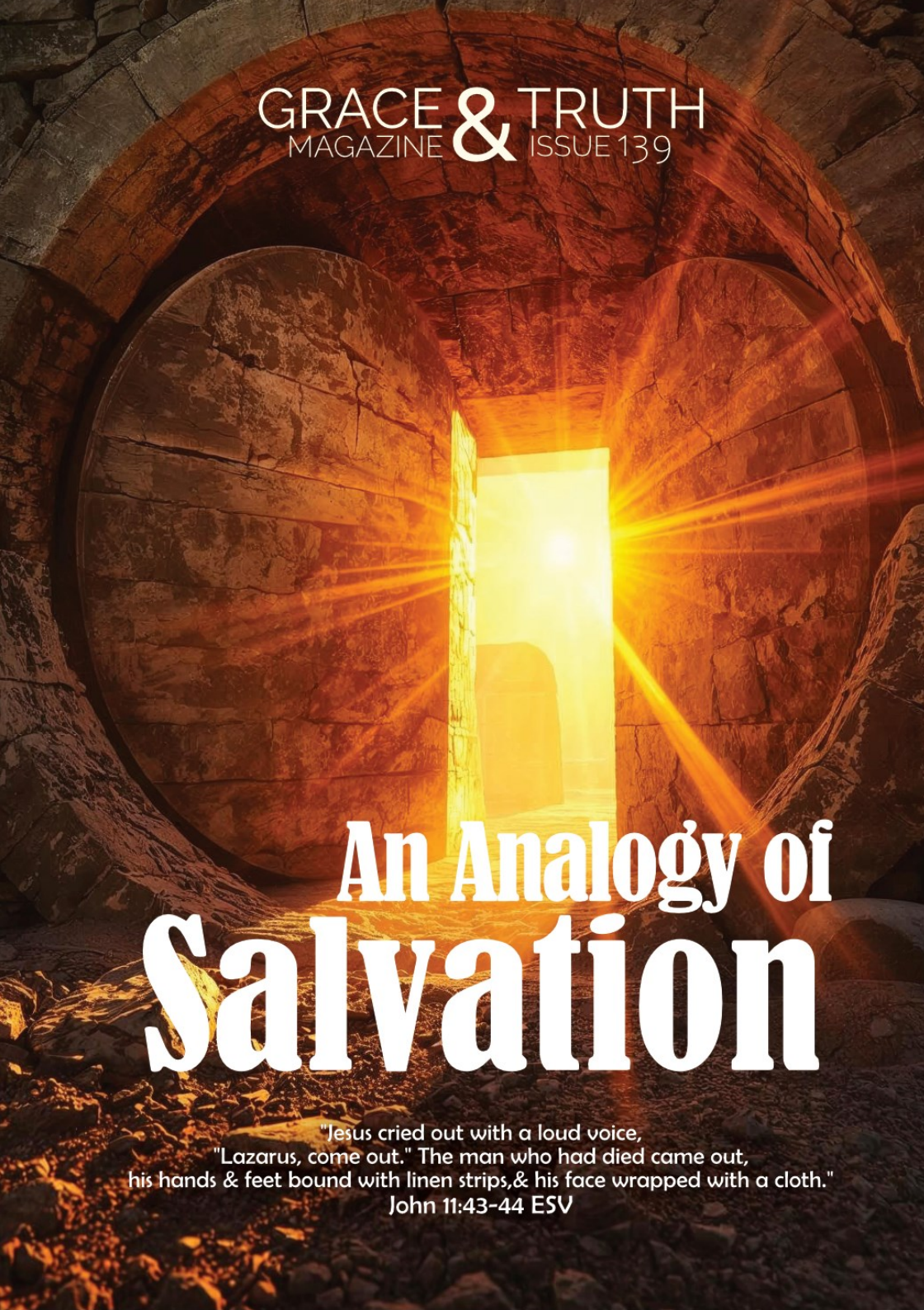




GRACE & TRUTH
MAGAZINE & ISSUE 139

An Analogy of Salvation

"Jesus cried out with a loud voice,
"Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out,
his hands & feet bound with linen strips, & his face wrapped with a cloth."
John 11:43-44 ESV



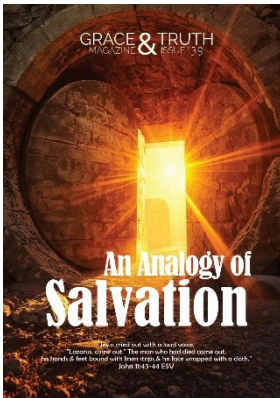
TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH

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, 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

Murungi Igweta



Cover: An Analogy of Salvation

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is a picture of salvation. God in His mercy grants salvation to those who are dead, when the powerful voice of Jesus calls them and they hear His voice (John 10:27-28). The raising of Lazarus is also the true believer's story of salvation. Those who were dead in sin and trespasses heard the voice of Jesus, were raised to life, and now strive to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

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Lift up your voice.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.

EDITORIAL: IRRESTIBLE GRACE

John Muketha

Have you ever wondered why two people who share similar circumstances react in opposite ways? One person believes in Christ and the other rejects Christ. The Gospel invitation extends a call to all with an invitation to drink freely of the water of life (Isaiah 45:22; 55:1-2,6). This external call is made to all without distinction and God promises salvation to all who believe in His Son. Does this bring sinners to Christ? Not really! The reason is ***Total Depravity!*** There is no amount of external threats or promises that will cause rebellious sinners who are blind, deaf, and dead in their sins and trespasses to bow before Christ as Lord and look to Him alone for salvation. This external call can be and often is rejected.

The Apostle Paul wrote that *no one seeks after God* (Romans 3:11). All of us without exception have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). God pleads with us to turn from sin and self to Him but we ridicule Him. What we deserve is death as the wage for sin. (Romans 6:23). Yet by His grace, God makes hell deserving rebels into His own children and heirs of unsearchable riches. This indeed is grace – God’s unmerited favour. The only reason why anyone believes in Christ is the ***Irresistible Grace*** of God.

The Holy Spirit extends a **special inward call** to the elect which perform a work of grace within the sinner bringing him to Christ for salvation. This is regeneration with the sinner given a new heart and a new nature and made a child of God. His will is renewed and his spontaneous response is to come to Christ freely. The once dead sinner is drawn to Christ by the inward supernatural call of the Spirit who through regeneration makes him alive and creates within him faith and repentance. The special inward call of the Spirit, therefore never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This Spirit’s call is efficacious, invincible, irresistible resulting in true faith in Christ.

The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing men to faith and salvation always achieves its goal. (Romans 8:29-30; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 4:4). God’s saving grace overcomes, in the elect, the resistance inherent in all of fallen mankind. God never drags people to Himself against their will. God intervenes in a person’s life in such a way as to overcome all natural resistance so that they come willingly by faith to

Him. Salvation begins in eternity past in the sovereign election of God (Ephesians 1:4). Through the preaching of the Word of God, the elect hear the voice of God and come to Christ. (John 6:37, 45).

The Bible contains many examples of Irresistible Grace. Consider Paul's Conversion: (Acts 8:1,3; 9:1-30) – Where was He and what was his mission? Paul hated God so much that he tried to throw believers into jail. Yet in spite of his hatred and while he was right in the middle of a hateful journey to Damascus, God came into his life in an irresistible way. He was overwhelmed and he had to believe. In Acts 16:14 we have an account of how Lydia was converted. Here, God opened her heart to pay heed to what Paul taught. Without the Lord opening her heart she could not believe. She was drawn to Christ by God (John 6:37,44). That is irresistible grace.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is a beautiful illustration of what happens when sinners are saved. Lazarus had been dead four days but when Jesus called him by name, he was made alive and came out of the grave (John 11:44). When sinners are “born again”, they become “new creations” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

If you are a believer today, think about the state you were when you were saved. Like Lazarus, every true believer was dead in trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1-3). God being rich in mercy and great love has saved us by grace and made us alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-9). Our response is praise to our sovereign Saviour as we “live to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:6, 12), since we are God's “workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

If you are not saved today, remember Paul's word to the Philippian Jailor: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”. Don't reason “unless the Holy Spirit moves me I can do nothing about.” It is your responsibility to believe. God's command to you is **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”** Afterwards look back and thank God for causing you to do so. (Philippians 2:13).

EPHESIANS 3:9-11

GOD'S MANIFOLD WISDOM

This article continues the verse by verse exposition of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Keith Underhill

If God is God then we all agree that He is the most wise Person; He is *all-wise* (Romans 16:27, see 11:33). He knows everything, and because there is no sin in Him, he always uses the best possible means for the most glorious purposes. Where do we see God's wisdom? Of course, in His creation (Jeremiah 10:12, see Proverbs 8). We see its beauty, its vastness, its detail, the way it all fits together and works perfectly, despite the world now being in a fallen state. Our passage, however, refers to God's **manifold** wisdom and finds it in connection with the CHURCH! This wisdom is multi-coloured, like a garland of flowers, like a rainbow, beautiful, and full of splendour. Too often the 'church' is despised and ridiculed as if something foolish. Many see it as just full of hypocrites, useless in today's society as totally unable to change anything, as an institution only interested in money and power. Yet, we need to learn that it is specifically and pre-eminently through the church that God's manifold wisdom is made known. Of course, we must know where to look for the church: not in buildings, nor in leaders who push themselves forward as 'men of God' for riches and influence.

1. GOD'S WISDOM IN STARTING THE CHURCH (3:9)

Who did God choose to start this work? It was seemingly a useless earthen vessel, Saul of Tarsus, who describes himself as "the very least of all the saints" (3:8). How was he to accomplish the work? He was simply commissioned to "preach" a message that there are unsearchable riches in Christ (3:8), the One whom the Romans crucified, yet who it is claimed rose from the dead on the third day and ascended into heaven. If this is it, then who could be expected to respond? It is an unbelievable message. And anyway, who is this unknown preacher, Paul? How, then, is it wisdom to use such a person, to carry out such a responsibility?

Paul makes it very clear in verse 9 that the preaching ministry is not simply about giving information. It is also a power to work in those who listen. When God raises up a preacher God's purpose is that

people all over the world have “the plan of the mystery” *brought to light* in their lives. This means that God enlightens them to receive the message with understanding and joy (1:18, Acts 26:18). Brethren, there is divine power in this gospel message! It is the only way its success can be explained. God has not commissioned famous people, there is no vast organization with financial resources, nor powerful rulers to enforce the message. So Lydia’s heart was opened by the riverside (Acts 16:14), the Corinthians believed (1 Corinthians 2:4-5), and the Thessalonians were blessed (1 Thessalonians 1:5). As men and women believe, so a local church is started; the stones of the spiritual building begin to be laid.

What God purposed to do in His eternal plans had not been fully disclosed, so it is called a “mystery”. It awaited the time of fulfilment as it could not be comprehended until its outworking was made clear. The church is a body of believers, both Jews and Gentiles, as they are equally the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ (see 2:19-22, 3:6). God’s full plan is to unite “all things” in heaven and on earth (1:10). God created all these things and will surely bring them back into full harmony. He has the power to do it, and He does it through the preaching of the gospel. This is God’s wisdom, as the purpose is glorious, and the means is most efficient.

2. GOD’S WISDOM IN ESTABLISHING THE CHURCH (3:10)

The church becomes established because over time groups of believers begin to meet in various places. They were first called Christians in Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:26). They were also known as The Way (Acts 9:2), or just as disciples (Acts 9:1,19). They are a diverse people: Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles; men and women; free and slave; adults and children. Yet they are united together, loving each other as a closely knit family, with one hope of glory. This is the true church, and there is no other society on earth like it. The world is always divided, with no real hope. Just think of the so-called ‘United Nations’ with different blocks that vote according to their own interests. When I first was in Kenya (1968), six brethren, who I did not know at all, came to meet with me. We were different in almost every way except one; we were all Christians with a testimony of how the Lord had saved us. So we were united. Just think of the different people who came together in the Biblical record: Paul the Jew and Luke the Gentile; the master Philemon and his slave Onesimus; and in the Philippian church, the

business women Lydia, a slave girl, and the jailer. God is doing before our eyes what sin destroyed at the beginning, what man by himself has been unable to repair. Sure, there are many unworthy things that you can find in the name of the church, just like on an unfinished building site. But there are also so many wonderful things. The church is God's building project for the reconciliation of all things (see Colossians 1:19-20).

Equally surprising is that this wisdom is made known to “rulers and authorities in heavenly places” and not just to people on earth.

Many believe this refers to *evil angels* (as in 6:12), who seek to sow discord and to destroy, but who are defeated by the ‘foolishness of the cross’ as Christ crucified has become “the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). This would be of great comfort to Christians who before used to fear such evil powers (see Ephesians 1:21). It would apply also to those who today have been caught up in the so-called ‘deliverance movement’ and the fear of generational curses.

However, it is probably better to see a reference to *good angels*, who want to know what God is doing (as in 1 Peter 1:12). They rejoiced over creation, then sin entered and brought futility, a problem that the flood did not solve. Then they witnessed the choice of Abraham and his grandson Jacob as the ancestor of the Jewish nation. They followed their history into Egypt, then into Canaan, with all its ups and downs. Sometimes it looked as if it would be a failure. Then the promised One was born and they sang over the birth of Jesus as the Saviour Christ who would bring that longed for peace (Luke 2:14). But how would He do it?

We imagine these angels marvelling at the great crowds who followed His teaching, witnessing His powerful miracles, but it seemed to end in utter defeat, the cross! Far from being defeat, the cross was victory over evil powers, as shown in the resurrection and the pouring out of the Spirit. The preaching of the cross has since gone throughout the world, establishing a church out of “every nation” (Revelation 7:9). No longer is the world divided between the Jews as God's people, and the Gentiles outside God's kingdom. In accomplishing this God's wisdom is seen as manifoldly great. Let us adore Him.

3. GOD'S WISDOM IN FULFILLING AN ETERNAL PURPOSE (3:11)

We all make plans. Some fail because they are foolish. Others fail because of unforeseen circumstances. God has made plans, an “eternal purpose”. Central to God’s plan was **the church**. Christ said He will build His church (Matthew 16:18). Paul wrote that “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). The church is not a ‘parenthesis’ as found in the older Dispensational teaching (as in the Schofield Bible). It was falsely believed that although the Jews first rejected Christ’s offer of the kingdom to them, at a future time they will receive it in a millenium. So the church is only there because of the failure of the Jews. NO! The church is God’s masterpiece. It was His purpose from eternity. It is established because of the coming and work of “Jesus Christ our Lord”. He came as a substitute for a multitude of sinners, he lived a sinless life, He was punished on the cross for our sin, and rose on the third day triumphant over every enemy, and will return for final salvation. God is fulfilling what He planned. How wise He is!

Don’t be found guilty of fighting against God’s eternal purpose by dividing the church. Paul will go on in this letter to urge the Ephesians “to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3). We must do everything we possibly can to show that we are spiritually one in the midst of our earthly diversity (Colossians 3:11).

You need to be sure that you are part of this church that Christ is building. How can you know? Ask yourself these questions. Are you totally depending upon Christ for salvation from sin? – remind yourself of Ephesians 2:1-10. Is Jesus Christ your Lord so that your life is patterned on His word? Do you count *anyone* like this a spiritual brother so that you love them in a Christian way? Do you magnify the wisdom of God in your salvation from beginning to end? Have you identified with a local church that also believes and practices these things?

THE LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH OF 1689

CHAPTER 10 EFFECTUAL CALLING

Keith Underhill

The Nature of Effectual Calling

1. At a time appointed and acceptable to God, those whom God has predestinated to life are effectually called by His Word and Spirit out of a state of death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ. Their minds are given spiritual enlightenment and, as those who are being saved, they begin to understand the things of God. God takes away their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. He renews their will, and by His almighty power He sets them to seek and follow that which is good, at the same time effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ. And to all these changes they come most freely, for they are made willing by divine grace.

(a) **Who** are called? “Those whom God has predestinated to life” (Romans 8:30). This calling is the first thing God does in the life of any individual He has purposed to save. Only those whom He has predestinated are called – this is part of God’s eternal purpose in their lives (so Romans 8:28). See Chapter 3 on God’s Decree.

(b) **When** are they called? “At a time appointed by and acceptable to God”. We have already seen that salvation depends on the will of God, not the will of man (Chapter 9). So God calls His chosen ones when He wants to do so (so Paul, Galatians 1:15).

(c) **How** are they called? “Effectually ... by His Word and Spirit”. ‘Calling’ is a common word in the New Testament to describe what God does in salvation. There is a General Call which can be and is refused (Matthew 20:16, 22:14). There is also a special or Effectual Call which is always received. It is like a summons to appear in court, which is obeyed because of the serious consequences of not doing so. God calls “by His Word” whether it is preached or read or just called to mind (2 Thessalonians 2:14). But the Word only has power “by ... (the) Spirit”. As an illustration, think of Lazarus whom Jesus called to come out of the tomb; it was only effectual because he was given life-

giving power to obey. The Spirit gives life to enable a dead sinner heed the call.

(d) **What is involved** in calling? Note the following things that are part of the life that the Spirit gives, what we usually refer to as regeneration or the new birth.

1. The *mind* is enlightened so that the things of God begin to be understood
(1 Corinthians 2:11-16, Ephesians 1:17-19, 4:17-21, 1 John 2:20-27). When you became a Christian you began to really appreciate the Scriptures, because they began to be meaningful to you.
2. The *heart* is changed from “stone” to “flesh” so that there is now a new desire for the things of God. This involves the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the guarantee that the life will now be totally changed (see Ezekiel 36:25-27, John 3:5-6). Stone is hard and cold; flesh is pliable and warm, a symbol of a heart that is now responsive to the things of God.
3. The *will* is renewed so that it makes a deliberate choice of the things of God. Therefore, the very first thing that the sinner does, when he is effectually called, is to come to Jesus Christ = to believe. If the mind understands and the heart delights in what is understood, the will most certainly chooses to follow. In this sense there is no such thing as ‘free-will’, as the will carries out the thoughts of the mind and the desires of the heart, and is not independent. It is therefore sure that all who are truly born again will seek to lead godly lives (Ezekiel 36:27, 1 John 3:9)

God Alone is Active in Effectual Calling

2. God’s effectual call is the outcome of His free and special grace alone. Until a man is given life, and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is dead in sins and trespasses, so is entirely passive in this work of salvation, a work that does not proceed from anything good foreseen in him, nor from any power or agency resident in him. The power that enables him to answer God’s call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, is no less than that which effected the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

(a) God's "free and special **grace**" is the only reason why anyone is effectually called (Galatians 1:15, 2 Timothy 1:9). This is because all men are "dead in sins and trespasses" and are totally unworthy of any blessing from God.

(b) It is only by God's **power** that any sinner can respond to God's call. Like Lazarus, we are dead and so unable to respond. We must first be made alive. God uses the same power by which He raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20).

(c) The sinner is "entirely **passive**", because we have neither done anything good to deserve God's blessing, nor do we have any power to hear or respond to God's call. It is so important to understand that the sinner has no hope in himself. While he must be called upon to believe he is unable to believe. We must point the sinner to Christ and to Him alone (John 6:41-44).

Problems Concerning Effectual Calling

3. Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how He pleases. The same is true of all elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called through the preaching of the gospel.

4. Men who are not elected, even though they may be called upon to embrace salvation by the preachers of the gospel, and may be subjects of some common operations of the Spirit, cannot be saved, because they are not effectually drawn to Christ by the Father, for which reason they neither can, nor will, truly come to Him. Much less can men who do not receive the Christian religion be saved, no matter how diligent they are to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the teachings of the religion they follow.

(a) Those who **die in infancy**. The Confession states that if there are those who are "elect" they will be saved even though they cannot be called through the Word. This is a subject about which there is no clear revelation in the Bible. It is just as false to say that no infants will be saved, as to say that all infants will be saved. The Lord knows and He will do what is right. There is no example in the Bible of a dead infant of whom it was declared that it was saved. 2 Samuel 12:23 only refers to the state of the dead and not to salvation.

(b) Those who are **incapable of understanding the Word**, especially the mentally ill. If they must be called through the Word in order to be saved, then there is no hope for such. The Confession again states that if there are those who are elect they will be “regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit” directly.

(c) Those who hear the Word but **are not elect**. Multitudes throughout the world hear the gospel but are never saved, and die as unbelievers. This is because they were never elect and so never experienced the powerful call of God in their lives through the Word, without which no one can come to Christ. This is hard teaching but it must be true if sinners have no power in themselves to respond to the call.

(d) Those who **never hear the Word**. There are also multitudes who never hear of Christ, and so who can never be called through the Word. Because Christ is the only way of salvation they cannot be saved (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). This is why Christ commanded us to take the gospel to all men (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15) for without such evangelism there is no hope for the lost. What they learn about God through creation can never save them (see Romans 1:19-20, and Chapter 1).

EFFECTUAL CALLING

Jon English Lee

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Living east of Eden, how can man know and commune with his creator? That is, if it is true that Adam's sin has rendered each of his children at odds with their creator (cf. Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1-3 2LBCF 6.2), how can we ever have hope of peace and communion? This is an important question, indeed, perhaps THE most important question that anyone can ask in this life.

In a very real sense, the Bible paints a sobering picture of the state of fallen man—not merely sinful, but hopelessly so: “no one is righteous, no not one...no one seeks for God” (Rom 3:10–11). If that is the case, that no man seeks after God, and that man is, “utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good” (2LBCF 6.4), then what hope does anyone have of salvation?

Apart from God's intervention, man has no hope. That's the uniform answer of scripture, and that's what the confession teaches. The God of all life alone can resurrect the spiritually-dead. And the gospel teaches that that is exactly what God does in salvation.

According to His timing, God decides to act in history to save sinners. Moved according to His own good pleasure (“according to the counsel of His will,” Eph. 1:11), God enacts His plan to call dead sinners whom He has elected before the foundation of the world (cf., Eph. 1:3–10). These that He predestined unto life, and only these, receive the blessed intervention, the holy gift of spiritual life (to see this connection further between predestination and effectual calling, see Rom. 9:11–12, 23–26; Rom. 11:7; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:23–24; 2 Thess. 2:13–14).

This gift of new life given to once-dead sinners is described by theologians as *effectual calling*: “and those whom he predestined he

also *called*, and those whom he *called* he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” (Rom. 8:30). Notice the finality, the assuredness of Paul’s thought present in the chain of salvation Romans 8:30. God is the powerful actor, and nothing can thwart His action, not even us. No wonder Paul goes on to immediately say, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31)

Not even death, or the effects of the fall within us, can thwart Divine action in the soul of fallen men. One author writes:

Man does not cooperate with God in this call (i.e., synergism), nor is man able to resist this call and defeat God’s grace—how could he when he is in spiritual bondage and death? Rather, this call is a summons that does not merely offer new life but creates new life within, much like Jesus’ powerful words: “Lazarus, come out!” (John 11:43). For that reason, this call is one that cannot and will not fail in its mission to bring God’s elect into union with Christ. It is effective.¹

The same powerful God who spoke the universe into existence from nothing, now authoritatively speaks spiritual life and peace into the soul that once new nothing but death and rebellion. It is that same Divine voice “who saved us and *called us* to a holy calling, not because of our works [indeed, in spite of our sinful works] but *because of his own purpose and grace*” (2 Tim. 1:9).

How does this God speak this word of life? Is it an audible voice from the heavens? Is it an internally discerned little tweak of the conscience? What means does the Lord use to communicate His blessed calling? In short, God’s blessed calling comes through the means of His word, made effectual by the operation of the Holy Spirit. As Paul says of the saints in Thessalonica: “God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification *by the Spirit* and *belief in the truth*.¹⁴ To this *he called you* through our gospel” (2 Thess 2:13–14, emphasis added).

¹ Matthew Barrett, “Effectual Calling,” Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/effectual-calling/> (Accessed 3/28/2025).

Again, notice the actors and the means in this glorious drama of redemption: God is the one doing the calling; sinners are the ones called; the Spirit is the agent applying the effectual call; and the word of God (i.e., “the truth”) is the instrumental means that the Divine Spirit uses to bring about the redemptive ends. The Spirit uses the word of God, and only the word of God, to bring about the redemptive designs of God.

As the confession states, it is this ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He “calls them out of their natural state of sin and death to grace and salvation.” He does this by removing some of the blinding effects of the fall so that sinners may see the glory of God in the gospel. Paul speaks of this work as “having the eyes of your heart enlightened that you may know that which is the hope to which he has called you” (Eph. 1:18). An internal action of the Holy Spirit enlightening the minds of sinners “spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God” (2LBCF 10.1).

This internal action of the Spirit is the prophesied blessing of the New Covenant, which Ezekiel said would result in the children of God being given new hearts: “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ez. 36:26–27).

Notice especially the latter part of Ezekiel’s prophecy. This internal action of God enlightening the minds of believers and replacing their hearts *necessarily* results in an outward, ethical change. They will have a new heart and the Divine Spirit of holiness within then, therefore they will be careful to walk in holiness (“obey my rules...”). To borrow the analogy from James 3:11, the spring has been made clean, so now fresh water necessarily flows. The effectual call, to be demonstrated as genuine, will necessarily begin to result in righteous living from the believer.

The soul that was previously dead to sin and powerless to do any good, now, because of this effectual change of heart, is given the power and the liberty to pursue that which is good. And the first step of that liberty is the reflexive response of faith: believing and rejoicing in the good work of grace provided through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the savior of the world.

The heart that was previously hard towards the things of God and at enmity toward him, now can perceive the beauty of his nature and the glory of his grace. Then, being wooed by his mercy, freely and delightfully comes to embrace that God by faith. “Your people do offer themselves freely,” the Psalmist says (110:3).

The effectual nature of this Divine call in no way negates the freedom of the believer’s will, nor turns the child of God into some time of choice-less robot. Rather, for the first time in his or her life, the child of Divine grace can freely choose that which is good, true, and beautiful. The soul that was previously only able to act according to its fallen nature, is now able, by Divine calling and renewal, to freely act and choose according to its new nature. Having been regenerated in the image of the Son, this child of God freely, reflexively, joyfully, doxologically now chooses a life of honor and praise to God. In short, the enemy of God has now been made a blessed child.

So to return to our initial question: how can man have peace with and communion with God? The answer is simple: by the gracious, effectual, initiative-taking action of God himself. And praise be to God that he delights to save sinners, by means of His Spirit effectually calling the dead to life, replacing their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh, enlightening their eyes to behold the glory of His nature, and freeing them to joyfully respond in faith and obedience. He acts, and we are freed to act. He loves, and we are freed to love in return (1 John 4:19).

“BY HIS WORD AND SPIRIT: THE MEANS OF EFFECTUAL CALLING”

Ben Carson

Introduction:

One of the main uses of the Greek verb “to call” (*kaleo*) in the New Testament relates to a call or summons which urges a response from its hearers. Men may make various calls in the form of commands and invitations, but the most important call is the effectual call coming from the mouth of God.

This call is not the creation call which declares and proclaims the glory of God (Ps. 19:1-6); or the conscience call which condemns us for breaking God’s law (Rom. 2:15-16); or the career call which directs us to a certain vocation (Matt. 4:8-12; Acts 13:2); or the conversion call which urges us to repent and believe in Christ (Matt. 22:14; 9:13; Mk. 2:17; Lk. 5:32; Heb. 3:15). Instead, this call is the new creation call which powerfully draws the elect into experiential and saving union with Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:9). It is effectual because it is always heard and heeded by God’s elect, and it is salvific because it flows from God’s sovereign election in eternity past and leads to all the benefits of redemption (Rom. 8:30).²

But how are sinners effectually called? What means does God use to unfailingly draw them to Christ? The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, in Chapter 10, Paragraph 1 on Effectual Calling, states that the instrumentality of effectual calling is “by His Word and Spirit”:

In God’s appointed and acceptable time, He is pleased to call effectually, *by His Word and Spirit*, those He has predestined to life. He calls them out of their natural state of sin and death to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ. He enlightens their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God. He takes away their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. He renews their wills and by His almighty power turns them to good and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ. Yet He does all this in such a way that they come completely freely, since they are made willing by His grace. [emphasis mine]

In what follows, I want to examine these means and draw two important applications from them.

² This calling to belong to Christ includes a calling to be saints (Rom. 1:7), a calling to holiness (2 Tm. 1:8-9), a calling to peace (1 Cor. 7:15), a calling to freedom (Gal. 5:13), and a calling to eternal glory (1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:3; Rev. 19:9).

Body:

1.) Effectual calling is by the Word of God.

God uses the ministry of His Word to effectually call sinners, and this Word is about Jesus Christ, or the gospel.

The apostle Peter writes about how sinners are effectually called and born again by God through the good news of Jesus Christ in 1 Peter 1:22-25: *“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”*

Similarly, the apostle Paul writes about how sinners are effectually called to salvation through the apostolic gospel in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14: *“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this He called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

And James speaks about how sinners are effectually called and made new creations by the truth of the gospel in James 1:16-18: *“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”*

These passages make clear that God uses the Word of Christ to awaken and draw His elect people to salvation.

2.) Effectual calling is by the Spirit of God.

Since God uses the gospel to effectually call us, it might be tempting to think that our response is factored into the Father’s decision to draw us to Christ. But we must not make this man-centered conclusion! Effectual calling is a monergistic work of God, meaning it is completely one-sided. God does not cooperate with us to call us and regenerate us. We are totally passive and contribute nothing to our salvation. Instead, God does all the work! And He does it by the power of His Spirit.

John Owen once wrote, “in every great work of God, the *concluding, completing, perfecting acts* are ascribed unto the Holy Ghost.”³ In the great

³ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 3, *The Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000 edition), 94.

work of creation, it is the distinct role of the Spirit to renew and beautify the universe (Gen. 1:2; 2:7; Job 26:13; 33:4; Ps. 104:30). And in the great work of redemption, it is the distinct role of the Spirit to transform and regenerate sinners.

Through the outward ministry of the gospel, He calls all men to repent and believe in Christ. He did this through the apostles, who preached “by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven” (1 Pet. 1:12). And He does this through the Bride of Christ, the church, as He invites thirsty sinners to freely drink from the waters of life (Rev. 22:17). But sadly, this call can be resisted and rejected (Zech. 7:11-12; Acts 7:51).

Therefore, the Spirit also speaks with a lion’s roar to the elect through the inward call. With the same power that brings life out of nothingness (at creation) and death (in the resurrection), the Spirit of God attends the preached Word in such a way that He awakens the spiritually dead to life, gives them ears to hear the voice of Christ, and makes them willing to come to Him. In the inward call, the Spirit ensures that the gospel does not fall on deaf ears but succeeds in its saving purposes.

The apostle Paul writes about this in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5: *“For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”*

The gospel not only came in word (outward call), but it also came in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (inward call). John Gill comments, “the preaching of the Gospel was accompanied with the powerful efficacy of the grace of God, working by it upon them; so that it became the power of God unto salvation to them; it came to them in the demonstration of the Spirit of God, and of power, quickening them who were dead in trespasses, and sin, enlightening their dark understandings, unstopping their deaf ears, softening their hard hearts, and delivering them from the slavery of sin and Satan.”⁴

To conclude, God not only uses the gospel to effectually call His people into the fellowship of His Son; He also uses the saving power of the Spirit, who unsheathes the sword of the Word of God and cuts sinners to the heart.

Applications:

This leads me to make two important applications.

First, God’s effectual call “by His Word and Spirit” is necessary.

The Word and Spirit work together in effectual calling, for one without the other would lead to disastrous consequences.

⁴ John Gill, comments on 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

If the Word worked without the Spirit, our effectual calling would be absolutely futile. This is not to cast aspersions on the Word of God. The Word is perfect, reviving the soul (Ps. 19:7). The Word is able to make us wise for salvation (2 Tm. 3:15), save our souls (Jam. 1:21) and build us up and give us our heavenly inheritance (Acts 20:32). The Word is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18). But the Word, by itself, is not sufficient to call us out of darkness into the marvelous light and life of Christ. This is not because the Word is deficient; it is because we are totally depraved! We are so bad that though the eternal God who never lies speaks to us words of life in the gospel, we stop up our ears and refuse to obey His demands and accept His invitation and be moved by His pleadings. Therefore, without the Spirit at work, God's Word echoes through the valley of dry bones.⁵

On the other hand, if the Spirit worked without the Word, our effectual calling would be utterly incomprehensible. The Spirit's work of regeneration is already mysterious, but if He always worked apart from the Word, we would be left to aimlessly wander about in the dark. Our duty to repent and believe would be loosened from us, for the effectual call would have little to no connection with turning from sin and looking to Christ. Our need to preach the gospel to others would be eliminated, for the effectual call would come to people who have never heard the ministry of the Word. And our assurance of salvation would be robbed from us, for the effectual call would only be based on subjective feelings and experiences.

The truth is, in effectual calling, we need both the Word and the Spirit at work. The Word objectifies and standardizes our effectual calling, and the Spirit energizes and empowers our effectual calling.⁶ We need the imperishable seed of the gospel implanted in us, and we need the power of the Spirit to water it and nourish it until it produces the fruits of salvation in us.

Second, God's effectual call "by His Word and Spirit" is normative.

⁵ Paragraph 4 of Chapter 20 "The Gospel and the Extent of Its Grace" also makes this point: "The gospel is the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and it is abundantly sufficient for that purpose. Yet to be born again, brought to life or regenerated, those who are dead in trespasses also must have an effectual, irresistible work of the Holy Spirit in every part of their souls to produce in them a new spiritual life. Without this no other means will bring about their conversion to God."

⁶ Sam Waldron offers this illustration: "Both the influence of the Word and the Spirit are needed. That lamp in your bedroom needs both an electrical cord plugged into an outlet [the Word] and electrical power running through that cord to light the room [the Spirit]" (ST25 Doctrine of Christ and Salvation lecture notes, 23).

It must be admitted that the Spirit is free to effectually call sinners without the ministry of the Word. Paragraph 3 of Chapter 10 states that the Spirit can effectually call those who lack the physical and mental capabilities of comprehending the gospel (like the severely mentally handicapped and infants).

So, certain exceptional cases may exist where the Spirit saves certain kinds of people not apart from the truths of the gospel but apart from the proclamation of the gospel. “The Spirit blows where He wishes” (Jn. 3:8), and we must not try to limit His saving activity.

But it must also be stated that the norm for effectual calling presented to us in Scripture is “by His Word and Spirit.” Under any normal circumstance, in order to be saved, the Spirit of God must use the gospel of God to transform sinners into new creatures of God.

Therefore, if you haven’t received the effectual call, humble yourself and acknowledge to God that only He can change you. You cannot come to Christ unless the Father draws you (John 6:44), and you cannot enter the kingdom of God unless the Spirit regenerates you (John 3:5), no matter how much you work, read, listen, and pray.

But also believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who embrace it. As Sam Waldron states, “The doctrine of effectual calling means that salvation comes through believing the gospel. It does not come through a subjectivistic or quietistic or fatalistic passive waiting on God or praying for a new heart before you believe in Christ. It comes through our proclaiming the gospel to men, urging them to believe immediately, and their actually believing as God calls them. Everyone without exception who believes the gospel will be saved.”⁷

Conclusion:

We have seen that the necessary and normative means of effectual calling is by God’s Word and Spirit. What therefore God has joined together, let none of us try to separate!

⁷ Ibid.

CHRIST OUR KING

John Miller

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The center of Christianity is none other than our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, both in His person and in His work. He is worthy of all honor, praise, and adoration! So wondrous is His person that He is beyond compare. So profound is His work, that we cannot plumb its depths. To begin to grasp the profundity of Christ's work to redeem us, Christians throughout the history of the church have viewed Christ's work through the lens of the *munus triplex*, the three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king. This way of considering the work of Christ began in the early church so that by the time of Eusebius of Caesarea, it became a standard and was later echoed in John Calvin's *Institutes* and in the broader Reformed tradition, even today.

This short series of articles has sought to give a brief introduction to the work of Christ according to each of these three offices. In the previous two articles, we have seen the work of Christ as our Prophet and as our Priest. This present article introduces Christ's work as our King. But before delving into this topic, it is important to remember when viewing the work of Christ according to the *munus triplex*, each act of Christ is not so neatly divided to reveal only one aspect of the three-fold office and not another. As Herman Bavinck states in *The Wonderful Works of God*, "For, though it is true that now one office of Christ comes into the foreground, and then another, so that, for instance, His public ministry reminds of His prophetic, His last passion and death of His priestly, and His exaltation to the Father's right hand of His kingly office, still, essentially Jesus was at all times and places busy in all three offices simultaneously. When He spoke, He proclaimed the word of God as a prophet, but in this He at the same time exhibited His priestly mercy, and His royal might, for by His word He healed the sick, forgave sins, and subdued the storm" (p. 314). Therefore, in every act of Christ, He exhibits characteristics of all three offices, though one may be more prominent than another.

Having given this qualification, let us now consider the significance of the work of Christ as our King. A helpful summary is found in our

confessions and catechisms. The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith describes our need for Christ's kingly office in order "to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to His heavenly kingdom" (chap. 8, para. 10). The Baptist Catechism in answer 29 summarizes Christ's kingly work as follows, "Christ executes the office of king, in subduing us to Himself, in ruling, and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies." Here we see that because of our rebellious dispositions and weak constitutions, we need Christ as our King to both overcome our sinful stubborn rebellious hearts, rescue us from ourselves and our enemies, and preserve us to the very end for final entrance into the eternal kingdom. What a wonderful work Christ our King does for us!

Yet how do we see Christ's kingly work not only summarized in our confessions and catechisms, but also more foundationally revealed to us in and through the Scriptures? Consider, first, *how the Old Testament foreshadows the kingly work of Christ*. This foreshadowing begins at the very beginning once again, as Adam the type of Christ was not only the very first prophet and priest, but also the very first king. As Bavinck states, "Adam was created in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, in order that as prophet he should proclaim the words of God, as king he should righteously rule over created things, and as priest dedicate himself and all his own to God as a well pleasing sacrifice" (*The Wonderful Works of God*, p. 316).

Adam's role as a king is explicitly stated in the work given to him in Genesis 1:26-28, in which mankind is to "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth," as well as being commanded by God to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Adam was to serve as God's vice regent, reflecting God and His kingship to the rest of creation by righteously ruling over them in a holy manner in submission to God himself. Adam's rule as a vice regent is indicated by the description of Adam as made in the image or likeness of God four times in Genesis 1:26-27. As G. K. Beale notes, "Ancient kings would set up images of themselves in distant lands over which they ruled in order to represent their sovereign presence. ... Likewise, Adam was created as the image of the divine king to indicate that earth was ruled over by Yahweh" (*The Temple and the Church's Mission*, p. 82). Adam was to serve as God's representative king on the earth, but as we know, Adam rebelled against

God, and ever since the fall of man that brought sin into the human race, what was meant to be godly dominion has become in the hands of sinful men and women “domination, exploitation, and oppression” (Richard Belcher, Jr., *Prophet, Priest, and King: The Roles of Christ in the Bible and Our Roles Today*, p. 106).

Praise the Lord that the Bible does not end with the fall of man but continues with the unfolding of God’s glorious plan of redemption! Even amid the cursing of the serpent, God gives a promise in Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” It is the promise of another human being, a seed of Eve, who will come and conquer the serpent and rule in righteousness. It is a promise of none other than our Lord Jesus Christ!

The rest of the Old Testament is filled with types and prophecies of the kingship of the coming Messiah. Abraham himself serves as a type of Christ’s kingly work, when in Genesis 14 he defeated Chedorlaomer king of Elam and the kings with him who had taken Lot captive. God also gives prophecies about the coming king from the line of Abraham when He states in Genesis 17:4-6, “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, *and kings shall come from you*” (italics added). God also prophecies of how this offspring of Abraham will conquer his enemies when He says in Genesis 22:17b, “And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies.” The prophecy of this coming king from Abraham’s line is further narrowed at the end of the book of Genesis as coming from the tribe of Judah. At the end of Jacob’s life, he blesses his twelve sons, and says to Judah, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (Genesis 49:10).

Further prophecies of this coming king even come from unlikely places, such as the mouth of Balaam who is hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. Every time that Balaam is called upon by Balak to curse, he cannot help but speak the blessing the Lord has given to him to speak. In one of those oracles, Balaam prophesies, “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also,

his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!” (Numbers 24:17-19). The “scepter” is a symbol of kingship, and the “star” refers to a royal figure. There is a king that is coming who will defeat Moab, and all the enemies of God’s people! This is partially fulfilled by King David (cf. 2 Samuel 8:2), but even David is foreshadowing the greater kingly work of Jesus Christ!

Mention of David is a reminder that the kings of Israel and Judah also served as types of Christ’s kingly work. They were kings that were supposed to be different from the kings of the surrounding nations. For they were to rule as kings under the Great King, Yahweh; kings who ruled according to God’s Law (cf. Deuteronomy 17:14-20). But as the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles reveal, many of the kings of Israel and Judah ruled just like the wicked kings of the surrounding nations. Even the greatest of the kings of Israel, David and Solomon, failed to rule in righteousness perfectly. As types of Christ, they have a point of similarity to the antitype, but they also have points of difference. Because of the wickedness of the kings of Israel and Judah, the covenant curses came upon the nation, and they were sent into exile and had no earthly king sitting on the throne from the point of their exile onward.

But God was not finished with His people nor His promise to send a messianic king through them. After all, God had promised David, “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:12-13). The prophet Isaiah also reiterated this promise that Israel could cling to in their time of exile, saying, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

And the good news is that the zeal of the Lord of hosts has done this! *The New Testament reveals to us that the promised King has come!* Jesus is the long-awaited king, though he did not come as the kind of king the Jews were expecting at that time. Just as Israel in times past

desired a worldly king that led them to choose Saul, so too the Jews of Jesus' day wanted a warrior king to restore the nation of Israel its former earthly glory by conquering the Roman occupiers of the land of promise. But they misunderstood Christ's mission as king. He came not merely to conquer their earthly enemies, but their spiritual enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil! He came to destroy the kingdom of darkness and the dominion of sin! The Jews also misunderstood the nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not merely an earthly political kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom. As Jesus said to Pontus Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36a).

Jesus revealed His kingly authority and power in His earthly ministry through His miracles and teaching. Many of Jesus' miracles reveal His dominion over creation. For example, Jesus can rebuke the wind and calm the great storm with a word (Mark 4:39-41). His casting out of demons reveals His kingly dominion over the spiritual realm as well. As Jesus declares, "if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28). Jesus is the true King who is ushering in the kingdom of God. Throughout Jesus' teaching, He proclaims His kingship. The very first message He gives is about the coming of the kingdom of God: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). And Jesus taught about the nature of His kingdom in the kingdom parables (Matthew 13:31-33). Jesus came as God's ultimate king.

The ultimate act of Jesus' kingly authority and power in His earthly ministry was in His suffering and death on the cross. The Jews of Jesus' day and many still today struggle to see how the cross is an act of kingly dominion, but Jesus is the king who came to conquer sin and death through His own suffering and death. Jesus displays His kingly power even in the way He maintained control over His suffering and death. When the Jews came to arrest Him, Jesus pronounced "I am he," and the soldiers fell to the ground (John 18:6), showing that Jesus had the power to stop them, but he willingly allowed himself to be arrested and to be mocked as King by the soldiers who clothed him with a robe and a crown of thorns. On the cross itself, Jesus exercised kingly authority when he admitted the repentant thief entrance into His kingdom (Luke 23:43), and once again displayed his authority as one who was in control of the exact moment of his death (Luke 23:46). And in His death, we see Jesus' greatest kingly act of all in triumphing over our greatest enemy, Satan. As Paul explains in Colossians 2:15, "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

Having triumphed by His death, Jesus now reigns as king in heaven. In His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation, Jesus is crowned king in a new way: as the God-man seated at the right hand of God the Father. As Richard Belcher remarks, “In Jesus’ exaltation there is a reinstatement of the originally intended divine order for the earth, with a human being properly situated as God’s vicegerent (someone appointed to act for another)” (*Prophet, Priest, and King*, p. 155). After His resurrection Jesus Himself declared to His disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:16). Christ is the Last Adam who takes up and fulfills the original mandate given to Adam to subdue the earth and fill it with other image-bearers, and now Christ our King does this through the means of His Spirit working through His Church. Our King has given His Great Commission to His Church for the expansion of His kingdom on the earth. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that advances through the spiritual means of prayer and preaching the gospel, so that people will be conquered by the sword of the Spirit, be born again, and enter the kingdom of God.

At present we do not see everything in subjection to Christ (Hebrews 2:8), but by faith we do see Jesus “crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9). Christ our King is advancing His kingdom, and one day our King will return to completely destroy all who remain enemies of His kingdom and to usher His sons and daughters into their rest in the eternal kingdom, saying, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). Come, Lord Jesus our King! Amen.

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COMMON QUESTION NO. 20

WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN WHO DIE IN INFANCY?

This series of Answers to Common Questions can be found as an A5 size leaflet of 4 pages at <https://www.trinity.or.ke> in a format for printing and distribution.

Keith Underhill

This is a very emotional question. Parents have brought a child into the world, who starts life as completely helpless. Then it dies. We want to know what happens to the child. Does it go to heaven, or to hell, or to some other place? This also applies to babies that die in the womb before birth.

We need to think about this very soberly, step by step. So we start with two questions.

1. Do infants need to be saved?

Generally we look on a new born baby and think of it as like a little angel, innocent. But is it really true that they are innocent? We can ask why it is that as they grow they disobey, they lie, they fight. We do not teach them to do these things, in fact we generally forbid them. Further, if death is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23), then why do babies die? It is because they are sinners and so need to be saved from sin. Our 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith teaches that this is because, “The family of man is rooted in the first pair. As Adam and Eve stood in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was reckoned by God’s appointment to the account of all their posterity, who also from birth derived from them a polluted nature” (6/3). What is the Biblical teaching?

(1) Romans 5:12-21. The whole human race was represented by Adam. When he fell, we fell in him. His condemnation resulted in the condemnation of all (verses 16,18). The guilt of his one sin, his disobedience, is imputed to us all. In the same way, all who are represented by Christ are justified on the basis of His righteousness, His obedience (verse 18). Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the believer (2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9). Let us not cry ‘Unfair!’ It is the way God has ordered His creation, both in responsibility to obey and in redemption from disobedience.

(2) Ephesians 2:3. “By nature” we are all children of wrath. As we are all formed in the womb we are all liable to the wrath of God, even those tiny helpless infants (see Psalm 58:3). We inherit a sinful nature through our first parents.

(3) Psalm 51:5. David confesses, “I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” He is not excusing his sin by blaming it on his parents, nor saying that the act of procreation is sinful. Rather he is admitting that his problem is deeper than the acts of sin he has committed. The problem is his nature, his innermost being, his heart (see Jesus’s teaching in Matthew 12:33-35, 15:18-20, also Jeremiah 17:9).

Therefore, infants need to be saved from both the guilt of sin by justification, and the pollution of sin by the new birth, just as any other person in this world.

2. How can they be saved if they cannot believe in Christ?

The 1689 Confession has a section on infants, and included are others who also cannot hear the gospel and respond to it in faith, e.g. those with no mental capacity. “Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how He pleases. The same is true of all elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called through the preaching of the gospel” (10/3). This is the difficult question: ‘If salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ, how is it possible for anyone to be saved without that faith?’ Here we have those who are physically incapable of believing. Is there any evidence of God’s saving work in such? Yes. There is John the Baptist. In his mother’s womb he “leaped for joy” when Jesus’ mother Mary greeted his mother Elizabeth. He was to be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15,44).

We need to be very clear about the role of faith. Faith is **not** a work that God rewards with salvation. Justification is on the basis of Christ’s righteousness, and regeneration is the sovereign work of the Spirit. Faith is the means by which such blessings are received. But what is faith? Faith is ceasing to trust yourself, and putting all your trust in Jesus Christ to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. Faith is required because it removes all possibility of boasting (Romans 3:27). But infants have no danger of boasting, as they can neither put faith in themselves nor in another! In their case, if any infants are saved, it is because of the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

3. Salvation is only possible on the basis of election

As regards the Confession it is obvious that this question was important 350 years ago. Infant mortality was much higher then, with more than 1 in 10 dying before their first birthday. There have been different views of infant salvation:

- All infants are saved. (i) Such think that David had the assurance that his dead infant was in heaven (2 Samuel 12:23). It is not sure that this is

the reason why he stopped weeping once the child died. He probably means that there is no bringing the baby back; rather he is the one who will also die. The nature of life after death was not so clear in the Old Testament as it is with us. (ii) Jesus' attitude towards children, as in Matthew 19:13-15.

- All infants who are baptized are saved. This can only be true if you believe in baptismal regeneration, which is unbiblical.
- Elect infants are saved. The Confession simply refers to those who are 'elect' without specifying whether this is all, many or few. I think we honestly have to admit that the Bible is silent on the subject. We know the Lord is both just and gracious and will do what is right (so Genesis 18:25). We can leave it to the Lord. What must concern us is those who are capable "being outwardly called through the preaching of the gospel". If they do not respond they will certainly not be saved.

Election is the basis for any hope of salvation for infants, as it is for any sinner. Yes, **election!** We are saved only because of the election of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit. So those infants who are saved are saved by God's work for them and in them. Those who believe that the sinner must use his supposed free-will to decide to accept Jesus and who say that election is on the basis of God's foreknowledge that he will decide to believe, can have no hope for infants or any incapable of faith. This is why some have said that there must be an opportunity after death, just as Catholics have invented a *limbus infantum*, a place where infants supposedly go after death.

The three major Confessions of the seventeenth century, the Presbyterian Westminster Confession (1647), the Congregationalist-Independent Savoy Confession (1658), and the Baptist Confession 1689, all have almost the same wording.

What is the message for those who lose an infant? It is the same for those who grow up into maturity. There is no absolute guarantee from God that they will be saved. From conception we earnestly pray for our children that God will be gracious, and then we leave it to Him.

DEACONS AND THEIR SERVICE

Murungi Igweta

Murungi Igweta is a Pastor with Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi. In this article he is continuing with his writing on aspects of the life and ministry of the local church. He seeks to adorn the Bride of Christ in her primary business of worship, which is the primary task of the church.

The office of a deacon is established by the Lord in His Word through three major texts. These three texts are crucial in understanding the appointment, qualifications, roles and reward for the deacons:

- ❖ Acts 6:1-6 – Prototype deacons
- ❖ Philippians 1:1 – Local church officers
- ❖ 1 Timothy 3:8-13 – qualifications and reward

1. But who are the deacons?

They are biblically qualified men who minister mercy to the saints as stewards of the church's resources to relieve the elders from this material responsibility. Acts 6:1-8 gives us the historical context in which the prototype deacons were appointed. The need was stated as follows;

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. (6:1-2)

The church in Jerusalem was growing exponentially. When the church had 120 members, there were three thousand conversions, increasing the number to 3,120 in just one week (Acts 2:41)! The Lord was remarkably blessing them with many people being saved by the mercy, love and grace of God in His Son Jesus Christ. The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:47). In Acts 4:4 we are told that many of those who heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand!

In this context we are presented with another scenario which was beyond the scope of the elders of the church, namely giving. Joseph Barnabas, from Cyprus, sold his field and brought the money to the apostles (Acts 4:36-37). Then another man Ananias and his wife Sapphira also sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge, kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and just like Barnabas,

laid it at the apostle's feet. This problem led to deaths of both as they were disciplined by the Lord. This was another diaconal matter not just of giving and handling/managing God's money, but also of giving in an ungodly manner.

In the context of increasing number of disciples, giving and dishonesty in the church (and thus discipline), as well as external persecutions, there was also the problem of poverty and division in the Jerusalem local church. Among the members of the first church in Jerusalem were needy widows who needed the care of the church. Some of the widows were Hebrew speaking and others were Greek speaking. The Hellenist widows felt neglected in the daily distribution of food and so they complained (Acts 6:1). This threatened to divide the church and so an urgent solution was needed. The whole church took the responsibility led by the apostles in the appointment of the deacons. But it turned out that this ministry, was both needful and enormous. It put demands on the church leaders of time, effort and money from the church coffers. The apostles wisely discerned that they had to delegate this responsibility to another group of officers, chosen from among the members in order that the twelve would devote themselves to *preaching the Word and to prayer*, while the deacons *serve the tables*.

2. What are the Qualifications of a Deacon?

1Timothy 3:8-13 shows us the qualifications of these men prefixed with "Likewise..." with reference to the elders.

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Although the diaconal functions are of a material nature, yet they have a spiritual ministry in the life of a local church. When we consider the church in Jerusalem, their involvement was meant to bring unity to a church that was being divided along ethnic lines (Jews vs Hellenists), and effectively along social classes, i.e. the rich vs. the poor. But it was also a ministry to the pastors, as these men relieve the elders of the material affairs of the church.

Therefore, deacons must be serious men. Men of good repute, or above reproach. They are to be full of the Spirit and of wisdom. A man who is to be considered for this honoured office must have been tested first in their service in the church life before appointment to prove himself blameless. If they have been faithful in a little affairs, then they shall be faithful in much. As the old faithful commentator Matthew Henry says, “Integrity and uprightness in an inferior office are the way to be preferred to a higher station in the church.”

Just like for Eldership, their qualifications can be divided into three categories:

1) Personal.

Positively – *Dignified*. Serious men not jokers or wags. They spew wisdom not nonsense.

Negatively – *Not double-tongued, not addicted to wine, not greedy for dishonest gain*. There are three things to be avoided here: *double-tongue* (slander/gossip), *drunkardness* (wine/alcohol) and *dishonesty*. Double-tongue is speaking from both ends of one’s mouth where one says this here and something different elsewhere. The personal character of a man that the Lord would have serve as a deacon is highly competent in wisdom for, he is a sober man, serious in character and capable in all ethical affairs. Anything that would make a man lose his mind, his sobriety, is rejected and since wine or alcohol falls within that category, it is discarded. He must not be greedy for dishonest gain. He knows that godliness with contentment is of great gain.

2) Doctrinal.

A deacon must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. Deacons are not theologically ignorant – they are competent in the Scriptures. A deacon must be a man who knows His Bible well and keeps within historic confessions of faith. He must not be given to fanciful doctrines, imaginations of the flesh or suggestions of the world and Satan. He also should be well versed with the doctrinal and moral standards of the local church he is serving. In as much as deacons are not expected to be teachers of the word, but they are mature Christians who are well-grounded in the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

3) Domestic.

Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. The

qualifications of a deacon's wife are presented in verse 11. With this qualification, it seems clear that a deacon must be a married man, for the character of the wife is scrutinized and should be very close to that of the man – dignified, not slanders. They use their tongues well. Verse 13 makes this even clearer – *Let deacons each be the husband of one wife...* the phrasing of this statement is different from that of the elders in verse 2, where there seems to be a requirement for a deacon to be a married man. He should be the husband of one wife. He is to be a faithful man, not given to sexual attractions, lustful fancies and perversions – his fidelity to his wife is unquestionable. A deacon must manage their children and households well.

3. How is the Appointment & Recognition of Deacons?

We shall depend on both the passage in Acts 6 and our 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith to determine the process of appointment and recognition of the deacons. Acts 6:2–6

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

The appointment of the deacons should be initiated by the pastors of the church for they have the spiritual oversight. Where they would request the whole church to consider godly and mature men among them who are already serving the church faithfully and thus nominate them to the office, then the elders will consider the men thus nominated by the church, to consider their faith, their conduct, their way of life, the marriage and family life as well as their vocational life and see if there be any reason not to appoint them to the office. These men are to be presented to the church for a congregational vote as our confession says in chapter 27 paragraphs 8 & 9;

8. A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members; and **the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church** (so called and gathered), for the peculiar administration of

ordinances, and execution of power or duty, which he intrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are **bishops or elders**, and **deacons**. (Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1)

9. The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person, fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit, unto the office of bishop or elder in a church, is, that he be chosen thereunto **by the common suffrage of the church itself**; (Acts 14:23) and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands of the eldership of the church, if there be any before constituted therein; (1 Timothy 4:14) and **of a deacon that he be chosen by the like suffrage, and set apart by prayer, and the like imposition of hands**. (Acts 6:3, 5-6)

While other elders should be involved in the recognition of the new elders, the elders of the specific local church are to be involved in the appointment, and imposition of hands upon the men being appointed to the diaconal role in their respective local church. Our own TBC church constitution states chapter 9 paragraph 3,

9.3. Appointment - Nominations to the diaconate will be made by the members of the church. A nominee must receive the unanimous approval of the Elders because, in their judgement, his gifts are already evident in the congregation. After the nominations have been considered for at least two weeks, a 75% vote of approval by the congregation shall constitute the appointment of a man to the office of deacon.

4. What are the Diaconal Duties?

The basic work of the deacons is to *serve tables*. The Greek word ‘*trapeza*’ is understood to be used symbolically to mean food or meals (cf. Acts 16:34). The term means finances, a money table, or a bank (Lk 19:23). It is for this reason The Good News Bible translates it ‘handle finances.’ If we combine what is in verse 1, *daily distribution* (of food), along with handling finances, we see their work to include distribution of food and money to cater for the needy widows in the church. But obviously, if they were to handle church money, then they also have a responsibility to present the accounts to the church in order to account for the previous giving and collections, and solicit more to distribute. Deacons have no ruling or leading role – the role of ruling or exercising oversight rests squarely on the elders.

In summary, the diaconal responsibility will touch on the following:

- 1) Collection of money and gifts in kind from the church. This includes mobilizing, collecting and the counting of the offerings

and gifts. This work had previously been done by the twelve (Acts 4:34, 36-37; 5:2).

- 2) Circulation of the money/gifts collected to the needy (Acts. 4:35). It is their duty to ensure that the distribution happens in an open, just and fair manner so that there is no need of complaining.
- 3) Coordination of all the charitable ministry of the church to the needy in order to unite the church.
- 4) Compiling accounts to the church in order to ratify their justice in distribution.
- 5) Budgeting for the future so that there is plan for the future needs.

Clearly the deacons have this ministry in the church, which affects, both the Eldership, membership and the world.

1. Responsibility to the Elders:

Deacons minister to their pastors! They serve the Lord in the church by assisting and relieving the elders from more material affairs of the church so that they can devote themselves to the ministry of the Word and Prayer. In other words, the deacons need to be in a close relationship with their pastors to find out what duties they can take away from their tray.

Deacons also minister to their pastors by ensuring that they are well remunerated so that their attention to spiritual duties is undivided. Deacons should make sure that their pastors are not impoverished such that they have to go to look for employment elsewhere to meet their financial needs.

2. Responsibility to the church:

Deacons should know the church members well to ensure that their material needs are not neglected. It is their duty to steward the church resources well, in order to encourage giving. They should know the needy members well enough by visiting, encouraging and even exhorting them.

3. Responsibility to the World

We live in a hopeless, needy, sorrowing, fallen world. Undoubtedly sin brought man into a state of sin and misery. The church has a duty to give hope to a perishing world through a faithful dissemination of the gospel. Deacons should have a keen eye of ensuring that the gospel efforts of the church are well financed. They also should ensure that there the gospel workers and missionaries are well remunerated.

Deacons also should look out for mercy opportunities. Orphans, widows and strangers are to be sought in kindness and brought to see and receive the redeeming love of Christ through meeting their material needs. Prison and hospital ministries are to be considered by churches as viable mission fields. Setting up of orphanages, hospitals, schools and training centres in

order to meet the material needs of the people should be some of the visions that deacons should bear in order that the church may be the light of the world.

In Summary the TBC Constitution states,

9.1. Functions - Duties of the Deacons include:

9.1.1 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. They should keep the Elders informed of all such needs.

9.1.2 Collecting, distributing and accounting for the church's finances. All accounts should be properly audited in accordance with the law and always open for inspection by members. (See 19)

9.1.3 Periodically reviewing the needs of any paid church worker, or one sent out from the church to labour elsewhere.

9.1.4 Administering the practical affairs of the church, such as preparation for the Lord's Table, and maintenance of the church premises and preparation for meetings.

9.1.5 The Deacons shall regularly meet under the chairmanship of one of the Deacons. Majority of deacons must be present in a meeting to form a quorum. It is desirable that Deacons and Elders meet together from time to time. Any decision by the diaconate may be over-ruled by the Elders.

Can women be deacons?

Women have a significant role of supporting and complimenting the male leadership by biblically using their spiritual gifts in nurturing, and supporting rather than from the frontline. They are to be involved in the education and instruction of other women and the children (Titus 2:3-4); hospitality ministries, bringing up children, washing the feet of the saints, caring for the afflicted, devotion to good works (1 Tim. 5:10). These are the delegated responsibilities from either the church eldership/diaconate. The work they have of working at home, so that the word of God may not be reviled (Tit.2:5).

However, there is no example of a woman who was an apostle or elder or deacon in the New Testament. It is clearly written, *"I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men"* (1 Tim. 2:12) and *"Let deacons each be a husband of one wife..."* (1Tim. 3:12) and not *"the wife of one husband"* (Cf. 1 Tim. 5:9). Women cannot lead the church as elders or deacons. The wives of the deacons have a supportive diaconal role,

working closely with their husbands and their qualifications are set forth in 1 Timothy 3:11.

Phoebe's spiritual gifts and graces in her service to the church of Cenchreae was not as an officer, but as a member of the church, where her ministry was diaconal. There is no reason to believe that she was an officer of the church. Deaconing is serving, and serving is deaconing without necessarily being an officer of the church.

5. Diaconal Reward

The Bible is clear that those who serve well as deacons *gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3:13)*. Faithfulness, integrity, and diligence in service will earn a deacon a good reputation in the church, with his pastors and with the world. But far more than this, a deacon will obtain a good confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Just like the reward of the elders, the deacons will also obtain a spiritual reward from the Lord Jesus Christ. This spiritual reward to the deacons must not be downplayed. In as much a deacon is not worthy double honour (not all elders are worthy of double honour, except those who labour in preaching and teaching, 1 Tim. 5:17), yet he is worthy of honour and respect. He gains a good standing. He gains great confidence in the faith in Christ Jesus. What else is left? This reward is great!

In **conclusion**, may the brothers who have been appointed to be deacons in their respective local churches be stewards of mercy. Exile out of the church any spirit of boardroom executives, or simply building, construction and maintenance committees! Deacons are to be involved in construction, but they are spiritual ministers to both the members and the elders.

It is my prayer that these men may serve faithfully in Christ's church. Christ, the Lord of the church, has given deacons a delightful ministry of mercy. Diaconal office is a spiritual ministry to the saints. They are ministers of mercy and stewards of resources. Their service does showcase the brotherly love and affection by the church to the needy people. Above all they are the official assistants to the pastors in relieving them of such duties as would hinder them from being faithful and quick in the ministry of prayer and preaching.

CHILDREN ARE DIVINE GIFTS!

Murungi Igweta

1. The first of God's blessing is children.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..." (Gen 1:28; 9:1). Children are a divine blessing that should be received gladly. Who does not rejoice when a baby is born? May be a witch? Children are a greater blessing than land and gold. Children are greater blessings than most expensive cars and estates. No property can be compared with a blessing of a child. For children bear God's image. Therefore, when you look at others with their lands and gold, think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold. Count your many blessings, money cannot buy, your reward in heaven, nor your Lord on high. Because children are God's gifts, may the Lord help you to draw much joy and delight out of them.

2. The Bible teaches that God gives children.

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward (Psalm 127:3). How did Eve conceive? By the help of Yahweh! It is true that Adam knew Eve his wife and conceived and bore Cain. But Eve knew that Cain did neither come from her husband nor simply from her own body for she said, "*I have produced a man **with the help of Yahweh.***" (Gen 4:1 emphasis added). This being the case, both ability and inability to have children for whatever reason should be seen as of the Lord. The Lord, out of anger with Abimelech's household, '*...closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.*' Genesis 20:18. Therefore closing of the womb has been associated with God's anger while conception is a blessing from the Lord!

We also read that the LORD gave her (Ruth) conception and she bore a son. (Ruth 4:13). Yahweh enables you to conceive, it is not simply your husband, it is not simply your body, it is not the doctors – it is Yahweh! God opens and closes the womb! He alone decides when and if anyone will have any (more) children and then He makes and causes it to happen. By his powerful hand, he gives two fertile reproductive cells; to

a man and to a woman. He causes the couple to approach each other for physical intimacy at the right time. Out of the millions of sperm cells released by the man, He guides the right sperm cell with the right morphology, and with the right motility, to the ready ovum leading to the fertilization, at the time when He does! The Lord sovereignly and graciously allows the blastocyst to develop into a zygote, to an embryo, to a foetus and into a baby! This takes the powerful work of God.

Would anyone reject a gift given by the most important and powerful person? If God promised to give you wisdom like he gave Solomon, would you refuse it? What if he promised to give health? But, what about children? You must not murmur or complain about children, rather be thankful. *Behold*, meaning; wonder with awe and amazement and joy, *children are a heritage from the Lord*. It is a delight to consider what God does in giving children.

When you do not have them, you whine when you have them you repine (or try to stop God from giving them to you!), what is your problem? Everyone should understand that children are a reward from the Lord. They are a public honour bestowed by God as a bonus to our own lives! Of course they are a responsibility too. No privilege comes without a responsibility!

3. Children display the image of God since they bear it.

Consider this, that God gives human beings another human being, created in his divine image! By them a family is continued, a clan is built, a race is made, a nation is established, the world is replenished, and most importantly the church is multiplied. Children are to be born and brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, so that they may know, love, and serve God, when we are dead and gone. Procreation is the divinely instituted method of continuing God's creation.

To a gospel minister, those whom he converts to God are his glory, his joy, and his crown of rejoicing at the day of the Lord (cf. 1Th 2:19-20). Churches and their leaders are therefore to be keen to faithfully invest in the children ministry. The best investment is the gospel, faithfully and simply preached. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes – to the children and to the adults! We are to

proclaim the excellencies of Christ to the children without wavering. Every Sunday, let the children hear the voice of Christ, the Good Shepherd and they will follow him. Make it easy and simple for the children to hear Christ. Don't send children to the creche to colour and sing silly songs. Let them sit with their mom and dad to learn the oracles of God in the simplest and clearest form – so that if they don't understand they can ask their parents. They can discuss it farther at home.

Even infants can receive the gospel when it is faithfully preached, for it does not need a developed mind – it needs the Spirit of God to aid in hearing and to give faith. The Holy Spirit can regenerate an infant as well as an adult!

4. Children are a blessing.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:4-5). Because of our children our enemies flee! If, by the grace of God, they come into the covenant of grace and into the kingdom of Christ, it is a greater blessing than to see them become monarchs of the world. Perhaps they might become greater men and women than we ever become. And the Lord could use them to serve the Lord in the various aspects of our society. This to the honour of our God and it will be a badge of honour for the parents.

Parents should acknowledge God's reward in every child that he has given them, not just by caring for them and giving them food, medical care and clothing and education, but by bringing them back to the Lord. Since children are a heritage from the Lord, is it too much to make them the heritage to the Lord? Dedicate them to the Lord.

Applications

1. Don't listen to the spirit of our age about children.

Sadly, our age has been urging mothers to cease from having tender care and gentle hands for the babies, and instead become murdering monsters who kill their own babies in abortion! Abortion is no longer a shame in the society and some governments now support organizations

that promote abortion using the taxpayers' money. No, sweet mothers, don't listen to them. Don't expose your little helpless children. The Lord God made you to be gentle, nursing, and nurturing mothers who take care of your children.

2. No abortions or any other dereliction of the motherly care.

O dear mothers, young and old. Our age is wrong and evil to be urging mothers to cease from having motherly tender care and gentle hands for the babies (1 Thess. 2:7). Don't kill your own babies in your wombs just because you did not plan. Plan? Plan for divinely given blessings? No! sweet mothers, the Lord God made you to be gentle, nursing, and nurturing mothers who take care of your children. Give them the God-given breast to suckle and long enough for them to build the necessary immunity. Six months is recommended by the doctors. Then wean them with nutritious food that will make them even stronger as you nurse them with the breast milk. I highly commend the work-at-home moms. This is the noblest of the tasks that you are given by God. Even if you must work some hours away from your baby, please come back and nurse them and let them feel your heart warming their little bodies. Smile with them and play with them. Tickle them and laugh with them. Rejoice at those wonderful milestones of life that they make. First time and many time mothers, I adjure you in the name of the Lord, do not think that your child will be a burden – it is indeed a responsibility, but it is a divine blessing.

3. Fathers, be fatherly.

Fathers take good care of your kids by providing spiritual and material needs. Be their model by faithfully teaching them the word of God daily in the family devotions. Pray for them in their hearing. Tell God what you want them to be. Play with them. Don't neglect your children because you are busy attending to other people. No business is more important than taking care of your children. Father them by admonishing and exhorting and charging them (1 Thess. 2:11). Discipline them, but without anger. Then they will respect you, for it is for their good and it will yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12: 9-11).

4. Educate your children for the Master, Christ.

May the Lord keep us from giving away our children to the world. When we give our children to be raised by unbelievers, is it surprising that they reject the gospel and mock our faith? May the Lord deliver us from raising our children for the world. We should raise them to be soldiers of the cross. We should invest in such spiritual education of the gospel that early they may turn to the Lord. Early let them seek the favour of the Lord and do His will.

This is what we read from the scriptures in Luke 18:15–17

Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

Educate them for the Lord. Listen to Thomas Manton,

‘Next to the preaching of the Word, the education of children is one of the greatest duties in the world; for the service of Christ, of the church, and state dependeth upon it. Families are the seminaries of church and commonwealth. Religion dwelt first in families; and as they grew into numerous societies, they grew into churches. As religion was first hatched there, so there the devil seeketh to crush it...’

In Conclusion.

Let us appreciate this hymn, **O happy home**, Based on Psalm 118:15 by *Carl Johann; Philip Spitta* (1801-59), translated by *Sarah L Findlater* (1823-1907)

O happy home, whose little ones are given
Early to Thee, in humble faith and prayer,
To Thee, their Friend, who from the heights of Heaven
Guides them, and guards with more than mother’s care!

EFFECTUAL CALLING (IRRESISTIBLE GRACE) – A SERMON BY CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON MARCH 30, 1856 NEW PARK STREET PULPIT.

“When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today must I abide at your house.” Luke 19:5

Notwithstanding our firm belief that you are, for the most part, well instructed in the doctrines of the everlasting Gospel, we are continually reminded in our conversation with young converts how absolutely necessary it is to repeat our former lessons and repeatedly assert and prove over and over again those doctrines which lie at the basis of our holy religion. Our friends, therefore, who have many years ago been taught the great doctrine of effectual calling, will believe that while I preach very simply this morning, the sermon is intended for those who are young in the fear of the Lord, that they may better understand this great starting point of God in the heart, the effectual calling of men by the Holy Spirit.

I shall use the case of Zaccheus as a great illustration of the doctrine of effectual calling. You remember the story. Zaccheus had a curiosity to see the wonderful man, Jesus Christ, who was turning the world upside down and causing an immense excitement in the minds of men. We sometimes find fault with curiosity and say it is sinful to come to the house of God from that motive. I am not quite sure that we should hazard such an assertion. The motive is not sinful, though certainly it is not virtuous—yet it has often been proved that curiosity is one of the best allies of grace. Zaccheus, moved by this motive, desired to see Christ—but there were two obstacles in the way—first, there was such a crowd of people that he could not get near the Savior. Second, he was so exceedingly short in stature that there was no hope of his reaching over people’s heads to catch a glimpse of Him.

What did he do? He did as the boys were doing—for the boys of old times were no doubt just like the boys of the present age—they were perched up in the boughs of the tree to look at Jesus as He passed along. Elderly man though he is, Zaccheus jumps up and there he sits among the children. The boys are too much afraid of that stern old Publican, whom their fathers dreaded, to push him down or cause him any inconvenience. Look at him there. With what anxiety he is peeping down to see which is Christ—for the Savior had no pompous distinction. No one is walking before Him with a silver mace. He did not hold a

golden crozier in His hand—He had no pontifical dress. In fact, He was just dressed like those around Him. He had a coat like that of a common peasant, made of one piece from top to bottom. Zaccheus could scarcely distinguish Him. However, before he has caught a sight of Christ, Christ has fixed His eye upon him and standing under the tree, He looks up and says, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house.” Down comes Zaccheus. Christ goes to his house. Zaccheus becomes Christ’s follower and enters into the kingdom of Heaven.

Now, first, effectual calling is a very gracious Truth of God. You may guess this from the fact that Zaccheus was a character whom we should suppose the last to be saved. He belonged to a bad city—Jericho—a city which had been cursed and no one would suspect that anyone would come out of Jericho to be saved. It was near Jericho that the man fell among thieves—we trust Zaccheus had no hand in it—but there are some who, while they are Publicans, can be thieves, also. We might as well expect converts from St. Giles’s, or the lowest parts of London, from the worst and vilest dens of infamy, as from Jericho in those days.

Ah, my Brethren, it matters not where you come from—you may come from one of the dirtiest streets, one of the worst back slums in London—if effectual grace calls you, it is an effectual call, which knows no distinction of place. Zaccheus also was of an exceedingly bad trade and probably cheated the people in order to enrich himself. Indeed, when But, my Brethren, grace knows no distinction. It is no respecter of persons. God calls whom He wills and He called this worst of Publicans, in the worst of cities, from the worst of trades. Besides, Zaccheus was one who was the least likely to be saved because he was rich. It is true, rich and poor are welcome—no one has the least excuse for despair because of his condition—yet it is a fact that “not many great men” after the flesh, “not many mighty” are called, but “God has chosen the poor of this world—rich in faith.”

But even here grace knows no distinction. The rich Zaccheus is called from the tree. Down he comes and he is saved. I have thought it one of the greatest instances of God’s condescension that He can look down on man. But I will tell you there was a greater condescension than that when Christ looked up to see Zaccheus. For God to look down on His creatures—that is mercy—but for Christ so to humble Himself that He has to look up to one of His own creatures—that becomes mercy, indeed!

Ah, many of you have climbed up the tree of your own good works and perched yourselves in the branches of your holy actions and are trusting

in the free will of the poor creature, or resting in some worldly maxim. Nevertheless, Christ looks up even to proud sinners and calls them down. “Come down,” says He, “today I must abide at your house.” Had Zaccheus been a humble-minded man, sitting by the wayside, or at the feet of Christ, we should then have admired Christ’s mercy. But here he is lifted up and Christ looks up to him and bids him come down.

Next it was a personal call. There were boys in the tree as well as Zaccheus but there was no mistake about the person who was called. It was, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down.” There are other calls mentioned in Scripture. It is said especially, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Now that is not the effectual call which is intended by the Apostle when he said, “Whom He called, them He also justified.” That is a general call which many men, yes, all men reject, unless there comes after it the personal, particular call, which makes us Christians. You will bear me witness that it was a personal call that brought you to the Savior. It was some sermon which led you to feel that you were, no doubt, the person intended.

The text, perhaps, was “You, God, see me.” And perhaps the minister laid particular stress on the word “me,” so that you thought God’s eyes were fixed upon you. And before the sermon was concluded you thought you saw God open the books to condemn you and your heart whispered, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord.” You might have been perched in the window, or stood packed in the aisle—but you had a solemn conviction that the sermon was preached to you and not to other people. God does not call His people in shoals but in units.

“Jesus said unto her, Mary; and she turned and said unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master.” Jesus sees Peter and John fishing by the lake and He says to them, “Follow Me.” He sees Matthew sitting at the table at the receipt of custom and He says unto him, “Arise and follow Me,” and Matthew did so. When the Holy Spirit comes home to a man, God’s arrow goes into his heart—it does not graze his helmet, or make some little mark upon his armor—it penetrates between the joints of the harness, entering the marrow of the soul. Have you felt, dear Friends, that personal call? Do you remember when a voice said, “Arise, He calls you.” Can you look back to when you said, “My Lord, my God”—when you knew the Spirit was striving with you and you said, “Lord, I come to You, for I know that You call me”? I might call the whole of you throughout eternity but if God call one, there will be more effect through His personal call of one than my general call of multitudes.

Thirdly, it is a hastening call. “Zaccheus, make haste.” The sinner, when he is called by the ordinary ministry, replies, “Tomorrow.” He hears a telling sermon and he says, “I will turn to God by-and-by.” The tears roll down his cheek but they are wiped away. Some goodness appears but like the cloud of the morning it is dissipated by the sun of temptation. He says, “I solemnly vow from this time to be a reformed man. After I have once more indulged in my darling sin I will renounce my lusts and decide for God.” Ah, that is only a minister’s call and is good for nothing. Hell, they say, is paved with good intentions. These good intentions are begotten by general calls.

The road to perdition is laid all over with branches of the trees whereon men are sitting, for they often pull down branches from the trees but they do not come down themselves. The straw laid down before a sick man’s door causes the wheels to roll more noiselessly. So there are some who strew their path with promises of repentance and so go more easily and noiselessly down to perdition. But God’s call is not a call for tomorrow. “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts: as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me.” God’s grace always comes with dispatch—and if you are drawn by God, you will run after God and not be talking about delays. Tomorrow—it is not written in the almanac of time.

Tomorrow—it is in Satan’s calendar and nowhere else. Tomorrow—it is a rock whitened by the bones of mariners who have been wrecked upon it. Tomorrow is the wrecker’s light gleaming on the shore, luring poor ships to destruction. Tomorrow—it is the idiot’s cup which he lies at the foot of the rainbow, but which none has ever found. Tomorrow—it is the floating island of Loch Lomond, which none has ever seen. Tomorrow—it is a dream. Tomorrow—it is a delusion. Tomorrow, yes, tomorrow you may lift up your eyes in Hell, being in torment. Yonder clock says “today.” Your pulse whispers “today.” I hear my heart speak as it beats and it says, “today.” Everything cries “today.” And the Holy Spirit is in union with these things and says, “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Sinners, are you inclined now to seek the Savior? Are you breathing a prayer now? Are you saying, “Now or never! I must be saved now”? If you are, then I hope it is an effectual call, for Christ, when He gives an effectual call, says, “Zaccheus, make haste.”

Next, it is a humbling call. “Zaccheus, make haste and come down.” Many a time has a minister called men to repentance with a call which has made them proud, exalted them in their own esteem and led them to say, “I can turn to God when I like. I can do so without the influence of

the Holy Spirit.” They have been called to go up and not to come down. God always humbles a sinner. Can I not remember when God told me to come down? One of the first steps I had to take was to go right down from my good works. And oh, what a fall was that! Then I stood upon my own self-sufficiency and Christ said, “Come down! I have pulled you down from your good works and now I will pull you down from your self-sufficiency.”

Well, I had another fall and I felt sure I had gained the bottom, but Christ said “Come down!” And He made me come down till I fell on some point at which I felt I was not savable. “Down, Sir! come down, yet.” And down I came until I had to let go of every branch of the tree of my hopes in despair. Then I said, “I can do nothing. I am ruined.” The waters were wrapped round my head and I was shut out from the light of day and thought myself a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel.

“Come down lower yet, Sir! You have too much pride to be saved.” Then I was brought down to see my corruption, my wickedness, my filthiness. “Come down,” says God, when He means to save. Now, proud Sinners, it is of no use for you to be proud, to stick yourselves up in the trees—Christ will have you down. Oh, you that dwell with the eagle on the craggy rock, you shall come down from your elevation—you shall fall by grace, or you shall fall with a vengeance one day. He “has cast down the mighty from their seat and has exalted the humble and meek.”

Next, it is an affectionate call. “Today I must abide at your house.” You can easily conceive how the faces of the multitude change! They thought Christ to be the holiest and best of men and were ready to make Him a king. But He says, “Today I must abide at your house.” There was one poor Jew who had been inside Zaccheus’ house—he had “been on the carpet,” as they say in country villages when they are taken before the justice and he recollected what sort of a house it was. He remembered how he was taken in there and his conceptions of it were something like what a fly would have of a spider’s den after he had once escaped.

There was another who had been restrained of nearly all his property—the idea he had of walking in there was like walking into a den of lions. “What?” said they, “Is this holy man going into such a den as that, where we poor wretches have been robbed and ill-treated? It was bad enough for Christ to speak to him up in the tree, but the idea of going into his house!” They all murmured at His going to be “a guest with a

man who was a sinner.” Well, I know what some of His disciples thought—they thought it very imprudent—it might injure His character and He might offend the people. They thought He might have gone to see this man at night, like Nicodemus, and give him an audience when nobody saw Him! To acknowledge such a man publicly was the most imprudent act He could commit.

Why did Christ do as He did? Because He would give Zaccheus an affectionate call. “I will not come and stand at your threshold, or look in at your window, but I will come into your house—the same house where the cries of widows have come into your ears and you have disregarded them. I will come into your parlor, where the weeping of the orphan has never moved your compassion. I will come there, where you, like a ravenous lion have devoured your prey. I will come there, where you have blackened your house and made it infamous. I will come into the place where cries have risen to high Heaven, wrung from the lips of those whom you have oppressed.

“I will come into your house and give you a blessing.” Oh, what affection there was in that! Poor Sinner, my Master is a very affectionate Master. He will come into your house. What kind of a house have you got? A house that you have made miserable with your drunkenness—a house you have defiled with your impurity—a house you have defiled with your cursing and swearing—a house where you are carrying on an illegal trade that you would be glad to get rid of? Christ says, “I will come into your house.” And I know some houses now that once were dens of sin where Christ comes every morning. Husband and wife, who once only could quarrel and fight, bend their knees together in prayer. Christ comes there at dinnertime, when the workman comes home for his meals. Some of my hearers can scarce come for an hour to their meals but they must have word of prayer and reading of the Scriptures.

Christ comes to them. Where the walls were plastered up with the lascivious songs and idle pictures, there is a Christian almanac in one place. There is a Bible on the chest of drawers—and though it is only one room they live in—if an angel should come in and God should say, “What have you seen in that house?” He would say, “I have seen good furniture, for there is a Bible there—here and there a religious book—the filthy pictures are pulled down and burned. There are no cards in the man’s cupboard now. Christ has come into his house.” Oh, what a blessing that we have our household God as well as the Romans! Our

God is a household God. He comes to live with His people! He loves the tents of Jacob.

Now, poor rag-muffin Sinner, you who live in the filthiest den in London, if such an one be here, Jesus says to you, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house.”

Again, it was not only an affectionate call, but it was an abiding call. Today I must abide at your house. “A common call is like this, “Today I shall walk in at your house at one door and out at the other.” The common call which is given by the Gospel to all men is a call which operates upon them for a time and then it is all over—but the saving call is an abiding call. When Christ speaks, He does not say, “Make haste, Zaccheus and come down, for I am just coming to look in.” No. He says, “I must abide at your house. I am coming to sit down to eat and drink with you. I am coming to have a meal with you. Today I must abide at your house.”

“Ah,” says one, “you cannot tell how many times I have been impressed, Sir. I have often had a series of solemn convictions and I thought I really was saved—but it all died away—like a dream. When one awakes, all has vanished that he dreamed. So was it with me.” Ah, but poor Soul, do not despair. Do you feel the strivings of Almighty Grace within your heart bidding you repent today? If you do, it will be an abiding call. If it is Jesus at work in your soul, He will come and tarry in your heart and consecrate you for His own forever. He says, “I will come and dwell with you and that forever. I will come and say—

“Here I will make My settled rest,
No more will go and come;
No more a stranger or a guest,
But Master of this home.”

“Oh,” you say, “that is what I want. I want an abiding call, something that will last. I do not want a religion that will wash out, but a fast-color religion.” Well, that is the kind of call Christ gives. His ministers cannot give it—but when Christ speaks, He speaks with power and says, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house.”

There is one thing, however, I cannot forget and that is that it was a necessary call. Just read it over again. “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house.” It was not a thing that He might do, or might not do—it was a necessary call. The salvation of a sinner is as much a matter of necessity with God as the fulfillment of

His Covenant that the rain shall no more drown the world. The salvation of every blood-bought child of God is a necessary thing for three reasons:

It is necessary because it is God's purpose. It is necessary because it is Christ's purchase and it is necessary because it is God's promise. It is necessary that the child of God should be saved. Some divines think it is very wrong to lay a stress on the word "must," especially in that passage where it is said, "He must go through Samaria." "Why," they say, "He must needs go through Samaria because there was no other way He could go and therefore He was forced to go that way." Yes, Gentlemen, we reply, no doubt. But then there might have been another way. Providence made it so that He must go through Samaria and that Samaria should lie in the route He had chosen.

"He must needs go through Samaria." Providence directed man to build Samaria directly in the road and grace constrained the Savior to move in that direction. It was not, "Come down, Zaccheus, because I may abide at your house," but "I must." The Savior felt a strong necessity. Just as much a necessity as there is that man should die. As strong a necessity as there is that the sun should give us light by day and the moon by night—just so much a necessity is there that every blood-bought child of God shall be saved.

"Today I must abide at your house." And oh, when the Lord comes to this—that He must—then He will. What a thing it is with the poor sinner, then, at other times we ask, "Shall I let Him in at all? There is a stranger at the door. He is knocking now—He has knocked before—shall I let Him in?" But this time it is, "I must abide at your house." There was no knocking at the door, but smash went the door into atoms! And in He walked—I must, I shall, I will—I care not for your protecting your vileness, your unbelief. I must, I will—I must abide at your house."

"Ah," says one, "I do not believe God would ever make me to believe as you believe, or become a Christian at all." Ah, but if He shall but say, "Today I must abide at your house," there will be no resistance in you. There are some of you who would scorn the very idea of being a canting Methodist—"What, Sir? Do you suppose I would ever turn into one of your religious people?" No, my Friend, I don't suppose it—I know it for a certainty. If God says "I must," there is no standing against it. Let Him say "must," and it must be.

I will just tell you an anecdote proving this. "A father was about sending his son to college, but as he knew the influence to which he

would be exposed, he was not without a deep and anxious solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of his favorite child. Fearing lest the principles of Christian faith, which he had endeavored to instill into his mind would be rudely assailed, but trusting in the efficacy of that Word which is quick and powerful, he purchased, unknown to his son, an elegant copy of the Bible and deposited it at the bottom of his trunk.

The young man entered upon his college career. The restraints of a pious education were soon broken off and he proceeded from speculation to doubts and from doubts to a denial of the reality of religion. After having become in his own estimation, wiser than his father, he discovered one day, while rummaging his trunk, with great surprise and indignation, the sacred deposit. He took it out and while deliberating on the manner in which he should treat it, he determined that he would use it as waste paper, on which to wipe his razor while shaving. Accordingly, every time he went to shave, he tore out a leaf or two of the holy book and thus used it till nearly half the volume was destroyed.

But while he was committing this outrage upon the sacred book, a text now and then met his eye and was carried like a barbed arrow to his heart. At length, he heard a sermon, which discovered to him his own character and his exposure to the wrath of God. It riveted upon his mind the impression which he had received from the last torn leaf of the blessed, yet insulted volume. Had worlds been at his disposal, he would freely have given them all, could they have availed, in enabling him to undo what he had done. At length he found forgiveness at the foot of the Cross. The torn leaves of that sacred volume brought healing to his soul—for they led him to repose on the mercy of God, which is sufficient for the chief of sinners.

I tell you there is not a reprobate walking the streets and defiling the air with his blasphemies. There is not a creature abandoned so as to be well-nigh as bad as Satan himself—if he is a child of life—who is not within the reach of mercy. And if God says, “Today I must abide at your house,” He then assuredly will.

Do you feel, my dear Hearer, just now, something, in your mind which seems to say you have held out against the Gospel a long while, but today you can hold out no longer? Do you feel that a strong hand has got hold of you and do you hear a voice saying, “Sinner, I must abide at your house. You have often scorned Me, you have often laughed at Me, you have often spit in the face of mercy, often blasphemed Me, but Sinner, I must abide at your house. You banged the door yesterday in

the missionary's face. You burned the tract, you laughed at the minister, you have cursed God's house, you have violated the Sabbath—but, Sinner, I must abide at your house and I will"?

"What? Lord," you say, "abide at my house! Why it is covered all over with iniquity. Abide in my house! Why there is not a chair or a table but would cry out against me. Abide in my house! Why the joists and beams and flooring would all rise up and tell You that I am not worthy to kiss the hem of Your garment. What? Lord, abide at my house!" "Yes," says He, "I must. There is a strong necessity, My powerful love constrains Me and whether you will let Me or not, I am determined to make you willing and you shall let Me in."

Does not this surprise you, poor Trembler—you who thought that mercy's day was gone and that the bell of your destruction had tolled your death-knell? Oh, does not this surprise you, that Christ not only asks you to come to Him, but invites Himself to your table, and what is more, when you would put Him away, kindly says, I must—I will come in"? Only think of Christ going after a sinner, crying after a sinner, begging a sinner to let Him save him—and that is just what Jesus does to His chosen ones.

The sinner runs away from Him, but free grace pursues him and says, "Sinner, come to Christ." And if our hearts are shut up, Christ puts His hand in at the door and if we do not rise, but repulse Him coldly, He says, "I must, I will come in." He weeps over us till His tears win us. He cries after us till His cries prevail—and at last in His own well-determined hour He enters into our heart and there He dwells. "I must abide at your house," said Jesus.

And now, lastly, this call was an effectual one, for we see the fruits it brought forth. Open was Zaccheus' door, spread was his table, generous was his heart, washed were his hands, unburdened was his conscience, joyful was his soul. "Here, Lord," says he, "the half of my goods I give to the poor. I dare say I have robbed them of half my property—and now I restore it. And if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I will restore it to him fourfold." Away goes another portion of his property. Ah, Zaccheus, you will go to bed tonight a great deal poorer than when you got up this morning—but infinitely richer, too!

Poor, very poor, in this world's goods, compared with what you were when you first did climb that sycamore tree. But richer—infininitely richer—in heavenly treasure. Sinner, we shall know whether God calls you by this—if He calls, it will be an effectual call—not a call which you

hear and then forget—but one which produces good works. If God has called you this morning, down will go that drunken cup, up will go your prayers. If God has called you this morning, there will not be one shutter down today in your shop, but all and you will have a notice stuck up, “This house is closed on the Sabbath-Day and will not again on that day, be opened.”

Tomorrow there will be such-and-such worldly amusement—but if God has called you, you will not go. And if you have robbed anybody (and who knows but I may have a thief here), if God calls you, there will be a restoration of what you have stolen—you will give up all that you have—so that you will follow God with all your heart. We do not believe a man to be converted unless he does renounce the error of his ways—unless, practically, he is brought to know that Christ Himself is Master of his conscience and His Law is his delight.

“Zaccheus, make haste and come down, I must abide at your house.” And he made haste and came down and Jesus received him joyfully. “And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Now, one or two lessons. A lesson to the proud. Come down, proud heart, come down! Mercy runs in valleys, but it goes not to the mountaintop. Come down, come down, lofty spirit! The lofty city—He lays it low even to the ground and then He builds it up. Again, a lesson to the poor despairing soul—I am glad to see you in God’s house this morning—it is a good sign. I care not what you came for. You heard there was a strange kind of man that preached here, perhaps. Never mind about that. You are all quite as strange as he is. It is necessary that there should be strange men to gather in other strange men.

Now, I have a mass of people here. And if I might use a figure, I should compare you to a great heap of ashes, mingled with which are a few steel filings. Now, my sermon, if it is attended with Divine Grace, will be a sort of magnet—it will not attract any of the ashes—they will keep just where they are—but it will draw out the steel filings. I have got a Zaccheus there. There is a Mary up there. A John down there, a Sarah, or a William, or a Thomas there—God’s chosen ones—they are steel filings in the congregation of ashes and my Gospel, the Gospel of the blessed God, like a great magnet, draws them out of the heap.

There they come, there they come. Why? Because there was a magnetic power between the Gospel and their hearts. Ah, poor Sinner, come to Jesus, believe His love, trust His mercy. If you have a desire to come, if you are forcing your way through the ashes to get to Christ, then it is because Christ is calling you. Oh, all of you who know yourselves to be sinners—every man, woman and child of you—yes, you little children (for God has given me some of you to be my wages), do you feel yourselves sinners?

Then believe on Jesus and be saved. You have come here from curiosity, many of you. Oh, that you might be met with and saved. I am distressed for you lest you should sink into Hell. Oh, listen to Christ while He speaks to you. Christ says, “Come down.” This morning go home and humble yourselves in the sight of God. Go and confess your iniquities that you have sinned against Him. Go home and tell Him that you are a wretch, undone without His sovereign grace. Then look to Him, for rest assured He has first looked to you. You say, “Sir, oh, I am willing enough to be saved, but I am afraid He is not willing.”

Stop! Stop! No more of that! Do you know that is part blasphemy? Not quite all. If you were not ignorant, I would tell you that it was full blasphemy. You cannot look to Christ before He has looked to you. If you are willing to be saved, He gave you that will. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and you shall be saved. I trust the Holy Spirit is calling you.

Young man up there, young man in the window, make haste! Come down! Old man, sitting in these pews, come down! Merchant in yonder aisle, make haste. Matron and youth, not knowing Christ, oh, may He look at you! Old grandmother, hear the gracious call. And you, young lad, Christ may be looking at you—I trust He is—and saying to you, “Make haste and come down, for today I must abide at your house.”

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

This is the first article on a series on the Five Points of Calvinism, a response to the Five Articles of Remonstrance, proposed by the followers of Jacobus Arminius in 1610.

Murungi Igweta

Romans 3:23 “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”

Every faithful preaching of God’s Word ought to be saturated with doctrinal substance. Doctrinal truths are the basics of our faith. Sermons deficient of these basic tenets are not likely to be helpful to the hearers. What are these basics of our faith? The nature of man and sin. The doctrine of the person and nature of God, his perfect holiness and righteousness. The doctrine of God’s sovereignty over salvation, his eternal love in Christ. The person and work of Christ as the only Redeemer of God’s elect who being the eternal Son of God became man and thus the only Mediator between God and man. The person and work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification. The doctrine of Scripture. Eternal judgement and salvation.

The Doctrine of Man and Sin.

This doctrine helps sinners to see the need for salvation. The doctrine of God’s sovereign grace helps Christians to see the riches of God’s grace in their own salvation to praise Him. The doctrine of Christ helps believers to see the preciousness of Christ to serve Him since He is the Lord and Saviour, the only Redeemer of God’s elect and the only Mediator between God and man. In this new series I want to show you five things that need to be mentioned in every sermon. When these truths are denied or silenced, the gospel is so badly distorted that it is not the gospel at all.

People learning about Christianity must start in the nursery school of trust in Jesus Christ before getting to the secondary school of election and the design of the atonement. I do believe that all the five points of Calvinism should be clearly articulated in one form or another when we preach. I pray and hope that every Christian would desire to believe

them because they are the teaching of the Bible. They are the historic Christianity.

During the grand opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, Charles Haddon Spurgeon asked his invited preachers to speak on the ‘Five Points’ one point each evening for a week. London needed to hear the ‘Five Points’ as it does today... Nairobi desperately needs this same truth, as well as every nation and every other city, and every town and every village and every place. I would encourage young preachers to begin their ministry with sermons on the ‘Five Points’ because these are the basics which have been neglected truths of Christianity and yet so basic. They are so often misunderstood, constantly opposed and distorted by many preachers, and yet indispensable for the full health of the faith. These doctrines must be proclaimed and be defended. These glorious truths are powerful means of evangelism, and the Lord has used them frequently to bring revival to dying churches and strengthen the weak ones.

The first point diagnoses the real state of man. The human condition before conversion is described as being dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). The first point judges man in his human totality of body and soul, as one who is totally depraved. If we do not understand the disease, we cannot know how to treat it! Jeremiah speaking of the heart says: *“the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick”* (17:9). Paul writes of the Gentiles that they have no understanding and are ignorant *“due to the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart”* (Ephesians 4:18). So sin is a condition, a character, an attitude, man’s nature.

Total Depravity

Depravity describes moral corruption. When we say this depravity is “total” we do not mean that man is *as sinful as he can be*, but that **sin has spread to every faculty of his being and has seriously affected him**. As a result everything that men do by nature is sinful and not good in God’s sight. Paul makes a universal conclusion about all men and all they do that *“no one does no one understands; no one seeks for God”* (Romans 3:11). No thought, no emotion, no word spoken, no action, is acceptable to God. Even our very best acts are polluted by sin (Isaiah 64:6, see Philippians 3:4-8). As a drop of poison makes the whole drink poisonous, so sin makes all corrupt and repulsive to God.

Our text is in Romans 3:23, which tells us, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” It is a universal condition.

1. ALL OF US ARE SINNERS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

For all have sinned...

The Word of God looks at human life not in terms of human standards but in terms of the law of God. This weighs on any man’s life in terms of those scales of God’s absolute and eternal balances of the standard of his law – the moral law (the Ten Commandments). It is in terms of them that it passes its own assessment upon our human behaviour. The law of God does its spiritual test on any human being and pronounces every one a sinner. Sin is not simply a violation of the expedient, or the practical, or the politically correct. It is a violation of the law of God. It is the breach of the divine standard of life.

All have sinned. The word “all” means that all types of people are infected with sin. Men are sinners just as women. Adults and children are sinners. Young and old are sinners. All races, all nations, all tribes have sinners. Rich and poor are all sinners. Literate and illiterate are sinners. Sinners fill the earth. They are all equally under the condemnation of sin. Sin is so pervasive that it spares not even those in the womb and so David says in Psalm 51:5, “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*” Sin spares no one. It is a universal pandemic, infecting and affecting everyone.

All have sinned. What is to sin? There are in fact four different words used in the Bible to describe sin;

1) Sin is missing the target

Every human life should aim at conformity to the law of God. Think of the senior archer teaching the novice to hold his bow and fire his arrow at the bull’s eye. The target God places before us is to love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. This is the summary of his law (the standard). The Scripture says that every human life has missed that target. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We have not just missed the bull’s eye – we have missed it all! Our lives have completely fallen short of the target of law and of love. Sin misses the target set by God in His Word.

2) Sin is trespassing across the boundary

There are the frontier posts that mark out life in the kingdom of God. The first says that we are to have no gods except the true and living God. The second says that we are not to make and serve idols. The third says that we are not to take God's name in vain. The fourth says that we are to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy to the Lord. The fifth says that we are to honour both our father and our mothers and respect all divinely instituted authorities. The sixth says that we are not to do violence to anyone and so it upholds the sanctity of human life as those made in God's image. The seventh forbids sexual sin, including lustful thoughts. The eighth tells us to respect the private property of others and not to take what is not ours. The ninth condemns lying, deceit and all falsehood, while the tenth tells us that the longing for anything that belongs to our neighbours is a trespass equal to idolatry. God has set those boundary markers and no one may remove those landmarks. Within those ten demarcation points we are to live our lives. Outside them is the total exclusion zone where trespassers will be prosecuted by the Lord, and yet we all wander there quite deliberately day after day. Sometimes we will crash through the barriers of God's great negatives into those no-go areas and do it again, and again – every single one of us. Sin is transgression, it is trespassing.

3) Sin is disobedience

There is the great voice of the Creator echoing in every heart and consciences of men, in the things of his law written upon his creation, made known in most lands in common grace, and clarified in the Bible as God's special revelation. "This is my will for you . . . fathers behave like this . . . mothers behave like this . . . brothers and sisters remember this... children relate with your parents this way... masters and servants you are called to conduct yourselves in this manner which will be pleasing to the Lord...and young people behave like this . . . preachers preach these truths . . . neighbours love your neighbours in this way." These are the Creator's rights over the creatures who live and move and have their being in him in his creation, and there is the constant, defiant human response of, "I will not!" or "No! We will not have this Lord

rule over us.” This disobedience and rebellion is loathsome to the Lord and He will crush every mutiny against His holy will.

4) Sin is rebellious lawlessness

Men and women are not meant to live an autonomous existence in this world. In other words, they are not meant to say, “Well this is how I think of God and this is how I consider the good life.” That is lawlessness, because such people are a law unto themselves, and that ends in chaos. We are meant to live a theonomous existence, finding delight in the will of God, loving him with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves. We are to take orders from the Lord our God, not from ourselves.

So in those four ways we learn more specifically what the Bible means when it says that all have sinned; every life has missed its target; every life has transgressed the boundary lines of God; every life has disobeyed the voice of God; every life is a lawless life. And because of these, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who in their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

No human being since the fall is able to perfectly obey the law of God, but does continually break it in thought, word and deed. It is a universal disease affecting the human heart, going into every crevice of human mind, percolating into thoughts and words and deeds. All have sinned.

2. WE HAVE FALLEN SHORT OF GOD’S GLORY

... and fall short of the glory of God.” What is the standard of life? The standard and objective of our lives is to glorify God. Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. To seek his glory and to attribute glory to him in word, thought and deed is our primary vocation. But is this what we always do? NO! (to our shame!) The standard before us is God in his glory, and that is what we have fallen short of.

But the Bible does not merely state these truths in a theological fashion. It brings our emotions to bear on this truth to wake us up to our plight, and it does so by describing sin as a hard heart, a stiff neck, self-inflicted blindness, a ferocious beast crouching at the door to destroy us, beautiful wedding garments stained with an indelible scarlet dye, a limp

in the walk, a parasite growing increasingly virile, a leprosy covering us with untreated wounds from head to toe. That is sin! Sin is deadly and fatal. Sin does not just maim – it kills! It leaves people dead to trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Why and how have we fallen short of God’s glory?

- Sin is in the heart – men sin inwardly
- All men are slaves to sin apart from the grace of God.

1) We all have sinned inwardly

According to the Word of God sin is something inward – it is in the heart (Mark 7:21). Of course there are obvious actual, visible, concrete sins, and when we think of sin then commonly, we think of such deeds as scandals of politicians. We think of the glaring mega-corruptions. We think of the list of thefts that fill columns of the local newspaper each week. We think of violence, rape, sexual immorality and drunkenness, and drug abuse, and cruelty to children. Our disgust is always directed to the external. We are concerned about men’s actions, and observable uncouth human behaviour, and of course all that is immensely important as symptoms in revealing the heart condition of human beings. But the Lord goes deeper than that in his Word.

The Bible is much more rigorous. It looks not simply on what is outward and observable. It goes right down to the depths of human life, the heart, and says that there you will find sin. Not just in our words and actions but in our thoughts and ambitions, our desires and emotions, our aspirations and affections we will meet the effects of sin. Jesus said that it was not what went into the body in eating ‘unclean’ pork or camel or going to the sea and grabbing a crab or a crocodile, that defiled a person but what came out of man’s heart that led to greedy, cruel, lustful, destructive actions. The heart of the problem is the human heart. It is not that human action has missed the target, or human speech but our hearts are at odds with God and His word.

All have sinned thus. You see depravity particularly clearly in children. Very often they lack the physical strength to express their sin in actions but in their voices and their constant cries for attention and in complaint you see their depravity. There is the heart that says constantly, “More, more, more, more . . .”, that quickly discards new toys at Christmas and longs for the ones a sibling or cousin has received, and that is sin of

covetousness. And yet, no parent teaches his two-year-old to be a covetous boy – no! it is in his heart! Even though so young. The heart that is angry, that is hateful, that is discontented and dissatisfied is the chief problem of every person. Think of the complaints of the elderly and their desire to control others by manipulation; or the demands for attention by teenagers, the grumbling of the unsubmitive wife, the accusations of the church members to their pastors – they all underline the same thing – sin is within. It is not simply that we have said and done sinful things but that our affections and feelings and ambitions have been tarnished by sin.

Or again you consider the whole realm of our emotional lives and how much in them is depraved by sin. How much sinful anxiety is there in the most well-adjusted person here? How much sinful depression is there – something that is scarcely more than prolonged sulking? How much fear when there should be trust in God's promises, and how much paranoia, that I am being persecuted for my righteous stand or for my theology, the feeling that people don't think of me as highly as they ought to? How much sinful escape from reality is there into a make-believe world? How often do we react excessively emotionally to certain situations? How much do we react insufficiently emotionally to others? We can look at violence, and hear of tragedy and refuse to be moved as we ought. Our hearts are not breaking when they should be, and that is as sinful as the tears that ought not to be shed. So when we talk about the totality of a person being depraved by sin we are referring to the inwardness of our behaviour, not simply our words and actions but our thoughts, and intentions, and desires, and emotions, and aspirations – sin is in them.

2) All are enslaved to sin

There is no moment and no action and no area of human life in which we are unaffected by sin. How can I say this? Because this is what God says in His Word. Look at Romans 6:16-18, *"Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one who you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."* The whole Roman congregation were once slaves to sin, according to the apostle Paul. Think again of those simple words in the

letter to the Galatians, chapter three and verse 22, “*But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin.*”

What does it mean to be a slave? It is to be one’s master’s property. The slave had no time of his own, no property of his own, no talents of his own, no wealth of his own. A slave was always his master’s. His every talent and possession belonged to the one who owned him. His wife was his master’s and his children belonged to his master! Paul, reminds these liberated children of God of the state from which they had been delivered, prisoners and slaves of sin.

Sin subtly hides itself in us, encouraging us to believe that we are actually free men and women, that the choices we make are all flowing from our ‘free will.’ Yet it is sin that is guiding and directing our paths each day as completely as the master controlled his slave. Just try to escape and you will learn how tightly sin controls you. Sin is the master. But sin must be mortified by the cooperation between the Holy Spirit and the believer.

According to the Bible sin is actively addressing everyone in the world every day saying winsomely or authoritatively, “Ignore Jesus Christ . . . don’t think about your sin and guilt . . . don’t bother to read the Bible . . . when your Christian friend starts to talk to you about her Lord change the conversation . . . don’t think about death . . . don’t pray . . . don’t start challenging the fantasy that this world came about by a series of lucky events . . . don’t go to church . . .” And so on, and everyone is kowtowing to Lord Sin with a, “Yes sir!”

The whole world is a prisoner of sin. It is the most staggering concept, and such a shock to our complacency. That what I thought was my own free decision to reject God the Son as my Lord originated in sin, that I am a prisoner to sin, every part of me, so that I cannot do what I want. I cannot go to Christ unless God the Father exerts a more powerful influence than sin and he draws me to his Son (Jn. 6:44). I can’t change and subject myself to God’s law (Romans 8:7). I don’t have the strength to do so because sin prevents me. I can’t accept the things that come from the Spirit of God – the offer of life and forgiveness and fellowship with God – for they are foolishness to me while I am a slave of sin (I Cor. 2:14). That is the divine diagnosis, that all of us are slaves of sin.

SALVATION STORIES

Vanessa Ingabo

Peace in Christ to you all. My name is **Vanessa Ingabo**, and I received salvation on **August 1st, 2021**, while I was at university.

Before that day, I believed I did not have many sins. I was raised in a Christian family where we were taught to pray and read the Bible. Because of that, I assumed I was already a Christian. During secondary school, I tried to serve God by engaging in spiritual activities. I would often remind God of the things I had done, hoping that He would answer my prayers because of them.

When I joined university, I started attending **GBU (Group Biblique Universitaire)** and regularly participated in Bible study sessions. As I continued to attend, I began to realize that many of the teachings were things I had never truly understood before—especially concerning the **holiness of God**.

For the first time, I heard about how God's holiness is incomparable and how no human being can be as holy as He is. I also learned that to enter Heaven, one must be as holy as God. That realization left me deeply afraid at night.

Later, we studied **Romans 3:12–19**, which speaks about how all people have turned away from God and that none are righteous:

"All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one..." (Romans 3:12–19)

That message deeply saddened me. I had always believed that the works I did for God would be enough to get me into Heaven. But the Word made it clear that **my works could not save me**.

I continued attending weekly Bible studies, and one day we studied the topic of **sin**. That was when I fully understood that I was a **sinner** in desperate need of God's grace. I realized that I had sinned against God—both knowingly and unknowingly.

I began to pray, asking the Lord to have mercy on me and teach me His ways so that I could go to Heaven. My prayer during those days was: *"Oh Lord, what must I do so that when I die, I will go to Heaven?"* I prayed with fear and a heavy heart.

Later, we studied **Colossians 1:20–23**, and I learned that through Christ's death, we are reconciled to God and presented before Him as holy and blameless:

"...But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation..." (Colossians 1:22–23)

During the session, I asked a question: *"Can salvation be lost?"* The brethren explained to me that **salvation cannot be lost**, and that once someone truly believes in Christ, they receive **eternal life**. They quoted **John 10:27–30**, where Jesus says:

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand..." (John 10:27–30)

It was on **August 1st, 2021**, during that Bible study, that God granted me the **grace to clearly understand the Gospel**. After months of spiritual searching, I finally received clarity. I was filled with **immense joy** and **deep gratitude** to God. At the same time, I felt sorrow for my family and friends who had not yet believed the Gospel. I developed a strong passion to share the Good News with everyone I could reach.

Today, my heart is filled with **thanksgiving and joy** for God's grace and mercy—something I did not deserve. I now live with the **blessed assurance** that I will not perish and that I have been given eternal life in Christ.

My deepest desire is that **everything I do may bring glory to the Lord**. I also thank God for the brethren who walked with me both before and after I came to Christ. They have continued to show me what it means to live as a true Christian, according to God's Word. **To God alone be the glory!**

Ashley

My name is Ashley, and this is my testimony.

I am being raised in a Christian family where Bible devotions are done frequently. When I was younger, I used to think that I would become a believer once I perfectly obey my parents and always do the right thing, but I was wrong. I came to the realization that God is the only one who is perfect and that no one can keep His law perfectly due to the fall of man and sin. In one of Pastor Dominic's sermons about the leper who was declared unclean and despised, this brought me to realize my sin and that I am a spiritual leper on the inside and that only Jesus Christ can separate me from this burden and curse of sin. And now only through Him can I say I am saved and set free. Now I have an assurance that I have died to the flesh but now live for Jesus Christ.

NEWS & REPORTS

TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH, SIAYA.



The Trinity Baptist Church, Siaya was reconstituted on Sunday, 17th August 2025 with an initial nine members who had a credible testimony.



Two men, Matthew Lincoln and Nick Teka were set apart as Elders in the Church.



Brethren from Grace Fellowship Church, and Trinity Baptist Church Donholm witnessed this occasion.

We praise the Lord for the successful setting apart of two Elders and two Deacons of HRBC in Isiolo on 31st August 2025. UGCC celebrated their first Anniversary on 7th September 2025. GRBC also celebrated their third anniversary on 14th September 2025 with the setting apart of an additional Elder.

TRINITY PASTORS COLLEGE (TPC)

The Trinity Pastors' College (TPC) is a ministry of Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi. The purpose of the College is training of men who rule well in their local churches by preaching and teaching God's word (1 Tim 5:17). As simple as this may sound, it is a glorious thing. It is through the ordinary means of teaching and preaching God's word that sinners are saved, and saints are kept in the faith till glory. Therefore, the need of faithful men who clearly teach and preach God's word cannot be overemphasized. 2000 years later, what Christ said is still true: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." (Matthew 9:37).

TPC students are a very important part of the college. If we had no student, the college couldn't exist. We therefore thank God for all of them. We currently have 21 students and this is the highest enrolment that we have ever had in the college. 8 of these students are pastors in their local churches while the other 13 are aspiring to be pastors, actively involved in the work of gospel ministry in their local churches.

We pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers and use TPC in preparing such laborers for the plentiful harvest.

How To Apply

Being a Pastors' College, TPC only trains pastors and aspiring pastors who are actively serving in their local churches. If you are in Christ and meet the qualifications of an elder according to 1 Tim 3:1-8 and Titus 1:6-9, then you need to have the following application components and submit them via email(tpcnairobi@gmail.com)

1. An application letter.
2. A recommendation letter from your pastor(s)
3. An application form (available on www.tpc.or.ke)
4. A recent passport-size photograph
5. A copy of your National ID/ passport
6. Copies of your Secondary and post-Secondary certificates

We believe that we are training you for your local church. Your church should therefore support you both morally and financially. We offer 90% scholarship through contributions of other churches. Your church is expected to give at least 10% of the total training, which includes giving the students books for their studies and ministry.

Please Pray with Us

Over the years, the Lord has sustained TPC through prayers of the saints. As we think of the future and the need of faithful men in local churches across the country and continent, we acknowledge our great need for God's help. Please pray that the Lord will keep us faithful in this noble task of equipping men for the work of the gospel ministry.

Please Partner with Us

We thank God for gospel partners who give towards the purpose of TPC- Training men who rule well in their local churches by preaching and teaching God's word. We invite you to prayerfully consider giving financially towards the purpose of TPC. To give, please use the details below:

Bank: ABSA

M-PESA Paybill

Business Number: 303030

Account number :0951044342

OR

Account Number: 2046942127

Account Name: Trinity Baptist Church

Bank: ABSA Babk, Embakasi

Swift Code: BARCKENX

Bank Code: 003

PayPal Account: tbc_kenya@ymail.com

For more info go to website at www.tpc.or.ke

DOXOLOGY

Revelation 19:6-7a Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory.

HYMN: THE LORD IS KING! LIFT UP YOUR VOICE JOSIAH CONDER 1789-1855

The Lord is King! lift up your voice,
O earth, and all ye heavens, rejoice!
From world to world the joy shall ring,
The Lord omnipotent is King!

2 The Lord is King! who then shall dare
Resist His will, distrust His care,
Or murmur at His wise decrees,
Or doubt His royal promises?

3 The Lord is King! child of the dust,
The Judge of all the earth is just;
Holy and true are all His ways;
Let every creature speak His praise.

4 He reigns! ye saints, exalt your strains;
Your God is King, your Father reigns;
And He is at the Father's side,
The Man of love, the Crucified.

5 One Lord, one empire, all secures;
He reigns, and life and death are yours;
Through earth and heaven one song shall ring,
The Lord omnipotent is King!

JOSIAH CONDER: the fourth son of Thomas Conder, engraver and bookseller, and grandson of the Rev. John Conder, D.D., first Theological Tutor of Homerton College, was born in London, September 17, 1789, and died December 27, 1855. As author, editor and publisher he was widely known. For some years he was the proprietor and editor of the *Eclectic Review*, and also editor of the *Patriot* newspaper. It is not known how Mr. Conder was brought to Christ, but there is definite evidence of his confidence in the sovereign grace of God in the hymns that he wrote.

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