do no more than his master demands and requires. When his master is not present, or when he is not looking, the servant lets up, producing only the minimum. All that the master gets from his ungodly servant is begrudging service.

He cares not for his master, nor will he do more than he is forced to do for his master's benefit. And not only will the sluggish worker fail to give his master his due, he may also steal from his master by pilfering, an evil which Paul vehemently condemns. He says, "*Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything: they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*" (Titus 2:9-10).

## 2. It's Your Service to the Lord

*".....but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man...."*(vv. 6b, 7).

Young people grow up today knowing that somebody owes them a living and that they should make demands for what they want and what they should get. This generation is producing young people who never see their parents work because even if they have two working parents, it's outside the home. They leave in the morning, they come back at night...all they know is work makes Dad and Mom irritable and work causes them not to get along too well and quite often work leads to breakup of homes. So work is not a very popular theme. The transition from college to the workplace could be an exciting change as one takes the next step in making his or her future dreams a reality. However, often in this transition, the initial excitement wears off quickly and one may find himself questioning what work is really all about. Work, as we know it, can be viewed as a troublesome experience. The processes and rewards of work are full of toil... thorns and thistles... and sweat (Genesis 3:17-19). Confusion over values rage as questions of excellence, integrity, quality, and skill get lost in the scramble for profit.

It is important that we acknowledge our whole working life as a sacred act of worship. Paul is saying here that Christians don't have secular jobs when he refers to them as "**bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God...**" The Christian must never forget that he or she represents Christ in the workplace. Not only is work noble and God-ordained, it is also an instrument of service to the Lord. The Christian should take Christ with him into every area of his life and the work area, that consumes nearly 75 percent of our usual week when we are awake, should be no exception. Even when the job is not the most satisfying or if it is the most fulfilling, the Christian will say, "I'm going to serve the Lord in my woods and nails, I'm going to serve Him in my chalkboards, I'm going to serve Him in the fixing of car engines, I'm going to serve Him while presiding over staff meetings, I'm going to serve Him while flying passengers in the sky. I'm not working for myself, for my family, nor for my boss. I'm serving Jesus Christ in the midst of a wicked world, I am His servant".

If you are a Christian who is discontent with your job, who is a poor worker, slothful, arrives late, leaves early, fakes illnesses, not diligent, seeks to get out of every task, not willing to volunteer for the extra things, murmuring against the boss, demanding every right; you are a dishonour and disgrace to the Lord Jesus. When Paul speaks about "**doing the will of God from the heart**", it is not therefore the outward acts of obedience alone for which Paul calls, but an inward spirit of submission and obedience, which results in obedience and faithful service, whether the master sees it or not. The fundamental obedience which Paul

calls for here and elsewhere in his teaching is to our Lord. The Ephesians were not instructed to obey their masters alongside obeying Christ, but to obey their masters in obedience to Christ. The fundamental obedience is therefore not to masters, but to the Master. The master issues him orders, and he obeys, but in so doing he is obeying his Master, Jesus Christ. In fact the only way you may know who is really in charge is to observe what happens when the earthly master's orders contradict the Master's orders (Acts 5:29)!

### 3. It Carries Eternal Dividends

*“.....knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free” (v. 8).*

It is important to realize here that Paul was not concerned about the political or economic liberation of slaves. He was not concerned about altering society externally, socially, or altering it culturally. Paul is simply addressing the heart of a Christian worker. The truth is when we do our jobs in the right attitude—when we embrace the mind-set of our Lord Jesus, work takes on a divine dimension. We then come to realize that if we do everything for God, then we are part of the big picture...we are where the action is...on the front lines, fulfilling God's purposes in this world. The sad truth is that many Christians have been ineffective in their attempts to make an eternal impact because they have either been careless workers whose shoddy jobs of inferior standards offended co-workers or have been inconsistent Christians whose behaviour was shaped more by the marketplace mind-set than the mind of Christ. In either case they have forfeited their credibility and turned an opportunity into a closed door.

When we look at our workplace, we realize that our co-workers (our bosses, our peers, our juniors, our suppliers, our clients) are the congregation (the mission field, the harvest) God has placed on our way. Therefore if we embrace these workplace principles that Paul cites in this passage...we inevitably erect a “pulpit” from which we can share the gospel of God. As God's Spirit bears His fruit in our workplace...in our Christ-like interactions with others...God's kingdom grows, and His eternal purposes are accomplished. Our acts of kindness...our striving for excellence...our honesty...our integrity...our witness both non-verbal and verbal—have eternal consequences!

When we look at work in this way—when we think of God as our Employer, our jobs become much, much more valuable. They become one of the ways in which we worship Him. Our job site, our office, our work desk, even the company bus we ride in—becomes a “temple.” Each project we undertake becomes an offering to God. When a Christian walks on the job site he or she should be thinking about more than making money, getting promotions, acquiring a flashy office, catching the eye of the boss, or even enjoying the tasks. He should be embracing a mind set in which he constantly strives to bring honour to the Lord. The greatest incentive in all the work as a believer is that Christ is the final Pav Master! He will provide the final payroll. Jesus said, “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done” (Revelation 22:12).

# WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE

*John Muketha*

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Every person who lives long enough will eventually encounter circumstances that are difficult to explain theologically. Cancer, death, accidents, terrorist attacks, divorce, rape, loneliness, infertility, rejection – these and a many other sources of human suffering produce inevitable questions that trouble the soul. Everybody who comes to church has a story that includes pain and suffering. Behind each smiling face there is pain, difficulty, heartache, and many unanswered questions. Most of us are happy but in each life some rain must fall as no one lives in the sunshine forever. When difficulties and calamities strike, people tend to respond in four ways:

**1. Denial:** This is where most of us begin in dealing with suffering. Grit your teeth, smile even when you are hurting deeply and never let people see you sweat. When someone is in denial, they won't admit the truth even when they know others know the truth. When you ask, "How are you doing?" They will say, "Great! I'm doing okay!" You know they are not telling the truth. There is something in all of us that makes us pretend that everything is going okay even when it's not. We pretend the problem is not there or we pretend that it is not as bad as it really is.

**2. Getting angry:** Sometimes we react to suffering by getting bitter even to the extent of shaking our fists at God. Failure to deal with your anger constructively will affect every relationship in life, including your relationship with God. It is impossible to go through life angry at others and maintain a warm and positive relationship with God. You can't hate your neighbour and love God at the same time (1 John 4:8). Some believers live that way for years – and then they wonder why God seems so distant and their prayers so empty and their Christian experience so lifeless. If that describes you, please take a good look inside, because you will never get better until you deal with the anger within.

**3. Blaming others:** This is a very popular option. We all use it sooner or later. "Whose fault was it?" "Hers!" The blame game started in the Garden of Eden: "*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate... The serpent deceived me, and I ate*" (Genesis 3:12-13).

**4. Accept it and learn from it:** Our final option regarding suffering is to accept it and to learn from it. You can deny it, you can get angry, you can blame someone else, or you can accept what happens to you and begin to learn from it. Of those four ways, only the last one is a truly Christian way of dealing with the difficulties of life. When trouble comes, you really only have two choices: to become a victim or to become a student. You become a student by asking yourself, "What have I learned from this? What is God trying to say to me? How can I grow from this painful experience?"

Having said that, we have to admit that there are many questions we cannot answer about why bad things happen to God's people. Even if we had all the time in the world, we still could not answer all questions about suffering because some of them simply defy any human explanation.

God allows bad things to happen to His people to test the validity of their faith, wean them from the world and call them to heavenly hope by filling their hearts with anticipation for the glories to come. Through trials God also teaches his people obedience in order that He might reveal His compassion in their misery. Suffering

helps us to develop our spiritual strength for greater usefulness and enables us to help others in their trials. Finally God allows His people to experience trouble and trials in order to display His power (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Yes, God's plans include a merciful escape from our suffering and death: *"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men"* (Romans 5:18). Just as Adam willingly forfeited his right to live in perfection, Christ willingly gave up his perfection to pay the penalty for Adam's sin. Jesus was the lamb *"foreknown before the foundation of the world"* (1 Peter 1:19-20). God's gift of salvation was the greatest demonstration of fatherly suffering in history - watching His only begotten Son suffer the agony of being vilified and crucified. Is there any doubt what great love God has? *"God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

**"Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?"** God is eternal, infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. Why should human beings (not eternal, infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent) expect to be able to fully understand God's ways? God allowed Satan to do everything he wanted to **Job** except kill him. Job's reaction: *"Though he slay me, will I hope in him"* (Job 13:15). *"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD"* (Job 1:21). Job did not understand why God had allowed the things He did, but he knew God was good and therefore continued to trust in Him. Ultimately, that should be our reaction too.

**Why do bad things happen to good people?** The biblical answer is there are no "good" people. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that all of us are tainted by and infected with sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 6:23; 1 John 1:8). Romans 3:10-18 is very clear about the non-existence of "good" people: *"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."* Every human being on this planet deserves to be thrown into hell at this very moment. Every second we spend alive is only by the grace and mercy of God. Even the most terrible misery we could experience on this planet is merciful compared to what we deserve, eternal hell in the lake of fire.

A better question would be **"Why does God allow good things to happen to bad people?"** Romans 5:8: *"But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Despite the evil, wicked, sinful nature of the people of this world, God still loves us. He loved us enough to die to take the penalty for our sins (Romans 6:23). If we receive Jesus Christ as Saviour (John 1:12-13; 3:16; Romans 10:9), we will be forgiven and promised an eternal home in heaven (Romans 8:1). What we deserve is hell. What we are given is eternal life in heaven if we come to Christ in faith.

Yes, sometimes bad things happen to people who seem undeserving of them. But God allows things to happen for His reasons, whether or not we understand them. Above all, however, we must remember that God is good, just, loving, and merciful. Often things happen to us that we simply cannot understand. However, instead of doubting God's goodness, our reaction should be to trust Him. When we suffer, we must trust that God knows what He is doing, and that He works in and through the pain and afflictions of His people for His glory and for their sanctification. *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

## A FEW THOUGHTS ON TEACHING CHILDREN *C.H. Spurgeon*

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Our Lord Jesus Christ evidently felt deep sympathy with children, and he is but little like Christ who looks upon them as a trouble in the world, and treats them as if they must needs be either little deceivers or foolish simpletons. To you who teach in our schools is given the joyous privilege of finding out where these young disciples who are truly the lambs of Christ's flock, and to you He saith, "Feed my lambs"; that is, instruct such as are truly gracious, but young in years.

Christian children mainly need to be taught the doctrine, precept, and life of the gospel: they require to have Divine truth out before them and forcibly. It is ours to make doctrine simple; this is to be a main part of our work. Teach the little ones the whole truth and nothing but the truth; for instruction is the great want of the child's nature.

The only way to keep chaff out of the child's little measure is to fill brimful with good wheat.

Train up a child, and he may have fifty years of holy service before him. We are glad to welcome those who come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, but they have hardly taken their pruning-hook and their spade before the sun goes down, and their short day's work is ended. O dear teachers and I speak here to myself also let our teaching be more and more Scriptural! Fret not if our classes forget what we say, but pray them to remember what the Lord says. Be sure whatever you leave out, that you teach the children the three R's – Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration. Tell the children they are ruined by the fall, and that there is salvation for them only by being redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

God forgive those who despise the little ones! Will you be very angry if I say that a boy is more worth saving than a man? It is infinite mercy on God's part to save those who are seventy; for what good can they now do with the end of their lives? When we get to be fifty or sixty, we are almost worn out; and if we have spent all our early days with the devil, what remains for God? But these dear boys and girls – there is something to be made out of them. They are the world's future. The past has been and we cannot alter it; even the present is gone while we gaze on it; but our hope lies in the future: therefore, leave room for the children, room for the boys and girls!

When the Lord calls a man to work, He gives him the preparation necessary for it. Get near to Jesus. An hour's communion with Jesus is the best preparation for teaching either the young or the old. So in the case of many a faithful teacher of young children, you hear but little about him, yet he is doing grand work for which future ages will call him blessed. His master knows all about him, and we shall hear of him in that day; perhaps not till then. Good teachers of the young look after them all the days of the week as they have opportunity, and they are careful about their souls with prayer and holy example when they are not teaching them by word of mouth. The shepherdry of lambs is daily, hourly work. Go and catch the children. There is no law against it; all is fair in war against the devil. So my first instruction is, get the children, and get them anyhow that you can.

He who teaches a class in a Sabbath-school has earned a good degree. I had rather receive a little of S.S.T. than M.A., B.A., or any other honour that ever was conferred by men. Let me beg you, then to take heart, because your duties are so honourable. Let the royal example of David, let the Godlike example of Jesus Christ inspire you with fresh diligence and increasing ardour, with confident and enduring perseverance, still to go on in your blessed work, saying as David did, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

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I hope that you have been blessed by this article as I was. My prayer is that these wonderful thoughts of C.H. Spurgeon, would kindle your desire to serve in the Children's ministry. And for those already involved in this ministry, may it be an encouragement for us to continue to labour faithfully, knowing that we are involved in a precious work.

*Dominic K. Ndung'u - Sunday School Coordinator.*

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