

GRACE & TRUTH



THE CHILDREN OF GOD

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are

1John 3:1a



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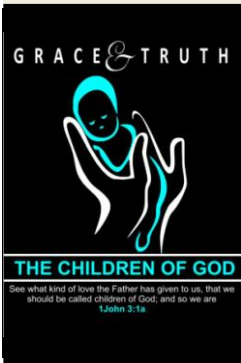
Editor's Desk

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

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Keith Underhill

GRACE & TRUTH
Magazine



Cover: The Bible teaches that the children of God are those born into the family of God. We cannot cause ourselves to be born again – it is God who has given us the Spirit of adoption to bear witness that we are children of God. (Romans 8:15-17). It is God's unconditional and everlasting love that has designated us to be officially God's children. (1 John 3:1-3)

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

THE CHILDREN OF GOD

John Muketha

Who are the children of God? Am I a child of God? Is God my Father? What can I do to become a child of God? These are important questions for all the readers of the Grace and Truth magazine. God has a family and it is important to be assured that we belong to this family. How can you be sure that you are a child of God?

Human beings are by nature in a hopeless condition. We are spiritually dead and lifeless. Morally we are selfish and rebellious. Legally, we are significantly guilty and corrupt before God's Law and under His curse. We are dead in the trespasses and sins and under the influence of the prince of the power of the air and therefore children of wrath. (Ephesians 2:1-3). Our only hope is in the sovereign grace of God.

Why God loves us is a mystery we will never solve. We don't have to understand why He should lovesinners like us. God's love is a gift and not something that can be earned. We haven't charmed our way into God's heart or impressed Him with our selfless acts and great charitable contributions. God loves us because He chooses to.

The children of God are those born into the family of God. We cannot see the kingdom of God unless we are born again (John 3:3,5). But neither can we make ourselves to be born again! We cannot cause the new birth; it is done to us not something we do. Being born again relies decisively on God who in His rich mercy and the great love with which He loved us, has made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5)

God is not everybody's Father! It is only those who receive Jesus Christ and believe in His name who are given the right to become children of God(John 1:12).Being in God's family is not connected with being in any human family. Being born the second time does not depend on who gave birth to you the first time, since no union of two people from two blood lines can make a child of God.No husband no matter how holy he is can produce a child of God. (John 1:13)

The children of God have the Spirit of Christ who adopts them into God's family and empowers them to cry "Abba! Father!" The Spirit further makes them heirs of God together with Christ. Although God allows His children to suffer in this life, He makes everything work for their good (Rom 8:28). Indeed nothing – not even death leave alone sickness, is able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (Rom 8:35-39).

Those officially designated to be God's children are truly His children who desire with all their hearts to be holy as they await the coming of Christ. (1 John 3:1-3). As children who are not ashamed of their Lord, they will identify themselves with the local church which is the visible family of God.What evidence is there in your life to show that you are a child of God?

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Keith Underhill

EPHESIANS 1:15-16

Some things are important although life is not dependent on them. For example, education and even basic literacy, employment, yet so many people must live without these important things. Yet no one anywhere has ever lived without food and drink; such things are not only important but *vital*. Prayer is like this.

So far in this letter Paul has blessed God for six great spiritual blessings that we have in Christ – election to holiness, predestination to adoption, redemption, the knowledge of His will, obtaining the inheritance, and being sealed with the Holy Spirit. Now he turns to pray for those who are the recipients of these blessings.

Most, if not all, of us struggle in prayer. Our first problem is to make time, and then to spend the time without distraction. We experience wandering thoughts as there are so many things we have to do. Sometimes we do not know what to pray. Such problems are shown by few people who make the effort to come to prayer meetings, and then often a reluctance to pray audibly. There is little urgency in prayer, little pleading with God. The focus may be on immediate physical needs rather than the far greater spiritual ones. This is all a reflection of our private prayers.

In our everyday life we discipline ourselves to learn what we think is needful. For example, the learning of basic computer skills. Yet how much effort is put into learning how to pray? Is there anything more important in our lives than prayer? Can we as individuals or as a church expect any blessing from God without prayer (James. 4:2, Matthew 7:7-11)? One great way to learn about prayer is from the examples of Paul's praying, as here.

1. WHY YOU MUST PRAY (1:15)

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,…”

By writing “for this reason” Paul shows two connected things that impelled him to pray for the Ephesians.

(1) Because of *the blessings of salvation already given by God.*

The Ephesians were partakers with Paul of amazing spiritual blessings, as have been enumerated in verses 3-14. At this point in his letter Paul turns back to the One who is the source of these blessings. If someone helps you with school fees, so that you can complete your education, will you not want to thank the giver? You say that you are saved, not because you attend church, or give offerings, or anything at all in you. Rather it is because God planned it in eternity (1:4-6), Christ accomplished it (1:7-8), and the Holy

Spirit has applied it to you (1:9-14). To the boasting Corinthians, Paul wrote, "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1:31). Is this total indebtedness to God what brings you to prayer?

(2) Because of *news of continued blessing from God*.

It was more than four years since Paul had been in Ephesus, and even in his imprisonment he is hearing news of them. It is good news, of faithful continuance in their Christian lives, and this too is all from God. We tend to focus on problems rather than on what the Lord is doing in the very midst of those problems! It would be like a farmer who only talks about the weeds he has to uproot, and the diseases he must spray against, yet all the while a bumper harvest is developing. The fact that there are problems shows there is struggle going on, but also a good foundation, otherwise there would be nothing. Two things clearly reveal a continued spiritual life from God, what we must be looking for in ourselves and others.

- **“Faith in the Lord Jesus”** – The Scriptures never congratulate us for having faith, because it is a gift from God. Many profess faith, but for various reasons sooner or later they give up. The Ephesians had continued to put their trust in the Lord. They had not turned back to the old Jewish religion as the Hebrews were tempted to do; nor had they gone back to idols despite many trials and temptations. But why should anyone trust a Saviour they have never seen, One who brings ‘trouble’ in this life in the form of self-denial and persecution? It is because faith is in Jesus as “Lord”. He rules because He died and now all things are under His feet (Philippians 2:9-11). Is the Lord Jesus central in your life enabling you to continue whatever the circumstances? Test your faith by considering your prayers. Are you conscious that you are unworthy to come into God’s holy presence, and it is only possible because of what Christ has done?
- **“Love towards all the saints”** – Faith always leads to love for others who share the same faith. ‘The magnet that draws sinners to Christ also draws such sinners to each other.’ “Faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:14-26), and this is in the context of loving a brother. Specifically, faith works through love (Galatians 5:6) as the only thing that counts in Christ. Note that Christians are called “saints” (it is never in the singular) because they are all separated from the world and consecrated to God. We love them simply because they are the people of God, and we love all of them. For example, in our earthly family we love all no matter what difficulties we have with any individual. This love is a warm, personal attachment, and genuine concern where no sacrifice is too great (so 1 John 3:16-18). What we do to our earthly family we should all the more do to the saints – delighting to be together, visiting, praying, helping when there are problems of sickness, etc. Don’t leave it all to the Pastors. It is easy to profess love to God, but the real test is loving the one, the saint, you can see (1 John 4:20). What an example was our Lord who with His disciples

was so patient, bearing with their weaknesses. Brethren this love that the Ephesians displayed is commanded, so plan to use your time and your gifts for others, to visit and encourage, and to restore the backslider. If you are not willing are you really a Christian?

2. **HOW YOU MUST PRAY** (1:16)

“I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ...”

Here Paul shows there are two general parts to prayer.

(1) *Thanksgiving.* Paul is always thanking God for them. Such thanksgiving is such a vital part of praying, see Ephesians 5:20, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 1 Timothy 2:1. In almost all of his letters Paul expresses his thankfulness to God for those to whom he is writing. This is because of the recognition that all is from God, and so when others are blessed we delight in God. How much we have to learn about prayer, yes, *learn*. We must train ourselves to pray with thanksgiving. Prayer is not just about solving problems and requests for more blessing, but it is about seeing God’s work in others. Such thanksgiving is an expression of love and an encouragement to love, and is against jealousy, gossip, division, and such like things. Do you pray for others at all? It is a recognition that we are part of the same spiritual family; so we are taught to pray, “Our Father”. We pray despite the weaknesses of others, for whatever anyone has is because of the Lord alone, so that we are thankful for each other.

(2) *Prayer.* Since all past blessings are only from God, we are totally dependent upon Him for all future blessings. Do you really believe that Christian growth is dependent upon prayer, as much as plants depend upon water? The means of growth is not prayer for myself alone, but also our prayers for each other. The great example is our Lord in John 17 as He prayed for His disciples and those who would believe through their ministry; and His servant Paul as he writes to various churches. Are we not in a spiritual battle ultimately against unseen spiritual enemies (see Ephesians 6:12)? Are we not to put on spiritual armour “praying at all times” (6:18)? Do you pray for your Pastors, or do you just criticize what you see as their failures? Rather, with thanksgiving pray for us even in those failures and the Lord will deal with us, and even you! Someone put it this way: ‘All spiritual blessings are stored up in Christ, and we go to draw the supply by prayer.’ This is the vital importance of prayer. What a privilege that we can pray to the eternal God through Christ. Let us repent where we have been failing or weak and not just talk about change but put it into practice by God’s grace.

COMMON QUESTION NO.3

ARE YOU BAPTIZED WITH THE SPIRIT?

Keith Underhill

This is a very important question to ask because the very reason why Christ came was to baptize His people with the Holy Spirit; so preached John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 11:16).

1. **What is ‘baptism with the Holy Spirit’?** Apart from the verses above in the Gospels and Acts there is only one other specific reference to being baptized with the Spirit – 1 Corinthians 12:13. In the Greek language in which Paul wrote the grammatical construction is exactly the same and so should not be translated “in one Spirit” but “with” the Spirit. John the Baptist used water as that into which he baptized repentant sinners; Jesus uses the Spirit as that into which He baptizes all His people. This is the clear parallel. The Spirit is not the One performing the baptism; but Jesus. This is the whole emphasis on the Day of Pentecost, that the exalted Jesus is given the Spirit by the Father and pours Him out (Acts 2:33). Therefore, this ‘baptism’ is the work of the risen Lord immersing a person in the Holy Spirit.

2. **All true Christians are baptized with the Holy Spirit.** There is an emphasis in 1 Corinthians 12:13 on Christian unity, the word “one” occurring 5 times. There is only one body (the true church), and one Spirit. So this baptism unites all genuine Christians into the church where the gifts are to be used. The teaching that the ‘baptism’ is an experience that only *some* Christians have after conversion is therefore false. That would divide Christians into 2 groups, those who have and those who have not. Note that the word “all” occurs 3 times. It does not matter what kind of Christian you are thinking of, “Jew or Greek, slave or free”, all were baptised, all have drunk of the Spirit. Do not bring objections to this from experience. You may object that some Christians have an experience that others do not have. That may be true, but that experience is not the Biblical one of being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

3. **Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a conversion experience.** This is because all Christians have received the baptism. The word “baptism” is not the only way to describe what the Spirit does at conversion. Baptism emphasizes being fully controlled by the Spirit. See how it is used in Mark 10:38-39 and Luke 12:50 to describe the great sufferings Jesus is to undergo. It is just one way to view the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian.

- *Regenerates.* It is the Holy Spirit who powerfully works to bring the new birth, to make us new creatures (John 3:5-8). There is far too much emphasis today on what we do in salvation. The fact is that we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual life as by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins.
- *Indwells.* The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian but not as a passive guest (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Timothy 1:14). He indwells powerfully to sanctify, to teach, to protect. Unless a person is so indwelt he is not a

Christian at all. This is why Christians are of the Spirit whereas non-Christians are of the flesh (Romans 8:4-5).

- *Seals.* The Holy Spirit indwells as a seal (Ephesians 1:13, 4:30), His mark upon us guaranteeing that we shall at last receive the eternal inheritance.

4. **Question:** Are there not occasions in Acts when Christians received the baptism after conversion? There are 4 supposed times:

- *The Day of Pentecost* (Acts 2:4). It is wrong to think that this was a second experience for the disciples of Christ after conversion. Before this time they were living under the old covenant. It was impossible for them to receive the promised Holy Spirit until Christ was exalted (see 2:33, John 7:39). The gift of the Spirit marked their entry into the new covenant, so the beginning of their experience as ‘Christians’. Peter says that this is the time they “believed in the Lord Jesus Christ” (11:17). Note that all who repent and are baptized, that is, become Christians because they are called, have the promise of receiving the Spirit (2:38-39).
- *The Samaritans* (Acts 8:17). It is quite clear that they believed and were baptized but had not received the Holy Spirit (8:12,16). There is something very special here as two apostles from Jerusalem had to come and pray for them to receive the Spirit. Remember there was centuries’ long hatred between Jews and Samaritans (see John 4:9). God deliberately withheld His Spirit until apostles (Jews) were present to guarantee that the Samaritans would be accepted by their Jewish brethren as genuine Christians. We must not take such an occasion and build a doctrine on it. Scripture teaching is clear that anyone who does not have the Spirit does not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9).
- *Cornelius and his house* (Acts 10:44). There is absolutely no question but that this was a conversion experience. When Peter explains to the brethren in Jerusalem what happened in Cornelius’ house and why he had to baptize them, they interpreted the falling of the Spirit to be the very experience they had at Pentecost, and said that God has granted the Gentiles also repentance unto life (11:18).
- *The Ephesian disciples* (Acts 19:6). Although these 12 are called “disciples” (19:1), they were clearly disciples of John the Baptist, never having heard that the Holy Spirit had been given. Paul preached to them about faith and repentance (19:4), they were baptized in the name of Jesus, and they received the Holy Spirit (19:5-6). This is conversion!

5. **Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not the same as being filled with the Spirit.** The baptism happens once at conversion. We are never commanded to seek the baptism, but we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:19). Although the disciples were baptized with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the account records that they were “filled” (Acts 2:4), and this was something that could be repeated when there was a special situation (see Acts 4:8,31, 7:55, 13:9, 13:52).

6. **Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the great new covenant blessing.** This is why Jesus came! Yes, He came to be born like us, to live a perfect life as the second Adam, to suffer and to die for our sins, to rise and be exalted into heaven. He did all this that He might give those who believe on Him the Holy Spirit. So the Old Testament prophesied – Isaiah 32:15, Ezekiel 36:27, 37:14, 39:29, Joel 2:28. It is the one thing John the Baptist said Jesus had come to do – Matthew 3:11. It is the central gift of the risen Lord to His new covenant people – 2 Corinthians 3:6-8, Galatians 3:14.

7. **Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit?** Unless you are, you are not a true Christian. Speaking in tongues is NOT the evidence of the baptism. Tongues was a gift only given to some, as the Spirit willed (1 Corinthians 12:11,30). The “more excellent way” (12:31) is the way of love. A person may have tongues of the most exalted nature imaginable (of angels), yet without love it is just a noise (13:1). The fruit of the Spirit is love ... (Galatians 5:22-23).

EVERLASTING LOVE

"I have loved you with an everlasting love! Therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. — Jeremiah 31:3

Here we have an everlasting thought of God, "in the beginning, before ever the earth was." Believer, travel back in imagination to the ages of the past. Before the trance of eternity was broken by any visible manifestation of power — before one temple was erected in space, before one angel waved his wing, or one note was heard of seraph's song — when God inhabited alone, these sublime solitudes — then there was a thought of you — and that thought was — Love!

Think of the sovereignty of that love. He says not, 'You have loved Me with your poor earthly love — therefore have I drawn you.' No, no! It is from nothing in you — no foreseen goodness on your part. Grace is the reason for all He has done, "God who is rich in mercy for His great love with which He loved us." "I will have mercy," is His own declaration — on whom I will have mercy!" "Jacob," (that cunning, scheming, crafty youth) "Jacob I loved — but Esau I hated!"

*Manasseh, (that miserable man who has defiled his crown, dishonored his throne, and deluged Jerusalem with blood) "I have loved." That dying thief — fresh from a life of infamy, breathing out his blasphemies on a felon's cross, "I have loved." And why, let each of us ask, am I not a Cain or a Judas? Why am I not a wrecked and stranded vessel, like thousands before me? Here is the reason; "Yes, I have loved you." Before you had one thought of Me, yes, when your thoughts were those of hatred, rebellion, and enmity — My thoughts towards you were thoughts of love! **Continued on page 13***

WHY YOU OUGHT TO ATTEND CHURCH REGULARLY

Murungi Igweta

Do you think that it is sinful for a believer not to be fully engaged in a local church? Have you ever failed to attend church? Is it necessary to attend the church? With the many failures of churches, many believers feel justified not going to church. Many would rationalize it by giving all sorts of excuses. They would say that they were ‘required to work’ by their bosses (not by the Saviour and Creator!) or, “I have not found ‘a good church’”. Or, “I would leave the church enraged and bitter, because of what is preached”, or, “the church is made of ‘cliques’ or groups so I feel out of place” and now most recently, “I attend my church on TV or on Internet”! While we may understand these reasons, we should consider this question very seriously. As I write many churches are closing down in Europe because people do not attend church.

The Wikipedia tells us that several research studies in the USA and Europe found that church attendance practices of parents, especially fathers can be highly influential in forming church attendance practices of their children. It is true that if you do not regularly attend church and demand that your children must attend, they will soon drop out as they grow older because they will take cue from your bad example. Therefore, this is so important for yourself and family. But what does the Bible say?

1. DEVOTION TO THE MEANS OF GRACE

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... And all who believed were together and had all things in common... And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (Acts 2:42,44,46)

After Peter’s convicting sermon on the day of Pentecost, the spirit-filled church is constituted with the 120+3000 members! Their distinctive identity is their commitment to the meeting of brethren to enjoy the means of grace provided. So they devoted themselves to these means – they were available, eagerly listening and learning from the doctrine of the Apostles, who were delivering to them what they also had received from the Lord. They immersed and soaked themselves to the Scriptural teachings from the apostles. This was the first distinguishing characteristic of the church.

The second mark is the subject of this article – fellowship. They also devoted themselves to the breaking of bread, a token given by the Lord to believers to remember His death and resurrection until He comes. In this regard, it is a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb, isn’t it? They also devoted themselves to prayer – communion with God.

How was their devotion revealed?

They had like precious faith (2:43). This faith was the foremost, for it was because of their belief in Christ that they met. They were only united with one another having been united by Christ. So it is recorded that *all who believed were together*.

They were assembled together. There cannot be fellowship when apart. The meeting of believers is the most important as we see from the very first congregation. Their meeting was not remote but they actually met and felt each other's presence and warmth. Assembly makes the church visible.

They had all things in common. Their relationship, springing from the same heart, faith and proximity, extended to ownership so that they did not have a problem sharing or fellowshiping over their belonging. Their material needs were well provided, for this is faith working in love (*James 2:15-17*)

Regular attendance: How was their attendance? It was *day by day* attendance, meaning it was not erratic – it was organized and consistent. They met formally for worship in the temple, and this extended to their homes. They were generous in fellowship with to one another, since God had been generous to them in giving them His Son and Spirit. Those who were recipients of this generosity were grateful and glad to their benefactors as well as to the Lord.

The implications of this passage: Spiritual growth of a Christian and the numerical expansion of the church are dependent on the provision of the means of grace to the church by the leadership. Pastors must aim at making available apostolic (Biblical) doctrine to the church. They should be very deliberate in encouraging and nurturing meaningful fellowship among the membership of the church.

The members must endeavour to cultivate a genuine desire for community with other Christians within the church. A heart for self-sufficiency must be taken to be a weed that has to be pulled out. Having all things in common, means that, very practically, some will not live like kings while others live as paupers, yet subscribing to the same faith, being in the same family and saved by the same Lord and Saviour. Kings should invite paupers to their palaces and enjoy the material blessings they have received from God (1Timothy 6:17-19).

Fellowship meals ought to form an integral part of the life of a church. In this passage, we see the emphasis of *breaking bread* (v.42, 46), and that they *received their food* (v.46). In our family we join together for meals, don't we? In the same manner as the spiritual family of God, we should meet together not only to break the spiritual bread of life, which is the Word of God, but also the physical food. Where there is failure to recognize that meals enhance fellowship, you will soon discover Christians will feel neglected. They will seek out to fellowship with others of biological or tribal descent and this will negatively affect church attendance!

Fellowship being one of the means of grace, is called *Koinonia* in Greek. It means, the sharing together, the communion, the fellowship in God and one another, and the partnership for the course of Christ. This is a powerful tool

for the church. It is also used of the Lord as an evangelistic tool because the passage ends with the fact that the early church found favour with *all the people*. *And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved* (v.47). This is the answer to the high priestly prayer of the Lord, *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me* (John 17:21).

Could it be farfetched to say that when you fail to attend church, you are communicating to the unbelievers that salvation is not important? On the contrary, when they see your commitment and devotion to the Lord and His Church, they are encouraged to think that salvation is the most important thing that can happen to them? This is something for you to consider very seriously.

2. ENCOURAGEMENT TO FELLOWSHIP

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

(Hebrews 10:24-25)

We must not assume that because of the benefits of the devotion to fellowship, therefore, church attendance will always automatically increase and be the most delightful thing to do. Human heart is sick and desperately wicked. It is naturally inclined to abhor that which brings spiritual good. The Lord understands this and so we have the exhortation from Hebrews 10:24-25.

It is our Christian duty to stir, or encourage others to this devotion to good works. The tendency to Christian duties is neglect. Neglect, like rust upon iron does not need an invitation letter. Neglect springs up from the heart and it is not long before we see this rust corroding a vibrant spiritual life, and could lead to backsliding, or even worse apostasy! Diligence and carefulness is expected of every Christian and you know this. Yet with all self-watch, if there is no encouragement from other brethren, you will discover that your default mode is self-deception. Christians are to be not only, diligent on self-watch but also prudent in watching over others. Mutually we are to observe other brethren's character, spiritual gifts, experience and virtues leading to good works. This can happen where there is meaningful close fellowship.

This means that when you fail to be in fellowship with brothers and sisters who are so committed to your spiritual good, you do yourself a great disservice. You notice that neglect, though appearing as something idle, yet it is a deliberate effort towards a direction that a person desires. Other Bible translations call it '*forsaking*' (ASV), '*giving up*' (GNB), or '*abandoning*' (LEB). For this reason, this is not something that fall on you by chance, it comes upon you by your own effort, or lack of it!

When you miss the fellowship once, whether on a Lord's Day, or prayer meetings, or any gathering of saints, you need to be very wary. Once will turn to be twice and develop into a habit. When such habits are perpetuated, end up disastrous to the faith. Such habits are infectious, if those around you do not admonish those perpetuating it.

To be without fellowship is dangerous. It must be pointed to any Christian who finds himself walking in a solitary path, that sooner than he expects, the devil who is a roaring roaring lion will soon devour him and will not be able to strive with it by himself. Heed the counsel of the Lord, *two are better than one... woe to him who is alone, when he falls and has not one to lift him up! A threefold cord (of two believers and the Saviour) cannot be broken* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). *As iron sharpens iron, one man sharpens another* (Proverbs 27:17).

It is particularly important that we stick with one another and be united because that great Day, of the coming of the Lord is drawing near. He is coming to unite us in eternal fellowship with Himself and His Father as well as with one another. Come, Lord Jesus Come!

Continued from page 9

And that Sovereign love, as it is from everlasting, so is it to everlasting — endless in duration — enduring as eternity. The love of the creature is but of yesterday — it may be gone tomorrow — dried like a summer-brook when most needed. But the love of God is fed from the glacier summits — the everlasting hills. We may estimate its intensity, when the Savior could utter regarding it such a prayer as this, "That the love with which You have loved Me — may be in them."

Oh, amid the often misgivings of my own doubting heart, with its frames and feelings as vacillating as the shifting sand, let me delight to ponder this precious thought — the long line of unbroken love — every link love — connecting the eternity that is past with the eternity to come — God thinking of me before the birth of time — even then mapping out all my future happiness and heavenly bliss — and standing now, with the hoarded love of that eternity in His heart, seeking therewith to "draw" me!

It is "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus" — which is the moral gravitation-power of the cross, by which His true people have ever been drawn. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth — will draw all men unto Myself!" Draw me, Lord — and I will run after You. Show me Your loving-kindness thus enshrined and manifested in Your dear Son. Constrain me to love You in Him, because You have first loved, and so loved, me! "How priceless is Your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of Your wings."

**BY JOHN MACDUFF, 1864
THE THOUGHTS OF GOD**

THIS MAN JESUS CHRIST! *SakwaBuliba*

Life and relationships have become all too superficial in our present age. It is the easiest thing in the world to say we know someone and yet really have nothing more than a nodding acquaintance. Indeed with the influence of the electronic media and social network - it is possible to see some famous personality on the street and instinctively feel that we know them, even though we have never even met them. They are really complete strangers to us. Sadly the same can be true of our reaction to the greatest personality ever to step on to the stage of human history - the Lord Jesus Christ. The critical difference about our knowledge of Him is that it impinges upon our eternal destiny. Thus one of the most penetrating questions a person can ask in life is, 'Who *is* Jesus Christ?'

At one level it is a question for those who have had little or no exposure to the Christian faith, either in terms of its teaching, or its practice in the life of those who are Christians. Our own secularized world is full of people for whom the words 'Jesus Christ' are nothing more than a profanity. The church has a mission field on its own doorstep. At another level it is also a question for those who claim to be believers, but for whom Christianity is nothing more than a label which they have applied to themselves. They really need to ask themselves some probing questions about the way Jesus affects the way they live and how they worship. Paul's warnings about a faith which is all form and no content (2 Timothy 3:5) are real - the dangers of a Christ-less Christianity are too serious to contemplate.

Jesus Himself provides the bottom line on the issues which are at stake. As He prepares for His ultimate ordeal on the cross and is engaged in prayer beforehand, He reminds His Father in heaven, '*This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*' (John 17:3). The very essence of eternal life is to know God through Jesus Christ His Son. To know Him, not merely in terms of being able to recite some nice doctrines about Him, but to know Him in the most intimate and life-changing fashion. Then we will find that the answer to our question about Jesus is really the answer to the question of life itself.

Who, then, is this Jesus and what is it about Him uniquely which makes Him the pivot on which turns the destiny of the whole world?

1. Jesus is God

To begin to understand Jesus, we cannot start in time, but rather in eternity and the mystery of God Himself. Throughout the Old Testament God made himself known as the one true God who is one and who alone is to be worshipped by all creation (Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 45:5). He is the God of all creation who will brook no rivals. Yet, intriguingly, He made Himself known to the world in a way which suggested there was more to His oneness than met the eye.

Right at the very beginning of the Bible in the account of creation there are several details which are at the very least unusual. The Hebrew word for God is plural in form, yet is used with singular forms of verb (Genesis 1:1). When He comes to create man, He enters into consultation and says, 'Let *us* make man in *our* image...' (Genesis 1:26), as opposed to 'Let *me*...in *my*...'. These details in themselves prove nothing, but in light of later revelation they clearly point to the fact that the God who is one, is also the God who is more than one. He exists in everlasting Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

The significance of the second Person of the Trinity is highlighted sharply by the apostle John in his Gospel where he starts his account of Jesus with the words, 'In the beginning was the Word.' (John 1:1). The 'Word' who 'became flesh and made his dwelling among us' (John 1:14) was none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. He was the One who was Himself profoundly conscious of the glory that was inherently His but veiled from human eyes during His time on earth, yet which would be restored when His work on earth was done (John 17:5).

To know Jesus is to know God. It is to be face to face with the One whose identity lies in eternity and whose power and glory towers over all. He takes our breath away, as He does with the angels of heaven as the One who is worthy of all praise. He captures our hearts as the One who alone is worthy of our trust. The other gods of the world speak about salvation, but only in terms of telling men what they must do to save themselves. The God of the Bible speaks about salvation and tells the world what He Himself has done to bring it (John 3:16).

2. Jesus is God Made Man

The way in which that divine intervention took place is almost too much for words to express. God became man. The Infinite stepped into the finite. The Creator took upon Himself the flesh of His creature. To think that this began in the unique miracle of conception which occurred in the womb of a young girl from an obscure village in an unknown corner of Palestine only serves to magnify the wonder of what happened.

It was not merely, in the words of Charles Wesley, that Jesus was 'Our God contracted to a span', but rather to a tiny cluster of dividing cells in a woman's body. 'He made Himself nothing...being made in human likeness' (Philippians 2:7). He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in an animal feeding trough.

Yet such was the need of those He came to save, 'He had to be made like them in every way' (Hebrews 2:17). If He, as the 'second man' and 'last Adam' (1 Corinthians 15:45,47) was going to undo the damage done to humanity and to creation by the father of the race, then he had to actually take human flesh in order to redeem it.

There is a strong temptation to play down the genuineness of Christ's humanity by always seeing it as overshadowed by His deity. Yet He was truly a man among men. He knew what it was to be hungry (Matthew 4:2), thirsty (John 19:28), weary (John 4:6) and at times even ignorant of facts (Mark 5:30). Yet all of this had a unique contribution to make to the greatness of His redemption. The writer to the Hebrews draws it out graphically, writing to Christians who thought no-one could feel for them in their plight, by pointing to Jesus, their great High Priest who is truly able to sympathize with those in need and extend the help most suited to their circumstances (Hebrews 4:14-16).

By becoming incarnate, Jesus bridged the great divide between a holy heaven and a fallen earth and in His Person joined humanity and deity in an eternal union which would have eternal implications for all who come to Him by faith.

3. Jesus the Dying Saviour

For many, a bloodless Christianity is the only kind of palatable Christianity. They are quite content to admire Jesus as their great role model, listen to Him as their great teacher, but they will not look to Him as the One who took their place on the cross! Great and awesome as the incarnation was, it was not in itself sufficient to redeem a lost humanity. For the Saviour to save, it was necessary for Him to suffer, be crucified, die and be buried. He came not only as Priest whose job it was to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people, but also as sacrifice - the only sacrifice that could ever satisfy God's perfect requirements for perfect atonement (Hebrews 9:14).

Jesus Christ faced head-on the sobering fact of divine justice that, 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness' (Hebrews 9:22). The cross has never been a part of the gospel with which people can feel comfortable. Even in Paul's day it was a scandal for some and a laughing-stock for others (1 Corinthians 1:23). Yet without it there could have been no salvation. Jesus could not have uttered the most critical words of his entire mission, 'It is finished' (John 19:30), nor looked upon the travail of His soul and been satisfied, were it not for the cross (Isaiah 53:11).

In His death, He not only descended into the place the Greeks called 'Hades' - the realm of the dead, He plumbed the very depths of the hell of eternal torment in the place of sinners by whom it is deserved. In that moment, which has become the very axis of history, the body of Jesus was sacrificed 'once for all' in the place of His people (Hebrews 10:10). As Peter told the scattered church of his day, 'Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God' (1 Peter 3:18). His sufferings are His people's salvation.

4. Jesus the Exalted Saviour

Paul summarizes his entire ministry with the words, 'I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus and Him crucified' (1 Corinthians 2:2). As we try to understand who Jesus is and what He has accomplished in redemption, we not only see Him in His pre-existent glory, follow Him into the spiral of His humiliation into the depths of punitive torment, but ultimately watch Him soar in exaltation to the place of highest honour in heaven (Hebrews 12:2). The exaltation of Jesus does not merely consist of what took place when He was taken up into heaven before the watching and wondering eyes of the disciples (Acts 1:9), but in what had its roots in the miracle of the resurrection.

Paul tells the Christians at Rome that it was through the resurrection that Jesus 'was declared with power to be the Son of God' by the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:4). The glory which had been veiled in human flesh throughout His life and ministry on earth was, in the resurrection and during the forty days which followed, revealed in the new body Jesus displayed when He emerged from the tomb. The significance of that event and that special body is something which Paul latches onto and expounds in his first letter to the Corinthians.

He argues with those who doubt the very idea of resurrection in principle by saying, 'If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith' (1 Corinthians 15:14). It is a crucial element to the Christian gospel and to Christian faith. The glory of the message hangs upon the glory of what really happened. It is nothing short of the glory of final victory - death has in truth been defeated, the powers of the grave vanquished. More than that, the character of Christ's resurrection body - with the obvious glory that attaches to it - becomes the prototype of the body that will be the property of the saints after His return (1 Corinthians 15:35-57).

This great truth gives a new twist to our understanding of who Jesus is: He is the One who has already taken human flesh to glory. When He returned to the place of honour at His Father's right hand, He did not cease to be man or abandon His flesh; He took His humanity with Him (Hebrews 4:14). Yes, there are saints in glory at this moment, but they are disembodied spirits (Hebrews 12:23). The only flesh in that wonderful place is the flesh of Jesus. It is there - He is there - as the living guarantee that all who put their faith in Him will one day be raised from the dead as He was and taken to the glory where He is (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The exaltation of Christ provides not only the pattern, but also the assurance of the future exaltation of our humanity which was debased by the Fall. Only as we are found in Him can we have our human dignity truly restored and reinstated to the glory for which it was intended. The glory which we receive from Him when we first share in His resurrection life is but a foretaste of the glory that will be ours when He comes to lift us from our graves and take us home to a glorified world and universe.

5. Jesus the Coming Judge

It is that future day of His return which provides the final clue to the identity of Jesus and the reason we must trust Him. Now He is enthroned at the right hand of His Father and from there He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. It is the risen, exalted reality of Christ that not only provides hope and comfort for all who trust Him, but should also strike fear into those who do not.

Paul uses the twin truths of resurrection and exaltation to buttress the great command of the gospel addressed to ‘all people everywhere’ to repent (Acts 17:30). Rejection of Christ is not just something for which we will be accountable in general, we will be accountable to Him, for we must all one day meet Him.

Who, then, is this Jesus? He is God the Creator and Son of Man, Saviour of His people and Judge of all the earth. He is the One to whom we must go by faith if we are to know Him, become His friends and escape the terror which is to come and find an everlasting home in God’s New Creation when He returns.

This Article originally authored by Mark Johnstone under a different title was adapted from www.placeoftruth.org and reviewed for contextualization with permission from the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

*On such love, my soul still ponder,
Love so great, so rich and free:
Say, while lost in wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally.*

John Kent (1766-1843)
Grace Hymns # 384

Some of you might think that a Christian, and especially myself as a pastor, should not have been in hospital in the first place. To many it spells spiritual defeat, a lack of faith. I was there to undergo a major operation. But I would like to show you that in many ways it was a blessing, and in God's wise purposes it was designed to be a blessing! We actually need to be exercising our faith in using these times for spiritual advantage.

1. It was a blessing to me personally.

- *It showed my personal weakness.* Knowing there would be at least 5 days in hospital after the operation I went armed with my Bible and much reading material. I have to confess that I managed to read my Bible only a little, and meaningful prayer was so difficult. Perhaps it was the effects of the anaesthesia. There was certainly little peace and quiet in the ward so if there was an opportunity to read and pray one always felt like sleeping. It was hard to focus the mind. I have never experienced this before, and neither can I remember having heard anyone say these things. I longed for brethren to come and read the Scriptures and pray with me. What a valuable lesson, as our weakness, spiritually and physically, is the true state of affairs. Is it not a blessing to be confronted with one's own weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)? Why are we ashamed to confess our weakness? It is only when we know our weakness that we can be spiritually strong. Thank God for anything that shows we are weak, and that brings us to depend on Christ!

 - *It has given me more sympathy for others in like situations.* In a way I could wish this had happened to me 20 years ago! I only had one time of pain and discomfort a couple of days after the operation but, of course, I did not know what it was and where it would lead. It took so long for a nurse to come, and then one just came and stood by my side and 'held my hand' as it were. What a comfort it was! Many of you have known this but I have never felt such helplessness and dependency physically. Few of us stay in hospital repeatedly, so it is a new experience for most. Such new experiences are often difficult to handle. We do not know what to expect. So we must comfort others with the comfort with which we have been comforted (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- ## 2. It was a blessing to ministered to in hospital, and there were lessons to be learned.
- *The importance of hospital visitation.* It was the first lengthy time for me to be on 'the other side' – a patient. Up to now my life has been visiting patients in hospital and home. I longed for visits from my wife and

brethren, and had many wonderful surprises. It has made me see all the more the importance of making an effort to visit even with the problem of horrendous traffic jams in Nairobi. One thing to be aware of when visiting: if there are signs of weariness in the patient prepare to leave.

- *Read the Scriptures.* How much I needed to be refreshed with familiar Scriptures read and simply explained, such as Psalm 23. Don't think: 'You are my pastor and you have always been doing it!' One pastor came and directed me to Scripture as we talked, and this was of such help. Then lead in a simple and earnest prayer based on the Scripture that has been read.
- *Give true spiritual encouragement.* Brethren were so concerned for me, hardly ever having seen me laid aside in 40 years. They constantly said, 'You will be well', and I always added, 'Lord willing'. How could anyone know for sure that I would recover? I really appreciated those who said, 'I am praying you to recover quickly so that you can continue to minister to us as our pastor'. There must be a definite and godly reason for remaining in this world. We need to give a comfort that extends beyond this life, that God's grace will be sufficient whatever the future holds, and that nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:37-39). Just before being anaesthetized I had to ask myself if I am ready to die. Thank God for the Lord Jesus Christ! Then, if God does bring recovery, we need to be told that God has a purpose in this (Romans 8:28), certainly to be a witness to those around, staff and patients, while we remain in hospital.

3. It was a blessing to observe God's kind providences.

Before going into hospital I asked my brethren to pray that the Lord would help me to be a witness. There were some very encouraging opportunities.

- One nurse was particularly helpful and late one evening she opened up that she had been bitter with God for 17 years having been widowed with 2 young children. I had given a booklet on 'Bitterness' to the one in the bed next to me and she had picked it up. If you have to go to hospital, you may not be able to talk much, so consider carrying appropriate literature to distribute.
- I was able to speak the gospel to a male nurse as he attended me and he opened up saying how hard they find it when they do everything for a patient but still they die under their care. What a difficult work they have to do.
- Sunday night there was the terrible incident of the double bus bombing. Ambulances raced in with sirens blaring. One of the victims occupied the bed next to me, and I found later that his wife had also been admitted in the same accident and 5 months pregnant. He had leg and hip injuries and could not move. It was past midnight but many of his university friends crowded round him. This continued through the next days, unconverted students not knowing what to say to him, even making jokes. Pastors prayed for healing, not considering God has many other purposes in such

events in our lives. Some prayed against the devil as if all these things are only from that evil spirit ; the Bible teaches that God is behind all that the devil is able to do (remember Job, 2 Samuel 24:1 compared with 1 Chronicles 21:1, 2 Corinthians 12:7). I had my opportunities later in the evenings, when they had all gone, to read the Bible and pray with him. I had given him the booklet on ‘Bitterness’ not realizing at the time how relevant it was to him (and others), and also one of our Grace & Truth magazines.

- There was an Ethiopian soldier opposite me, injured in the foot as he served in Somalia with the ANISOM forces. There were 3 more soldiers in the ward, one from Uganda, one from Sierra Leone, and one from Djibouti. Language was a problem for 2 of them, as one needed Amharic, and another Afar (Djibouti).
- Diagonally opposite me was a strapping, ‘macho’ man from Kinshasa DRC, self-admitted for an operation on his neck. He did not need anyone to help him, he thought, and drew the curtains around his bed and started phoning home. But after surgery, with intense pain, he needed help and reassurance constantly. I was able to have some words with him and leave some literature.
- Finally there was one of my 2 surgeons who went out of his way to help me. He even went on our church website to find out more. I was able to tell him before the operation that I am not afraid to die because of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Instead of praying against situations that we do not like, let us rather accept them, and ask the Lord to use them in our personal growth as Christians. “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline,” says the Lord (Revelation 3:19). “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11). Then we need to pray that in the situation of weakness we would be given opportunities to be a witness to Christ. Often it is just such a circumstance that brings an open door. If Paul and Silas had not been unjustly treated and thrown into prison in Philippi they would not have been able to witness to the jailer. If Paul’s trials had been examples of justice then he would not have appealed to Caesar and he would have had no opportunity to bring the gospel to Caesar’s household. God’s ways are not our ways

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

John Muketha

1 John 3:1-3 *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

Being a child of God is truly a tremendous privilege. But what does “being a child of God” mean? Some would argue that we are all children of God because we are all created by God and belong to the human race. In John 1:9-13, John makes it clear that it is those who received Jesus - who believed in His name, who were given the right or authority to be called the children of God. This is the new birth which is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. It is not being born into this world that makes someone a child of God but it is being born of God. If this is what John means by using the phrase children of God, what are the implications of being a child of the living God?

1. GOD'S CHILDREN ARE LOVED BY THE FATHER (v.1).

John wants us to grasp how God's love really is different from all other kinds of love. **“See what kind of love the Father has given us”** – God’s love is truly amazing. In this great love God takes the initiative to make us His children by lavishly and freely giving love to those who are utterly undeserving. God loved us before we belonged to Him. He loved us when we hated Him and didn't want him. He loved us when we were unlovely.

When we consider of our sin, rebellion and hatred for Christ and contrast that with God who is holy and perfect in every way, we can begin to wonder that God should ever love sinful people and send His Son Jesus to die for us in order to save us from sin and hell. God’s love is demonstrated in the death of Christ for the ungodly sinners. *God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:6-8). *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life* (John 3:16).

God’s love is evident through His Son’s suffering in our place. Christ literally paid the supreme sacrifice for us because of God's desire that we become His children. God wants us to be children, because of the price He paid, giving His Son Jesus Christ. God loved so much that He gave His Son that He might bestow on us sonship so as to become joint heirs with Christ. The bestowal of sonship comes by God’s sacrificial and eternal love. We are loved with an everlasting love that is beyond understanding and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

The wonder of God's love is that if you are born again then you are truly a child of God. You have been adopted into the family of the living God and this is not something that you chose for yourself. As children of wrath, there was nothing appealing about us that God should be attracted to us. God's unconditional and limitless love has lifted us out of a life of sin and placed us within his family thus giving us authority to be called children of God.

We sometimes try to impress God by our lives in order to earn His love. Our service for the Lord is not to earn us His love but it is in response to His love. We love God because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19). God's love is steadfast and everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3). God lavishes this love upon us no matter how we have been living. We are God's children because of His sovereign love.

2. GOD'S CHILDREN FACE HOSTILITY IN THE WORLD (v 1).

As God's children we live in a world that is hostile to Christ, and therefore, hostile to the children of God (John 15:18-25). The world did not know the Lord Jesus but it rejected Him and His message. The world has no capacity to know God or to know Christ. *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to His own and His own people rejected Him* (John 1:9-11). The world hates us as God's children because we do not belong to the world (1 John 3:13).

When we face hostility from the world and are even tempted to give up our faith but we should take this positively because such hostility is evidence that we do not belong to this world. Remember friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). We are God's children but we are also affected by the sin stained world. Our human bodies are frail and this causes us to long for the full realization of God's purpose. We suffer even as we wait glorification as Christ our Lord suffered and he was glorified. God's children will suffer in this life but that cannot be compared with the glory to be revealed. Yes if we suffer with Christ, we will also be glorified with Him (Romans 8:17).

The natural man does not understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14) because the god of this world has blinded his mind (2 Corinthians 4:4). The unsaved person can't recognize the child of God because he is dead (Ephesians 2:1). The world has no capacity to recognize God, Christ or the child of God and understand because it is foolishness. God's children should not love the world or the things that are in the world" because if they love the world, the love of the Father will not in them (1 John 2:14-15). Thus we should not marvel if the world hate us.

3. A CHILD OF GOD HAS A FUTURE HOPE (v 2)

We don't know much about the future but we have a sure future hope. We truly are loved by the Father now but our future state will be more glorious. God who has begun a good work in us will definitely bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). Those foreknown by God and are being conformed to the image of his son will be glorified (Romans 8:29-30). As we wait for the return of Christ, we are being changed in this world and are

becoming increasingly like the Lord Jesus. That however, is nothing compared to the fact that when Jesus Christ returns we will see Him as He is in the fullness of His glory and we shall be like Him.

We know little about heaven and the future but we can be sure of this that Jesus Christ is coming back, and we are going to see Him as He is and then we shall be like Him. At that stage the process that started in us when we came to know God as a result of His electing love will then be made complete as God's work of sanctification will be finished. One day we will be like Jesus but in the meantime we will live in the light of that future hope. We live knowing that we are eternally loved by the Father and we enjoy all the privileges in this world of being children of God. These privileges include the forgiveness of sins, justification before God and the sure hope of heaven among others. We live with complete confidence that what we have been promised in the Word of God concerning the future will take place and that one-day we will enjoy all that God has in store for us.

We not only have the bestowal of sonship, we have the hope of the full experience of sonship. Our hope is in the appearance of Jesus Christ for when that happens, we are going to be complete in Him. The hope of sonship is revealed in Christ's coming and results in purification. When Christ appears we shall be like Him. The fulfillment of our hope is going to be revealed in the coming of Christ. We are going to be like Jesus Christ because those whom God foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. (Romans 8:29) "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus." Yes indeed we are God's masterpiece, the most glorious thing that God has ever made. As a Christian God is molding you into the image of His dear Son.

4. GOD'S CHILDREN STRIFE AFTER HOLINESS (v 3)

God's will for us is our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). God's children will live a life that is pleasing to Him. Our future hope is focused upon Christ but our desire is to be like Him now. Every child of God who has this hope will seek to be holy. As God's children, we must daily seek to root out of our lives all sin and seek to walk with honesty before God as we go about our daily business. We must have hearts that are sensitive to sin and turn to the Lord in genuine repentance when we fall into sin.

Jesus is the founder and perfecter of our faith who lived in this world with all its attractions and temptations yet he did not sin. One day we are going to be like Him but until then we must remember that we are God's children, loved by God from eternity past and although we have to face hostility in this world, we have a future hope that is absolutely guaranteed. Therefore we must seek to be holy and live in a way that is pleasing to our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.

The hope of sonship is revealed in the coming of Christ and it results in our purification. ***And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (v.3).*** When you really live as if Jesus Christ is coming back any instant and you are going to be ready for Him it changes the way you live. The person who really has that hope in him purifies himself so that he might be pure when Christ returns and stand before Him blameless.

MY TESTIMONY

My name is Cynthia Asingwa. I am a Christian. I believe that Jesus Christ, the son of God, died on the cross so that I, a wretched sinner, may be saved. John 3:16 is a verse I heard so many times when I was younger. It was the first verse I memorized, but I never truly grasped its meaning and value until 5 years ago.

I got born again in the year 2009. This is the year I first understood why the Gospel was called the Good News and why John 3:16 was such a popular verse. Having been raised as a Roman Catholic, I had been quite aware of my sinfulness and the consequences to me. If I sinned, I would be doomed to hell unless I confessed and was given absolution. But I did not confess my sins often enough (and they were many sins) so logically my chances of going to hell were rapidly increasing.

At the time I joined the university, I was not very religious in my practice of the Catholic faith. I tried to be good and avoided anything my parents would not approve. So I went to Mass every Sunday morning at 7 o'clock. With time I got lazy and after missing it a few times I joined my friends and went to a Christian Union service. While I enjoyed the company of the students there, I disliked the constant reminder to "give my life to Jesus" or "open my heart to Christ". In my mind being born again simply meant being 'good' and more rules to keep. My sinful heart denied the only one who could save my soul. It is when I got curious and asked what 'grace' meant that the Good News started pouring forth.

I knew I had no chance of getting into heaven. The standards were too high. However, this message; ***"For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life"*** from John 3:16, told me something different.

God was doing His work within me. And I was being brought to the realization of how beautiful this message was. I was a sinner, yet God loved me. I had tried to be good but I could not. I remember being terribly afraid of death because of what it would mean. I did not have a relationship with God and I did not know how. But he gave His only Son that I may be saved.

Over the past 5 years, God has been my guide. When I have left the path He has mercifully brought me back. He is my shepherd. Except for His love and mercy I would be lost; a slave to my sinfulness. It is by His hand that I am born again, not my own. It is a privilege to be my Father's child and I trust that He will keep me under His wings. As I continue on this journey, I trust that our God will continue to mould me to be more like Him.

THE AFRICAN PASTORS' CONFERENCE (A REVIEW)

Vincent Kajuma

The voices of about a sixty men thunder a loud 'Amen!' to the conclusion of pastor Banda's prayer. It is time for a tea break. As they begin pouring out of the church hall, some, especially the younger, can be seen sorting through the crowd for their friends. There is a mixture of both excitement and gravity. Pastor Banda has just finished showing how the book of Leviticus reveals to us God's will to offer Christ, as one of those bulls were offered, for the forgiveness of the sins of all who would believe. Some of them stop around the tables. It is hard not to stop by the tables. The tables are colourfully layered with titles upon titles of books. There are Bible commentaries, books on parenting, marriage, assurance, church history, the Holy Spirit, tongues and spiritual gifts, church unity, the cross, the Trinity. There's even one on how to counsel people addicted to pornography, or wives struggling to submit to their husbands! Gayle is the lady in charge of the text books. Gayle is from South Africa and volunteers with the Africa Pastors' Conferences (APC). Her warmth is infectious. She's printing name tags for all who attend, putting them in cases and giving them to the attendees. One of the attendees filled in his title as 'Chief Apostle'. That's what she's printed for him, perhaps in the hope that his views would change during the conference.

This is just a snapshot of one moment from the Africa Pastors' Conference, which took place in Trinity Baptist Church on the 10th and 11th of June. The theme of the conference was 'Preaching Christ crucified'. Irving Steggles of Birchleigh Baptist Church, Kempton Park, South Africa, gave the opening address on the theme of the Conference. He is blessed with a remarkable ability to communicate. With him was Pastor Raphael Banda of Lusaka, Zambia. They divided the conference addresses between themselves.

The whole two days were filled with activity. The sessions were interspersed with breaks where attendees could interact with each other as they enjoyed a drink or had a meal together. Those who were boarding could enjoy longer chats with the speakers after the closing sessions.

Steggles' and Banda's teaching was an encouragement to all who came. It was useful to all, since it provided what we might call a gospel hermeneutic – how to interpret and teach the Bible with Christ's person and work in view. The many pastors, aspiring pastors, men and women of all ages who came where definitely profited from these two men's clear teaching.

One session that I must highlight was when Pastor Banda spoke on ‘Preaching Christ crucified in an African context.’ It caused quite a buzz. Ours is a culture where we call upon Christ’s blood, spilled for redemption alone, to ‘cover’ our cars, roads, shambas and electronics. It was an eye-opener (and a rebuke for some) to see from the Scriptures what Christ’s blood is for and what it is not for. It is definitely not a charm to keep safe the things you love. It is one to redeem us and keep us for the glory it has obtained for us.

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There were certificates at the end of the Conference, to all who came. This was after a Question and Answer session moderated by Murungilgweta, pastor at Trinity Baptist Church.

The next week, the team flew to Eldoret for a similar conference.

We praise God for these brethren’s’ ministry and trust God that we can have another conference. We will keep you updated for any upcoming conferences. One upcoming one that we most warmly invite you to is the Grace and Truth conference, next month. Read on for more details.

The Grace and Truth Conference in October

You are invited to our next Conference, the Grace and Truth Conference at Trinity Baptist Church, Donholm. It will be in October (3rd to 5th).

The theme of the Conference will be ‘The Church’. We will be exploring what the Bible teaches concerning a Christian’s relationship to the local church, and topics such as church leadership, what a healthy local church is, whether church membership is necessary, the Lord’s Supper, among other things. Every Christian, pastors, church leaders, campus students, people involved in ministry and discipleship programs, seminary students, para-church organizations, etc. are especially welcome.

The costs will be 800 for boarding and 500 for those coming in every day, to cater for meals and materials. Attendance alone is free. The topic will be ‘**The Church**’. For reservations or more details, contact the addresses at the back of this *Grace and Truth* magazine. You can also access more information from the Facebook event page.

Hope to see you there.

Grace and peace.

Subscription

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

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