

GRACE & TRUTH
MAGAZINE ISSUE 135

Pandemic *of* Pandemics *Man and Sin*

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of
God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23



TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH

N A I R O B I

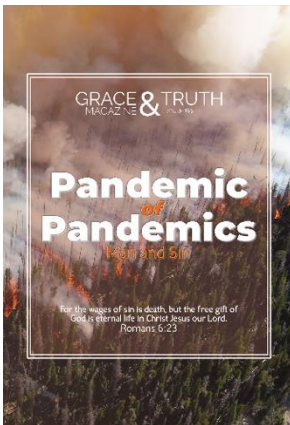
No. 135 2021

Contents

Editor’s Desk

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

Keith Underhill



| | |
|----|--|
| 2 | Privileges of Belonging to the Church (1): Ephesians 2:19 |
| 7 | The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689: Chapter 6 |
| 11 | Creation of Man |
| 16 | Fallen – Who Needs to Be Saved? |
| 23 | The Bondage of the Will |
| 28 | Common Question #16: Is there a Sin that cannot be Forgiven? |
| 31 | Life of David (11): David’s Sin and Its Punishment |
| 36 | A Lot to Learn From Lot |
| 42 | Killing Remaining Sin in our Lives |
| 48 | Biblical Eldership |
| 55 | Marital Roles |

Cover: Pandemic of Pandemics – Man & Sin

Undoubtedly coronavirus has shaken the world in the last year and half, but Covid is nothing in comparison to sin. Sin is the mother of all curses, the king of all evils, the disease of all diseases. The Puritan, Ralph Venning calls it *Plague of Plagues* in his book (1669). But thanks be to God for though *the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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

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

PRIVILEGES OF BELONGING TO THE CHURCH (1)

Do you count belonging to a local church a privilege, even the greatest privilege in this life? Sadly, some see 'church' as no more than a building, an organization. They 'go to church' once or twice a week and that is it. Excitement in life lies elsewhere. Look at Christians and their Facebook posts, and how little 'church' worship and life feature as most significant. Look at how the church has been deemed as irrelevant during the pandemic. If you understand what 'church' truly is then you will consider it quite differently.

Paul is writing a letter to a group of people in the city of Ephesus that make up the church there (1:1). Many were of Gentile background having had none of the privileges the Jews have (2:11-12). He wants to encourage these Gentile Christians not to feel as "strangers and aliens" amongst their Jewish brethren. He has been careful to point out that they did not first have to become Jews in order to have the privileges of the church, but both are reconciled to God and to each other (2:14-16). God has created "one new man" who is neither Jew nor Gentile, a new society in the world, the church. He takes three pictures from the Old Testament to show what a great privilege it is to belong to the church.

1. THE CHURCH IS GOD'S NATION – "*Fellow citizens with the saints*"

Is it not a great privilege to be a citizen of a nation? If you are not a citizen, then you are an 'alien', and aliens have no rights or privileges. For the 40+ years I was in Kenya I was considered an alien. I had to apply to stay every three years and could be asked to leave at any time. I could not vote. Consider the Israelites in Egypt (Acts 7:6). Think about the vast numbers of refugees in camps such as Kakuma, in north-west Kenya. But for us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has set up a Kingdom, and we are all its citizens. There are at least three reasons why this is such a great privilege.

(1) *Our King is God Himself*

I would not like to be a citizen of some nations because their leader is an oppressive dictator. There are two characteristics about God our King that are so encouraging.

- God is love. We have a Triune God, each Person giving Himself unreservedly in planning, executing and applying those plans to make sure there is reconciliation (2:16) and access (2:18). It is amazing that I have personal, confident access to this God as my heavenly Father. The rulers of this world may promise great things, but they are either insincere or unable to fulfil them. God is not like Pharaoh who withholds straw yet has the same demands. Our King gives the most wonderful commandments and the ability to obey by the gift of His Spirit.
- God is almighty. Our King reigns over all. He will defeat all apposition (1:22). Around us there is so much insecurity from terrorist threats to economic instability. But we have nothing to fear “for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). There is nothing that “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

(2) *Our fellow citizens are saints*

The “saints” are all those who are “faithful” in Christ Jesus (1:1), Gentiles as well as Jews. They are those for whom Christ died, so they love the One we love and serve the One we serve (1:7). They are those who are indwelt by one Spirit, so they have the One we have to reveal the truth to them and to enable them to bear fruit (1:13). In the Jewish nation, those who were not Jews (i.e. Gentiles) were 2nd. class citizens at best even if they had embraced the Jewish religion. It was this attitude that brought problems in the early church (see Acts 15 and Galatians 2:11-14). But “in Christ Jesus” there is “neither Jew nor Greek” just Christians as fellow citizens. We are proud of our national heroes, but Abraham, David and Paul are now our fellow citizens (Hebrews 12:22-24). All believers without exception have the same rights and privileges in God’s kingdom. Please note that there is nothing special about the Jewish nation today, despite support from some misguided Christians. The “holy nation” that was Israel in the Old Testament is now the church of believers in the New Testament (see 1 Peter 2:9).

(3) *Our citizenship is for ever*

The nations of this world are temporary at best. How many are more than 100 years old? Where are Babylon and Rome today? God’s kingdom will outlive all (Daniel 2:44) and will cover the earth as Jesus taught in the parable of the mustard seed where the birds of the air made nests in its branches (Luke 13:19).

Even great America cannot prevent death from robbing her of her citizens. But we shall be transformed because “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body,…” (Philippians 3:20-21). No one in his right mind would exchange the temporary for the eternal.

How can you know if you really are a citizen of God’s nation? If it is one of the nations of this world then I would ask you to produce a birth certificate, or a passport. I would want to know if you speak the language, and practice the culture. Consider the following three evidences.

➤ You represent your King. People will talk about, shout for, and defend anything they are greatly interested in. If you are a Kenyan at the Olympics and a Kenyan is winning you make it known you are a Kenyan! You should be eager to talk about the greatness of your King and the perfection of His kingdom. So how do you feel and react when your King is blasphemed? Or are you concealing the fact that you are a Christian? We have many enemies and we must know how to defend our country (nation/church).

➤ You put your nation before your personal interest. Lord Nelson is famously reported as stating before engagement in the battle of Trafalgar, ‘England expects that every man this day will do his duty’. If I am enlisted in the King’s army, what does He want me to do is my most urgent concern (2 Timothy 2:4). Those engaged in battle do not choose to have a day off to attend to personal affairs. Practically, citizens of the kingdom of God put the local church first in terms of service and attendance. Above everything else you want this Kingdom to be extended to be more mighty and glorious. Represent your nation by following its peculiar lifestyle (Philippians 1:27, 1 Peter 2:11-12). If you fall then your country falls with you.

➤ You do not feel at home anywhere else. I now live in U.K. having lived in Kenya for more than 40 years. I miss the food, the warm weather, and the friendliness of people of Kenya. Similarly, outside the local church and the saints we feel like a strangers. In turn, we are not understood, for we have a different King, we are subject to different laws and customs, and this leads to persecution of one kind or another. Where are you most comfortable, most happy, most fulfilled? I hope you can say from the depths of your being that it is in the church.

2. THE CHURCH IS GOD'S FAMILY – “members of the household of God”

Why does Paul go on to give a second picture of the church? Is it just repetition, or an important addition? The family is obviously a much smaller unit than the nation, as there are very many families in a nation. Consider the following two things about the family relationship compared to that within a nation.

- It is *personal*. A household typically lives under one roof so they know each other well (1 Timothy 5:8).
- It is *living*. National unity is based on law (a constitution), but this is a blood relationship. Many Kenyans have emigrated to the States, but home remains home. Home is the country of birth and the family from which they came.

So we need to think seriously about ourselves as Christians as being the family of God (see also Galatians 6:10). There are at least two things true of a family:

(1) ***There is a father*** (see verse 18). This is the great name for God in relationship to Christians. It must be emphasized that only Christians are God's children and He is their spiritual Father. Only believers have “the right to become the children of God” (John 1:12). Unbelievers have the devil as their father (as in 8:44). God is constantly called “our Father” – in the Lord's Prayer, 2 Corinthians 6:18, etc. He perfectly does towards us what fathers do:

- He provides for all our spiritual and physical needs (Ephesians 1:3).
- He protects us from all our enemies (John 17:11).
- He disciplines us to become more holy (Hebrews 12:7-10).

He is not only “in heaven” but also near to us, like a father surrounded by his children. What an encouragement this is to bear the family likeness (Matthew 5:45,48), to pray to Him (Matthew 6:6,8-9,14, 7:11), and to be content as regards the things of the world instead of being anxious (Matthew 6:26,32).

It is vital to ask yourself if God really is your Father. Here is a busy CEO who only has time to see top managers. But there is a little tap on the door as it opens and everything is pushed aside to spend time with his ... child. The God who made everything out of nothing, to whom all the nations are like the dust on the balance, is our Father. We have the right to approach Him at all times and in all situations. Nothing is too small or trivial. God is so interested in you as His child that the hairs of your head are all numbered (Matthew 10:30). There is no place for worry when your “heavenly Father knows that you need them all” (Matthew 6:32). If you claim your father is a rich man, yet you are worrying about what you will eat, it is hard to believe you. So is God really your Father in practice? Do you go to Him in prayer as a child to a father? Do you trust Him to do what seems best to Him? This is the great change that comes when you are converted to Christ.

(2) *There are brothers and sisters* (see 6:21,23). There is the closest possible relationship between siblings. We are not just brothers but dearly “beloved”, just as the Father refers to His own Son (Philippians 4:1). This shows the intimacy of the relationship, the longing for and delight in fellow Christians. Where blood brothers and sisters are concerned we will typically do anything for them, whatever the difficulties. So as Christians we have both the privilege and duty to love one another (Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10), to serve one another (Galatians 5:13), to speak to each other for edification (Hebrews 3:12-13), to refrain from evil thoughts, speech and actions (Romans 14:13, James 4:11, 5:9), etc. A loving family holds its members accountable for its actions, for what one does impacts all.

It is now vital to ask yourself if Christians really are your brethren. For many it is sadly just a Sunday morning relationship, even barely more than a greeting. To such blood relatives are far more important than the Christian relationship. When a relative dies, even a distant one, there is commitment to incessant evening meetings, generous contributions are required, and days are taken off work to go home for the burial. It is not so much that this is wrong, but as much and more should be done for the brethren. The great mark of the Christian is practical love for the brethren (read in 1 John 2:9-10, 3:11,14,16-18, 4:7-12). When you are amongst Christians do you feel at home? Is it where you most want to be? This is why you need to be challenged if you seem to enjoy other things more on a Sunday, or you have no time to pray with your brethren at prayer meetings. When you hear of the need of fellow Christians do you respond with love knowing them to be dearly beloved brethren? The early Christians had “one heart and soul” with “everything in common” (Acts 4:32).

Here is a great difference between a genuine Christian and others. A man is either your father, or he is not. Others are either your siblings or they are not. It is so vital to know where you belong, and you can know. There is no need to be in doubt, groping in the dark. There is all the difference between a ‘stranger’ and a ‘member of the household’. Admittedly, none of us are perfect, and we fail to live up to our privileges. But in your heart you know the truth.

What a privilege this relationship is in a crowded world where so many people are lonely and discouraged. The Christian is not an insignificant speck in a vast universe of billions of galaxies! God is our heavenly Father and we have family members who would die for us. Have you ever known that you have lived “without God in the world” (2:12), so that you came to seek reconciliation with God through the blood of Jesus Christ? You realized you were not part of God’s family by nature and you sought adoption through faith in Christ.

THE LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH OF 1689

Keith Underhill

We continue a chapter-by-chapter study of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. Issue # 134 dealt with Creation, and especially the creation of man and his probation. The Confession now progresses to the fall of man into sin and its consequences. Each section in the article begins with the text of the Confession in italics. Much help was found in *Samuel E. Waldron, A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1989).

CHAPTER SIX: THE FALL OF MAN, SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT

The Origin of Sin: The Fall

1. *Man, as he came from the hand of God, his creator, was upright and perfect. The righteous law which God gave him spoke of life as conditional upon his obedience, and threatened death upon his disobedience. Adam's obedience was short-lived. Satan used the subtle serpent to draw Eve into sin. Thereupon she seduced Adam who, without any compulsion from without, wilfully broke the law under which they had been created, and also God's command not to eat of the forbidden fruit. To fulfil His own wise and holy purposes God permitted this to happen, for He was directing all to His own glory.*

a. **How God made man** (line 1). Adam and Eve were perfectly suited to the garden into which God put them. In this sense there was nothing lacking in them that was the cause of their downfall (Genesis 1:31, Ecclesiastes 7:29).

b. **The Adamic Administration** (lines 1-3). The arrangement God made with Adam in Genesis 2:16-17 is sometimes called the 'Covenant of Works' because it depended upon Adam's obedience. The threat of death upon disobedience implies that if he had obeyed they would have been given 'life', a higher life than that with which they were created, with no possibility of sin, no death, and the closest possible communion with God. Two reasons:

1. The tree of *life* was also in the midst of the garden and they had never eaten from this tree (Genesis 2:9, 3:22-24).
2. Christ, the second Adam, has obtained *life* for us (Romans 5:17,18,21).

We say that Adam was put on *probation*, for the test of his obedience to the prohibition was only to last for a specified time (known to God).

c. **The Fall** (lines 3-6). Read Genesis 3:1-6. Eve was deceived, but Adam sinned with his eyes open (2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:14). From this first sin we learn sin is breaking the law of God (1 John 3:4); sin is going our own way (Isaiah 53:6), following our own thoughts and desires; sin is judging the word of God and obeying only if it seems good to me.

d. **God's purpose in the Fall** (lines 6-7). God was neither the author nor the approver of the sin of Adam and Eve. He had the power to prevent it happening, but chose not to do so because He had a higher purpose to fulfil, His glory in both showing mercy and judgment upon sinners (Romans 9:22-23).

Our Participation in the Sin of Adam

2. *By this sin our first parents lost their former righteousness, and their happy communion with God was severed. Their sin involved us all, and by it death appertained to all. All men became dead in sin, and totally polluted in all parts and faculties of both soul and body.*

3. *The family of man is rooted in the first human 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. Conceived in sin and by nature subject to God's anger, the servants of sin and the subjects of death, all men are now given up to unspeakable miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus Christ sets them free.*

a. **Representative sin.** "Their sin involved us all,..." and "As Adam and Eve stood in the room and stead of all mankind,..." Adam's sin not only brought consequences upon himself but also upon the whole human race. The whole human race fell when Adam fell because in his probation he represented us. We call him our 'representative head'. Note the following two passages: Romans 5:12-19, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. Two arguments from these passages show the truth of 'representative sin':

1. Romans 5:18-19 clearly teaches that because of the *one* sin ("trespass") of the one man Adam condemnation has come upon *all* men.
2. Our salvation comes by the representative obedience of Jesus Christ. This is the way God deals with us: we are condemned because of Adam's one sin, and we are justified by Christ's act of righteousness.

b. **Original sin.** “All men became dead in sin,…” and “...who also from birth derived from them a polluted nature.” Original sin is the sinful nature with which all men are born (Psalm 51:5, Ephesians 2:3). We inherit this from Adam through birth. Because this is our nature, all men are “totally polluted in all parts and faculties of both soul and body.” This is what we call ‘total depravity’. ‘Total’ = every part of us has been thoroughly affected by sin, our bodies and our minds and our hearts. See Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-18.

c. **Our natural state and the need of salvation.** As sinners we have two problems:

1. We are guilty (= liable to condemnation) – because of the one sin of Adam, and also because of our own personal sins. We need God to justify us.
2. We are polluted – because of our nature, needing the cleansing of regeneration (John 3:3-6, Titus 3:5).

Actual Sin

4. *The actual sins that men commit are the fruit of the corrupt nature transmitted to them by our first parents. By reason of this corruption, all men become wholly inclined to all evil; sin disables them. They are utterly indisposed to, and, indeed, rendered opposite to, all that is good.*

Why are all men sinners in practice? It is because of original sin, the sinful nature with which we are born. We are not sinners because we do acts of sin; we sin because we are sinners by nature. We must trace sin to its roots in our hearts (Matthew 12:33-35, 15:16-20). This is why children do not need to be taught to practice such things as lying, for it comes naturally to them (Psalm 58:3). Do not think of sin as originating outside a person, in things or places. “To the pure, all things are pure” (Titus 1:15). Rather, we are tempted because of the sin that is within us (James 1:13-15). We do acts of sin because we have minds that cannot understand the truth (1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 4:18), and desires that love evil (Ephesians 2:2-3). The result is that nothing we do can be called “good” in the sight of God. Nothing proceeds from faith (Hebrews 11:6), nothing is done out of obedience to God. Therefore, *every* act of an unbeliever is a sinful act, even religious acts. Remember it was the religious Pharisees who were most condemned by Christ because of their self-righteousness. Because of our sinful natures we are therefore totally unable to do anything that is good (Romans 8:7-8). This is the seriousness of our sinful condition by nature.

Sin in the Christian

5. *During this earthly life corrupt nature remains in those who are born of God, that is to say, regenerated. Through Christ it is pardoned and mortified, yet both the corruption itself, and all that issues from it, are truly and properly sin.*

Sin remains in every believer, called ‘indwelling sin’. We do not reach perfection through being regenerated; that waits until we are given new bodies at the resurrection. In this life we have to fight against sin that indwells us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 7:14-25, 8:12-13, Galatians 5:16-17). This “corrupt nature” that remains is called the ‘flesh’. Note that not only the actions that proceed from the flesh are sinful, but also the flesh itself. Our condition, as well as our acts, are sinful; and God requires perfection in our character as well as in our acts. The depth of sin within us as a Christian is one thing we learn as we grow in grace. The nearer we grow to God the more we see our sinfulness (Luke 5:8). So it is totally wrong for any Christian to claim perfection, either in nature of in action (1 John 1:8-10).

The Five Points of Calvinism are now known under acronym T-U-L-I-P.

T = Total depravity

U = Unconditional election

L = Limited (or definite) atonement

I = Irresistible grace

P = Perseverance of the saints

John Calvin was one of the great Reformers of the 16th. century. Around the beginning of the 17th. century there were followers of Arminius (so Arminians) who rejected much of Calvin’s theology, and they thus became known as Remonstrants. They drew up 5 articles of faith. When a synod of church leaders from many parts of Europe met in Dort (Holland) 1618-1619 they presented five ‘heads’ of doctrine in opposition to these articles. This is the origin of the Five Points of Calvinism.

The first of the five points is Total Depravity. This does not teach that human beings are as wicked as they can be, but that every part of their being has been radically affected by sin, including the will. Therefore sinners are spiritually dead and can do absolutely nothing to save themselves, not even to predispose themselves for salvation. This is why salvation is by God’s grace alone through Christ alone.

CREATION OF MAN:

Are you in Adam or in Christ?

Murungi Igweta

In this article the author considers aspects of the creation of man and their important implications.

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-14a).

There is no doubt that man is the apex of God's creation. There is no doubt that man did not evolve over a period of millions of years from an ape or any other primate. *God formed the man, out of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature (Genesis 2:7).*

The verse quoted above underscores not only the fact of being created by God but the wonder of the outcome of the precision of divine fingers in fashioning man. Each part or member of human body was intricately knit by God in his infinite wisdom. We shall consider some of these parts in this article, and deal with the fact of being created in God's image and the implications of this glorious truth.

The second and important aspect of the creation of man is the federal headship of both Adam. This is one of the implications of being created by God and in His image – that God gave man very special relationship through two representatives – Adam (the first man) and Jesu Christ (the Last Adam). This will form the second part of this article.

Being in the Image of God

The Triune God made man in His image, after his likeness (Genesis 1:26) – no other creature has this privilege. Being in the image of God means that man is given special abilities and privileges above all other creatures. Man being in the image of God, was given:

- 1) **Companionship** – Human beings are normally expected to marry and enjoy the blessing of companionship, which no other creature was given.
- 2) **Dominion** – Human beings were given 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 (Genesis 1:26, 28).

- 3) ***Righteousness and holiness*** (Ephesians 4:24). “God made man upright” (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Though in Adam the whole race fell from this ‘original righteousness’, this likeness of God is restored to all who repent of their sins and believe in Christ.
- 4) ***Knowledge*** (Colossians 3:10). As soon as God created man, He spoke with him and even when man fell into sin, God spoke with him. God has revealed himself to man both generally in His creation and especially in the Scriptures, the Bible so that man can know God. Christ, the Word, has made God known to man (John 17:3).

Being in the image of God confers special attributes to man that no other creature possesses. Man was given the responsibility, not only to name the animals, but to have dominion over all of them.

The wonder of human body

The human composition shows that human beings are a masterpiece of God’s work of creation. Being made of the invisible part called **the soul**, which does not die, and the visible part called **the body**. Animals only have bodies but not souls. To demonstrate God’s wonder in creating man, let us consider the body.

The human body is made of a dynamic framework of bone and cartilage called the skeleton, which is flexible. Then it has muscles, and blood which is constantly oxygenated and pumped to the rest of the body by the heart. It has multiple joints and hinges, made to move, and usually well supplied with self-lubrication. We all know that man-made machines are lubricated from outside sources and yet the body lubricates itself by manufacturing a jelly-like substance in the right amount at every place it is needed.

The human brain is more wonderful than the greatest computer ever built by man. The body’s computer system computes and sends throughout the body billions of bits of information. This data controls every action, right down to the flicker of an eyelid, and the twitching of a muscle. In most computer systems, the information is carried by wires and electronic parts. In the body, nerves are the wires that carry the information back and forth from the central nervous system, which itself is a very complex system. It is reckoned that in just one human brain there is probably more wiring, more electrical circuitry, than in all the computer systems of the world put together!¹

The wonder of a human eye surpasses the most powerful cameras. Describing the human eye, George Marshall has said:

¹ <https://creation.com/The-human-bodydashGodsquot-masterpiece>

The retina is probably the most complicated tissue in the whole body. Millions of nerve cells interconnect in a fantastic number of ways to form a miniature ‘brain’. Much of what the photoreceptors ‘see’ is interpreted and processed by the retina long before it enters the brain.²

Modern cameras operate on the same basic principle as our eyes. In our eye the focus and aperture are adjusted automatically.

The sound we hear is being played on a perfect little musical instrument inside our ear. The sound waves go down the auditory canal and are carried by the bones of the middle ear to the cochlea, which is rolled up like a tiny sea shell. The outer ear operates in air. But the cochlea is filled with liquid, and transferring sound waves from air to liquid is one of the most difficult problems known to science. Three tiny bones called the ossicles are just right to do the job that enables us to hear properly. Interestingly, the size of these little bones does not change from the time we are born.³ Commenting on the human ear, Andy MacIntosh concludes:

Such an exquisite system involving air vibrations, mechanical, chemical and electrical engineering is frankly astonishing, and confirms the intelligent design of the ear. Surely we can say with the Psalmist, “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (Psalm 139:14).⁴

The heart actually is a muscular pump forcing blood through thousands of miles of blood vessels. Blood carries food and oxygen to every part of the body. The heart pumps an average of six litres (1.5 U.S. gallons) of blood every minute, and in one day pumps enough blood to fill more than forty 200-litre (50-gallon) drums!⁵

Implications of being God’s masterpiece

- 1) *Sanctity of human life.* God has put the highest value on human life. Because man’s life is so precious everyone is commanded, “You shall not murder.” Hatred, anger, malice, slavery and all other forms of abuse are outlawed in this command. This command requires all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life and the life of others.⁶ Laws to protect human life

² <https://creation.com/an-eye-for-creation-george-marshall-interview>

³ <https://creation.com/The-human-bodydashGodsquotmasterpiece>

⁴ <https://creation.com/human-ear>

⁵ <https://creation.com/The-human-bodydashGodsquotmasterpiece>

⁶ Baptist Catechism, Question 73.

should always be encouraged. The current wanton destruction of human life in the womb in the form of abortion is from the pit of hell and no Christian or anyone with sound mind should do anything to promote it.

- 2) *Salvation of man.* When man fell into sin, God, out of His mercy, love and grace, did not give up on man. Instead, he sent His Son, to be the only Redeemer of God's elect. Being the eternal Son of God, He became man (further demonstrating the value of human life), being born of a woman with a true body and reasonable soul, yet without sin. The gospel is that Christ saves sinful men, freely and fully. Believing in Christ is the only means by which your salvation can be obtained. This is the only divinely appointed means by which you will come to know the fullness of being in the image of God.
- 3) *Glorification.* God has not only knit our parts together, but He is also knitting an eternal destiny for human beings, and especially for the good of those who are in Christ. From the resurrection of the body to the eternal blessedness, God has prepared for his people a place of glory. This is another evidence that God has placed a high value on human beings. It is a wonder that God abandoned the angels who sinned to their wickedness but saved human beings (Hebrews 2:16). It is also equally delightful and comforting to know that angels minister to God's children (Hebrews 1:14).
- 4) *The folly of atheism, evolution and human wisdom.* Those who espouse a worldview that denies God, are described as fools (Psalm 114:1, 53:1) because they reject God's work of creation and/or of redemption. Evolution is not rational at all, since it denies the intelligent design in God's creation of human beings and hands it over to a single cell whose origin is not defined, and natural selection. Atheism and evolution lack common sense and are not scientific.

Adam as the federal head of humanity

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... Romans 5:12.

God, after creating Adam, made a covenant with him, not only for him but for his posterity, since all mankind is generated from Adam. This means when Adam fell into sin, we fell with him and so are born in a state of sin and misery. We should realize that the sinfulness of that state into which man fell consists of the guilt of Adam first's sin, the lack of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature (original sin), together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. Consequently, all mankind lost

communion with God, and are under God's wrath and curse and so made liable to all miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever. This is the natural state of all humanity whether they know it or not.

God deals with humanity under this federal system. Adam represented all human beings, and when he acted, it was on our behalf! God has appointed two representatives in history: Adam and Christ. Adam did not represent the race well; he disobeyed God, fell into sin and we all fell with him. Through him sin came into the world. Through him, death came to all human beings. As a result, all of his descendants are born with this an inclination to sin, and they all share in his guilt and suffer the same penalty he received – death. This is what Paul means when he says in verse 12 that “all sinned” at the end of the verse.

Then, Paul argues that there was death before the giving of the law of God. Yes, sin (in the sense of rebellion against and rejection of God) was in the world before the law of Moses, which is what is stated in verse 13. How was the law present before the Ten Commandments were given? The law was present in the sense that God spoken to Adam, and gave him dos and don'ts, e.g. Genesis 2:16-17. Nevertheless, the fact that the law had not yet been made manifest meant that those then living could not sin “according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam,” that is, by violating an expressly revealed law of God. Even if those who followed Adam had no specific law until God gave His commandments at Sinai, yet they sinned.

At the end of verse 14, Paul says Adam was “a type of the one who was to come,” that is, Jesus Christ. In some way, Adam's life and work were a pattern for Jesus' and these two are our representatives. Thus, his federal headship can teach us much about Jesus' work of representation on our behalf. The work of both representatives had stunning effects for humanity. Those effects, however, are radically different, one leads from death to death and the other from life to life.

The inability of the sinner to do anything for salvation:

No one **can** come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. (John 6:44)

The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it **cannot**. Those who are in the flesh **cannot** please God. (Romans 8:7-8)

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is **not able** to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

FALLEN – WHO NEEDS TO BE SAVED?

Jeremy Walker

Jeremy Walker is a pastor with Maidenbower Baptist Church in U.K. This article is a slightly shortened version of a chapter in the book, *Anchored in Grace* (Cruciform Press, 2015), available as a hard copy or various electronic formats from cruciformpress.com. It is reproduced with grateful thanks to the publisher.

We must begin with our condition as fallen creatures. This is a vital first step because if we make a false diagnosis of our condition then we will seek out flawed remedies and accept false answers. To do so would be fatal.

In order to make a proper assessment of this matter, we shall trace out two strands of evidence. The primary and fundamental strand is the testimony of God's Word. The secondary and supplementary strand is the evidence of the world around us. Having surveyed the evidence, we shall then draw out some particular inferences and conclusions.

Evidence: The Testimony of Scripture

The testimony of Scripture must be, for Christians, the defining truth. This is where we begin seeking a final answer to every question addressed therein. What does the Word of God say about the human heart? What does the Bible reveal about our fallen condition? It describes it in various terms.

Deadness. Scripture describes our natural condition as one of deadness. Paul concludes part of his reasoning with the Roman Christians by telling them that, "therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). Paul traces our condition to its fountain in the sin of Adam. All mankind, descending from Adam by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. All our sinning is traced back to the sinful nature we inherited from our first father. Ours is an hereditary condition, and a dreadful one. Everyone, Christian or otherwise, is by nature "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Death – spiritual death – is revealed by our pattern of existence marked by trespasses and sins. It is a state of spiritual inertness, or utter spiritual lifelessness.

Rebellion. The Bible also describes our condition as one of rebellion. Again, writing to the Romans, Paul says that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). We exist, by nature, in a state of hostility toward God, neither willing nor able to live in accordance with his holy law. In ourselves, it must be said of us just as

it was of many Jews in Christ's day, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:44). It is the devil's falsehoods we believe and his will we embrace, while rejecting God's truth and God's will (Ephesians 2:2).

Enslavement. Again, the Scriptures describe us as in a state of enslavement. Jesus makes it an axiomatic principle that "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). That is, a life marked by persistent, thoroughgoing, unrepentant sin is the life of man enslaved to sin. Paul similarly personifies lusts when writing to Titus. He looks back with sorrow, describing how "we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

The apostle also describes those who do not yet know the truth as trapped in "the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26). Our sins are the devil's snares, means by which he brings us into his vicious captivity. He is our fierce and heartless foe, who loves to have us under his oppressive and destructive government.

The behaviour of the unconverted man or woman reveals that our fallen desires are our cruel masters. We are as bound to commit sin as water is to flow downhill.

Blindness and deafness. Further, we are described in terms of spiritual blindness and deafness. We see but do not perceive; we hear but do not understand (Mark 4:12). Our best and most brilliant thinkers, even those who consider themselves theologians, if left to their own wisdom, are blind leaders of the blind, so that both fall into the ditch (Luke 6:39). We have no spiritual sense and awareness by nature.

Inability. Again, there is a horrible inability in us: "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). The truth of God is "foolishness" to the natural man. Despite some sense of eternity, he lacks the spiritual discernment to grasp truly spiritual—we might properly say, Spiritual—things. He lacks the capacity to know better and acts accordingly:

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given

themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Ephesians 4:17–19).

Indeed, even if he could see the way, he does not have the ability to do what is acceptable to God: “those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). Jeremiah asks the question that traps every sinner. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil” (Jeremiah 13:23). Christ himself makes clear the inability of the unresponsive heart of the sinner to move toward God: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44).

Sinfulness. This whole description is rooted in the reality of sinfulness. Here is the root of the matter. We are sinners by nature, “brought forth in iniquity” and conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5). The entire human race stands under the divine indictment that “the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Our transgression is thoroughly instinctive, for “the wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies” (Psalm 58:3). Those words describe both the root and the fruit of our condition. Lawlessness is woven into our hearts (1 John 3:4) and lawless deeds result. Christ shows the horror of such hearts, even while the outward man might be carrying out deeds of extravagant religiosity:

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7:21–23).

Such is the consistent, almost relentless, testimony of Scripture. We are by nature dead, rebellious, enslaved, senseless, incapable sinners. It is an awful but an honest portrait of the unconverted heart.

Evidence: The Testimony of Daily Life

While the testimony of the Word of God should be sufficient for the Christian, we may also expect experience to bear out what we read there. In truth, if we survey the world with the same honesty with which we face the Bible, we do find this to be the case.

Children. We can see it, for example, in the behaviour of children. As any candid parent will tell you, no one needs to teach a toddler selfishness or greed or anger. No one must school a child in deceit or pride. But there cannot be many parents who set out to develop sin in their children. Nevertheless, in the face of the best human efforts, the blithest little baby allowed to develop in the most neutral or positive environment will soon enough produce the fruit of a fallen nature.

The world. Or consider, more generally, the state of the world. As I write there are wars being fought out in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and countless other places around the world. By the time you read these words, those wars may well have been won and lost by respective sides, with all the resultant misery. Other conflicts will be simmering or boiling over in other parts of the planet, and you will be able to list them for yourselves. But you need not look so far afield. Walk the streets of your village, town, or city with your eyes and ears open. Do you see some rural idyll or scenes of metropolitan bliss? Or do you not find, more or less evidently, the marks of man's iniquity scorched into countless lives? Do the sins and sorrows of this world contradict or illustrate the truth of God's Word?

Your heart. Then think of your own heart. Has God given you any accurate and honest insight into the state of your own soul? If he has, then you will confess that the portrait of the suspect sketched by the Word of God matches your inner man. The Bible has delineated with painful accuracy the modes and moods of your soul. By nature, apart from God, you think the way a fallen man thinks, you speak the way a fallen man speaks, you feel the way a fallen man feels, you act the way a fallen man acts. You lift your eyes and look into the mirror of the Scriptures, and you see yourself as you really are. It is not pretty.

Gospel resistance. Consider, too, the characteristic resistance to the gospel that lies in our hearts. It is played out in the antagonism sinners have to the good news. It manifests itself in denials of the principles the gospel lays out and derision for the responses the gospel demands. The message of the cross—that Jesus of Nazareth, who was God's Son and God's Christ, suffered and died according to the Scriptures, being crucified in the place of the ungodly, rising again on the third day, and that only through faith in him can we be made right with God—is foolishness to every unenlightened heart. The notion that such a despicable or deluded individual (if we acknowledge his historical validity) dying such a disgusting death (if we permit that it was no fraud or inaccuracy of record) is somehow required in order for a sinner (if we acknowledge ourselves to be such) to stand acquitted of his guilt (on the assumption that there is some standard by which we are judged) before a holy God (if we allow the idea of his existence to stand) offends the natural mind. It is foolishness to those

who have made human reason their idol and a stumbling block to those who imagine themselves good enough for anything that may be required of them. For many, despite the most careful explanations and the most earnest entreaties, they are swift to despise it, ready to dismiss it, and remain utterly inert in the face of it.

A Universal Condition

When we face these strands of evidence, we are obliged to use the language of universality and totality:

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.”... Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God (Romans 3:9–12, 19).

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

Even addressing those who have come to know the blessings of Christ’s saving work, God’s spokesmen remind us that we too were once entirely subject to sin. It is clear that the whole humanity of all humanity is subject to the taint of sin. To put it another way, every part of the whole life and every element of the whole person of every human being demonstrates our true natural condition as alienated from and antagonistic to God.

All the faculties and capacities of every human creature are under the same condemnation. Our fundamental and pervasive character is one of moral evil. We are morally and ethically disordered at every point of our being. Our minds and hearts are darkened. Our affections and emotions are twisted. Our wills and desires are perverted. Our consciences are dull and inaccurate. Our bodies themselves lead us astray.

This is not to suggest that no one can be saved from such a state. In due course we shall consider the remedy provided for mankind dead in trespasses and sins. Neither is everyone as bad as they could be. That would be to suggest a sort of absolute depravity. The little old lady with the blue rinse who may live next door is as much subject to this corruption as the most violent criminal imaginable. What differs is the expression of the condition.

Simply put, we are all sinners through and through. We are all sinners by nature and deed. Every human being is thoroughly corrupt, that corruption being total in its extent if not in its degree. Every one of us is naturally subject to a comprehensive spiritual deadness that afflicts the whole human race.

Taking Stock

What shall we make of this? What inferences and conclusions must we draw?

Realism. First of all, there should be realism about those who are, at this point in time, unconverted—those who are not true Christians. Such men and women, boys and girls, must be born again: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:5–7). This is not the language of obligation (it is not a command) but of an absolute spiritual necessity. No one moves to God, or even desires to move toward God, without God moving first to draw that one to himself. We may and should mourn over the hardness of men’s hearts, but it should not surprise us. In fact, we are told to expect it. When believers take the gospel into the world, they take it to those who are utterly dead in themselves. We must be realistic about that and about what it means for the hostile reception that the unregenerate heart will give to both the message and messengers of the cross.

We must be realistic, no less, about our own children, if we are Christians. We cannot excuse or ameliorate their sin. All their privileges growing up under the gospel, all the healthful influences brought to bear upon them, do not in themselves render our children less sinful.

Honesty. Furthermore, there must be honesty concerning our own condition. It may be that even now the Holy Spirit is using this chapter to give some reader, perhaps for the first time, a clearer understanding of the evil of your nature, the criminality of your record, the rebellion of your heart. Have you grasped that, as you are or were, there is no good thing in you or from you? That might be a dawning realisation for a Christian who has never considered these things before. It might even be a revelation of your present utter lostness and your deadness to your own dead state. If that is so, do you see that you need a Saviour? Do you now understand that from the womb you have gone astray?

Soberness. It should mean soberness regarding the sanctification of a Christian. I am referring to the gradual process by which a saved sinner is made more and more like Jesus Christ. When we are saved there is radical change—the root of our humanity is made new. In Christ, we are new creations: the old has passed away, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Christ, the whole tenor and direction of the Christian’s life changes. This is a wonder of divine

grace. But our whole humanity needs addressing. That new life at the core of our being needs to be increasingly worked out in all our faculties and capacities. That means a battle on every front, for sin has had a more or less free rein on every front, and now needs to be reined in, ridden down, and rooted out. Where sin reigned, righteousness must replace it, being cultivated in thought and word and deed. Everywhere that sin had its expression, a holy counterpart must now be established and advanced. Let there be no illusions about the extent and degree of the work required and of the time and effort that may – under God – be required to advance the believer’s real holiness.

Conviction. Faced with this reality, there should be a conviction that nothing less than divine power and wisdom are required to bring life from death. Only the almightiness of God can bring light into such darkness. Only the Lord can change our nature and reverse our spiritual polarity. There is no remedy for sinners dead in their trespasses and sins other than the power and wisdom of God as they are revealed in Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Humility. There must, then, be humility concerning our salvation. There is no mere human being who can make any contribution toward our right standing with God. In its initial acts, salvation is all of the divine prerogative. In its subsequent processes, even our actions depend on and respond to God’s prior acts. The renewed heart, with all its gracious operations, finds its origin in the sovereign grace of God. Salvation is accomplished outside of us and granted and applied to us. Salvation is given to us as those who are dead and desperate. All the glory and honour of salvation therefore belong to its Giver. Believers are blessed, and God alone is the Benefactor.

Earnestness. This ought to lead to earnestness in prayer for the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit. If men are indeed so dead in themselves, and if any and all believers made alive are so entirely dependent upon God, then how much ought we to be in prayer to the Spirit of God, who grants life in Christ! How much should we be pleading that he would come in sweet and saving power to open the eyes of the inwardly blind, to unstop the ears of the spiritually deaf, to give life to those who are dead in sin. Salvation is of the Lord. We must therefore look to him to give it, and plead with him to grant it.

Thankfulness. Finally, let there be abundant thankfulness for divine grace. Salvation is of the Lord! That being so, all honour and glory belong to him alone. If anyone is saved then the origin of the whole and the source of every part is found ultimately in God who redeems. The accomplishment of salvation and the application of salvation are acts and works of free and sovereign grace. Praise the God of our salvation, Father, Son, and Spirit!

THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL

Keith Underhill

As this issue of Grace & Truth focusses on man and his fall into sin, there is nothing more important than to consider what the Bible teaches about sin and the will. This was the great controversy of the Reformation.

‘The Bondage of the Will’ is the English title of a book written by Martin Luther in 1525, almost 500 years ago. Why should I draw your attention to a book written so long ago? Surely it is out of date and of no importance today except for historical research. Let me give you some reasons why you should at least be aware of this book.

- The very significant time when it was written. It was just after the formal start of the Reformation which we can date at 1517 when Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenburg. In the history of the Church the Reformation is arguably the most important post-apostolic event resulting in the rise of Protestantism, including the Anglican Church.
- The person who wrote the book. Martin Luther was the individual God used to spearhead the Reformation. It is he who rejected the authority of the Pope in 1519 by burning the ‘Bull’ of excommunication against him. It is he who stood against the Church of the day and the Empire in the Diet of Worms in 1521 and declared that he would not recant his teachings unless it could be proved they contradicted Scripture. This was more than a decade before Calvin had even become a Christian.
- What Luther himself said about the book. He declared it to be about the most important book he wrote. It is said that every two weeks Luther prepared something for the press. His collected writings amount to 55 volumes of about 500 pages each! Apart from his translation of the Bible into German he wanted to be sure that at least three of his many writings were handed down to subsequent generations – the two Catechisms, and this book, *The Bondage of the Will*.
- What others have said about the book. “The manifesto of the Reformation” (Warfield). “The clearest, indeed, the classical elucidation of what the Reformation conflict was all about” (Packer).

Why did Luther write this most important book? It was in response to a much smaller book by Erasmus, *Discussion on Free-Will*. Erasmus was the

leading scholar of his day. Anyone would have felt vindicated if Erasmus was on his side. To aid scholarly pursuit Erasmus had printed the New Testament in Greek and this became such an important instrument the Lord used for reformation as theologians went back to the original language rather than the Latin translation (Vulgate). Any reader could immediately see that the church of A.D.1500 bore little resemblance to that of the apostles as recorded in Scripture. It was full of “obscurantism, superstition, corruption, and moral laxity”. And Erasmus was as loud as Luther in condemning the evils of the church, so much so that it was rumoured that he was ‘Lutheran’. But he could not let there be any suggestion that he was a follower of Luther, one who had been excommunicated from the Church. He had to clear his name and he chose the subject of free will because Luther had described it a ‘a mere fiction’.

What was the Reformation all about? Historians have given many different analyses. It is said that the Reformation was political, as in England when King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the Church instead of the Pope. Others emphasize that it was an attempt to get rid of evil practices in the Church, and this was certainly the attitude of Erasmus. But at the end of his book Luther congratulates Erasmus for ‘hitting the nail on the head’ in choosing to write about free will. He is declaring that this teaching is the root of the problem in the Church. The basic problem is not morality but doctrine, because morality depends upon doctrine. Let us listen to Luther himself:

You alone ... have attacked the real thing, that is, the essential issue. You have not worried me with those extraneous issues about the Papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and such like – trifles, rather than issue – in respect of which almost all to date have sought my blood ... you, and you alone, have seen the hinge on which all turns, and aimed for the vital spot [literally, ‘taken me by the throat’]. For that I heartily thank you; for it is more gratifying to me to deal with this issue. (Luther, 319)

Have you considered this? What is the hinge on which the door of true Christianity turns? It is what you believe about the will of man, whether it is free or in bondage to sin. It is not the door itself; that is the doctrine of the Trinity and the work of Christ. But how does the door open so that a sinner can receive the blessing of the work of Christ? In plain words, does “the Christian message tell man how, with God’s help, he may save himself”, or does “Christianity declare that it is God in Christ who saves, and God alone”? (Packer, 108) Here are the only two alternatives: either God saves from beginning to end; or the sinner has at least some part in being saved.

Let us look at each of these in turn. **Luther** teaches that unless God freely works our salvation we cannot be saved at all. We have no works of our own that can be part of the basis of justification. The Bible is absolutely clear that justification by works is impossible (for example, Galatians 2:16). The only righteousness available is that of Christ. Justification is by faith and not works. How is it possible to have faith? Does the sinner have natural ability to so trust in God, that is, does he have free will? The Bible's answer is No! it is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). The Holy Spirit must first work in the heart giving spiritual life out of which flows faith. This is what Ezekiel promises – 36:26-27. This is what Lydia experienced (Acts 16:14-15). The implication is that if there is any dependence upon man then salvation is impossible. The body of Lazarus has lain in the cold tomb for four days. But he is soon going to walk out alive. How is it possible? Does Jesus whisper to the dead man, 'Just give me a little indication that you want me to raise you up. Lift your finger. Blink your eyes.' Of course, he doesn't. Lazarus can't do anything, not the least little thing. Jesus must first give him life, and only then can he do all things pertaining to life. That is the teaching of Luther, of the Reformation and of the Bible. That is the way you became a Christian, if you truly are one.

Let us now turn to the teaching of **Erasmus** which Luther so strongly opposed. Erasmus is an orthodox follower of the Church, and what is called in theology, semi-Pelagianism. Very simply put, the sinner needs God's help to be saved, but he also has a vital part to play. In other words, he can't be saved without God, but neither can God save him unless he plays his part. It sounds familiar doesn't it? How many preachers have argued: 'God has done his part, all He can; it is now up to you'? Erasmus believed that we all have the natural ability to choose God or to reject Him, which may be no more than just the will to do good which merits divine help for the doing of that good. He gives the illustration of a baby boy who cannot quite walk whose father sets before him a banana beyond his reach. The boy stretches for it but cannot touch it, nor can he walk towards it without help. He wants the banana and his father 'rewards' him by picking him up and carrying him to the fruit. What is wrong with the illustration? In Biblical terms the baby boy is dead and cannot even move his hand (Ephesians 2:1,5)! You may ask, as Erasmus himself did, does it really matter? Isn't what matters that people are saved and live Christian lives? But pleading with the sinner to do something to be saved, like praying the sinner's prayer, has led to a multitude of false professions of faith (see Elly Achok). Preaching morality, even Biblical morality, has led to external religion, for first the heart must be changed.

What is the will? There was, and continues to be, much confusion about the idea. Often the will is thought of as if it is something distinct from the person himself, like our faculty of sight. I am a full person even if I lack the ability to see. But to be able to will, to choose, is a necessary part of personhood. Luther, but not Erasmus, was very clear on this. Free will is not simply the ability to choose some things, but rather the ability to choose any of the alternatives presented to me. Specifically, the question is, ‘Do I have the ability to do that which leads to eternal salvation?’ Erasmus objects that because God commands us to choose the way of obedience then we must have the power to make such a choice. Luther’s response is that God commands what we cannot do precisely to show that we lack that power, so that we might humble ourselves and come to God in total dependence. Listen to Luther:

As long as he is persuaded that he can make even the smallest contribution to his salvation, he remains self-confident, and does not utterly despair of himself, and so is not humbled before God; but plans out for himself ... a position, an occasion, a work, which shall bring him final salvation.

Luther teaches us that according to the Bible not only is it impossible to keep the law of God (Romans 8:7-8), but we have no desire to. If it is then proposed that we are able to believe in Christ then Luther responds that is equally impossible. How can one whose mind is “hostile to God” have faith in Him, trust Him? We cannot choose to act contrary to our nature, which is sinful. We would sooner see a lion eat grass! It cannot because it will not, because it is a carnivore.

The necessary implication is that our salvation is all of God from beginning to end. Luther believes this because it is what Scripture teaches (for example, Romans 9:15-16) and he is totally submissive to the authority of Scripture. Luther uses an illustration of Augustine:

Man’s will, is like a beast standing between two riders. If God rides, it wills and goes where God wills... If Satan rides, it wills and goes where Satan wills. Nor may it choose to which rider it will run ... but the riders themselves fight to decide who shall have and hold it. (Packer, 114)

If God ‘fights’ to be the rider then it His grace, and His grace alone. This raises the inevitable question about those who are not saved: ‘This is unfair particularly towards those God damns rather than saves.’ In his response Luther of course uses the very arguments of Romans 9:14-23. First, he writes, let us not occupy ourselves with debating things that God has not revealed. This is why Paul rebukes one who continues to question God’s doings (verse 20).

Second, one day we will know all things as fully as they can be known when faith becomes sight:

... it is inexplicable how God can damn him who by his own strength can do nothing but sin and become guilty. Both the light of nature and the light of grace here insist that the fault lies not in the wretchedness of man, but in the injustice of God ... But the light of glory insists otherwise, and will one day reveal God ... as a God who justice is most righteous and evident.

We will let Packer tell us why this conflict between Luther and Erasmus was of the highest importance. “It established once and for all that the Reformation conflict was not primarily about obscurantist superstitions and ecclesiastical abuses ...; but that it was essentially concerned with the substance of the Gospel and the significance of grace.” (Packer, 118-119) This means that you must come to a Biblical conclusion about the state of the will of men as sinners, that it is in bondage to sin, and there is nothing you can do towards your salvation. It depends upon the grace of God in Christ received by faith alone.

References

Achok, Elly, *Hell's Best Revealed Secret: Reflections on the Invitation System*

Luther, Martin, *The Bondage of the Will*

Translated and edited by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston 1957

An older translation is available online at www.monergism.com

Packer, J. I., *Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer Volume 4: Honouring the People of God*

Chapter 8: Luther Against Erasmus, pp. 101-119

Available online at Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXV11, No. 4, April 1966

For further reading on the subject of the will.

Chantry, Walter, *Man's Will Free Yet Bound* – www.monergism.com

Spurgeon, C. H., *Free Will a Slave* – www.chapellibrary.org

Boettner, Loraine, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*

Cheeseman, John, *Saving Grace*

COMMON QUESTION NO. 16 *Keith Underhill*

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..

IS THERE A SIN THAT CANNOT BE FORGIVEN?

The clear answer is ‘Yes’, because Jesus says so. He says, “The one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven” (Luke 12:10, see also Matthew 12:31-32 and Mark 3:29).

1. What is ‘blasphemy against the Holy Spirit’?

Blasphemy generally is to speak wickedly against someone. One of the ones crucified with Jesus “railed” (= blasphemed) at Him (Luke 23:39). It is a word used for slanderous speech against Paul (Romans 3:8). All such blasphemies can be forgiven if repented of, but not when it is against the Holy Spirit of God. Mark is the one who gives an explanation: “but is guilty of an eternal sin---for they were saying, ‘He has an unclean spirit’” (3:31). There is something different about this sin from others, it is “eternal”. It has eternal consequences, its guilt remains for ever. The scribes about whom Christ was speaking had witnessed Jesus casting out demons. For example, “a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw” (Matthew 12:22). Although it was obviously the work of God in restoring this man, the evidence of the kingdom of God among them (verse 28), they wickedly and repeatedly said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons”. To witness the power of the Holy Spirit and deliberately say it is the power of Satan is going too far. It would be as if a person today, seeing a wicked man totally changed in becoming a Christian, then proclaimed that it is the work of the devil.

So this unforgivable sin is not any kind of blasphemy, not even blasphemy against the Son of Man (Jesus). So many have blasphemed Jesus and yet have been saved – from His family who said ‘He is out of His mind’ (Mark 3:21), the Pentecostal crowd who had shouted for Him to be crucified, to Saul of Tarsus (1 Timothy 1:13). During His earthly ministry He had veiled His glory. Who could believe that the Son would be born in a stable, or be crucified as a criminal? Nor is it sexual sin – think of the sinner woman of Luke 7:36ff. who was forgiven much, and the former life of many of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). It is not even suicide when attempted and fulfilled by one of disturbed mind.

2. **Why will this sin not be forgiven?**

There is one condition in order to experience forgiveness, and that is repentance. No one will ever be forgiven sins without repentance. Read Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31, 8:22. Those who commit this sin of deliberate and repeated slander towards Christ against the evidence they have seen with their own eyes show they have such a hard heart that will never soften in repentance. They have already rejected the means to repentance: they knew the truth and were persuaded of it; they saw and experienced the power of the Holy Spirit at work through Christ. It is sad truth that even in this life that someone may be in this condition where forgiveness is impossible. On the other hand, there is the absolute assurance that if you repent, you will be forgiven. Or to put it another way, God will not soften this heart in His grace.

3. **Is it possible that you have committed this sin?**

Thank God it is most unlikely. Unless you are seeking to defiantly oppose everything written here, the fact you are reading this seeking information, wanting to know the truth, is enough evidence you have not so sinned. The fact that you are concerned about whether or not you are in this state shows that you are not!

4. Some other passages with similar teaching explained. These passages do not use the words ‘blasphemy against the Holy Spirit’ but they reveal conditions where there will be no forgiveness.

➤ **Hebrews 6:4-6.** “It is impossible ... to restore them again to repentance.” Here are professing Christians who have had great privileges and spiritual experiences yet they have fallen away. In the context of Hebrews with its emphasis on perseverance, these are Christians from a Jewish background who embraced Jesus as Messiah but they now reject Him. It is like they are crucifying Jesus again. Despite their identification with Christians they never were true Christians. The writer likens them to ground that bears thorns and thistles (verse 8). He goes on to assert confidence that the others to whom he is writing are not such but have “things that belong to salvation” (verse 9). The fearful thing is that those who once professed Christ but now reject Him can never come to repentance and so be forgiven.

➤ **Hebrews 10:26-30.** “There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment.” These are people who “go on sinning deliberately after receiving a knowledge of the truth”. We need to be very careful and realize the writer is referring to the specific sin of stopping meeting with the church (verse 25) because they no longer profess the faith (verse 29). If a person comes to the conclusion that Jesus was not the Lamb of God who

takes away the sin of the world, then what other sacrifice for sin is there for him? What a wicked thing to reject Christ, the Spirit's work, and the gracious covenant, when once believed in.

Note. To blaspheme Christ like this now will not be forgiven. He is exalted in glory and there is no excuse for those who have known the truth to mistake Him.

➤ **1 John 5:16-17.** "There is a sin that leads to death." This death is spiritual as all people die physically because of sin (Romans 5:12). In the context it is the specific sin of the secessionists, those who left the church (see 2:19). They deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (4:2-3) and also deny the significance of His death (5:6). Such deniers of Christ will not experience the eternal resurrection life. This distinction between sin that does and sin that does not lead to death is not that of the Catholic teaching between 'mortal' and 'venial' sin, for there is no distinction in the Bible between such sins. John is certainly not encouraging prayer for such people, although he does not outwardly forbid it. There is little hope for those who have turned away from Christ when once they professed Him.

The fact that there is an unforgivable sin ought to be a challenge to each one reading this. No one purposes to go in this direction. The Pharisees did because they only other alternative was to believe in Jesus and He did not fit their idea of Messiah. The Hebrews were in danger because of the great suffering they were undergoing because of their faith in Jesus. John was writing about people who came to embrace false teaching about Jesus and they left the church. Any one of these is possible and that is why Hebrews gives such strong warnings. The way to avoid this sin is to look to Jesus, to keep going and let nothing turn you aside (read Hebrews 12:1ff.).

The Reformed Baptist Association of Kenya (RBAK)

The RBAK unites churches that subscribe to the 1689 Baptist Confession. Each year one or two delegates from member churches hold a General Assembly to encourage and strengthen each other in the Lord. This year's GA will be hosted by TBC Nairobi from 7th. to 11th. October. The theme will be *Church Stewardship* with the aim of strengthening churchmanship.

If you / your church subscribes to the 1689 Confession, but you are not yet a member, you are welcome to attend as an observer. We encourage this as it is vital to express our unity by assembling together. You might want to read the Confession itself, chapter 26, paragraphs 14 & 15.

THE LIFE OF DAVID (11)

Keith Underhill

This study continues our examination of the life of David, as found in 1 & 2 Samuel. This #11 is so relevant to our consideration of the doctrine of man and sin. While the history is the foundation of our study, our concern is to find out what the Lord is saying to us today about our Lord Jesus Christ to whom the whole Old Testament points.

DAVID'S SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT (2 Samuel 11-18)

We now come to consider David's greatest failure, that one sin in his life that is forever a blot on his character (see 1 Kings 15:5). May we not only be revolted at his sin, but may the Lord open our eyes to see the reality of evil that dwells in the best of us. We shall start by noting the downward path, and thanking God that he did not descend right down into hell but was brought up to a true confession of sin.

DAVID'S SIN

The occasion (11:1). David had enjoyed unparalleled success as King. He no longer had need to be in active combat with Joab as a capable leader. Yet it was this failure to follow the path of duty that turned to be his undoing. No one can expect God's protection if he turns aside from the way of duty. It is not only important to know the will of God, but also to do it!

The fall (11:2-5). The temptation no doubt took him by surprise as, due to idleness and inactivity, he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Note the sequence recorded – David saw (2), inquired (3), and sinned (5). This is the way it is so often. Eve was tempted to question God's prohibition, she saw and she ate (Genesis 3:6). In the same way Achan saw, coveted and sinned (Joshua 7:21). This is how you fall into temptation. You see, hear or think, and instead of putting it away as illicit you desire it, and so you are trapped into sin (so James 1:14-15). David's fall was very, very serious because it was *not* one of ignorance. He had found out who the woman was, "the wife of Uriah the Hittite"; he himself was already a married man; and at that very moment Uriah was on the battlefield risking his life for the King.

The results (11:6-27). Rather than humble confession David tried to cover up what he had done. How familiar this is! Through a process of deceit and evil he planned to make the resulting conception look perfectly natural.

- He called Uriah back from the war and sent him home to his wife with gifts. But being the righteous man that he was he refused to be with his wife (verses 6-12).
- He arranged to get Uriah drunk to be sure he would go home. He still did not go down to his house (verses 12-13). Didn't David begin to see that God's providences were working against him?
- His love for his own reputation now made him actually plan Uriah's death (= murder). Instead of turning to the Lord to get him out of trouble to turn to Joab (verses 14-25). What a great change from the days when he was chased by Saul. Such is the fruit of turning from God.

With Uriah dead, David now thought his sin was completely covered up. Perhaps only he and Bathsheba herself knew, but it could not be hidden from the Lord (11:27).

The confession (12:1-15). The Lord left David for about a year, not in the joy of having Bathsheba as another wife, but in the misery of unconfessed sin (so Psalm 32:3-4). Many may have seen what David did as quite normal for a monarch. After all, Uriah her husband was dead. But in His grace God sent Nathan the prophet after the child was born. What a blessing He did not send to David enemies to invade the land, or to messengers of death. Nathan used an appropriate parable about sheep to reveal David's sin and make David condemn himself. With his knowledge of the law of God how easily David could see sin in others. Nathan boldly reproves David who confesses his sin (verse 13). It is a genuine confession for David makes no excuses. There is no lessening of the sin committed, no pleading human weakness, no blaming of others (Psalm 51:3-5). Nathan finally has the privilege of bringing the message of God's forgiveness.

SIN'S PUNISHMENT

Although David had been graciously and completely pardoned, he must still have to bear the consequences of his sin in life. Things were not going to be the same again as if nothing had happened. May God grant us to hate sin by seeing its evil effects in our lives, the lives of others, and especially because by sin God Himself is despised (12:10,14). What a terrible price David had to pay. He had not bargained for this when he sinned, but there was no going back.

Punishment predicted (12:7-14). See how each aspect of the punishment is closely connected with the sin.

- The sword would not depart from David's house because of the murder of Uriah (verse 10). Death and murder would now be a part of David's family life. God's word concerning murder had been despised (verse 9).
- David's own wives will be immorally treated because he wrongfully took Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and he already had many wives (verses 11-12). What he did in secret would be done openly.
- The child born of adultery would die (verse 14). Because of David's exalted position God clearly shows to all His great displeasure at his sins (verse 7).

Punishment fulfilled (chs. 13-18).

- The child dies (12:15-23). When sick, David fasts and prays because there was hope (verses 22-23). When dead, David worships the Lord, having no bitterness, surely accepting that this was small punishment considering the greatness of the sin he had committed. Such submissiveness to God's providence is a good sign of genuine confession.
- Amnon's incest (ch. 13). He committed immorality with his half-sister, Tamar, by deceit and force. Amnon pretended to be sick and it was David himself who sent Tamar to him! Although David knew what had happened and was very angry he did nothing (13:21). Was it his guilty conscience? Absalom, Tamar's real brother got revenge by killing Amnon, thus also making himself next in line to the throne – Amnon (1), Chilibab (2) never heard of again, Absalom (3), see 2 Samuel 3:2-4. So the sword began to devour in the family.
- Absalom's rebellion (chs. 14-18). David had a real soft spot for Absalom (13:39) which overcame his better judgement. He ought to have been angry at his sin and rejection of the Lord. Eventually David gives in and allows Absalom back into Jerusalem, but no meeting between them takes place for two long years. But then without any confession of sin there is reconciliation (14:33). Now Absalom can openly fulfil his desire to wrest the throne from his father. It is possible that this was a time when David was laid aside with much sickness (as in Psalms 39, 41, 55). He seeks to woo the people of Israel by his vanity (15:1ff., cf. 14:25-26). He actually stages his rebellion under the pretext of worshipping the Lord (15:7ff.). In these four years of Absalom's activity David did nothing (15:7); perhaps awareness of his guilt made him weak in dealing with his sons. Finally David was forced to flee Jerusalem (15:13ff.), but when there was a battle Absalom was slain by Joab against David's express command (ch. 18). Great was his weeping over his beloved Absalom (18:33-19:8) to the disgust of Israel.

- Adonijah’s rebellion (2 Kings 1:5-27,41-43, 2:13-25). He is David’s fourth son, and now the next in line. He exalts himself as King, then asks to marry David’s last ‘wife’, which Solomon interprets as a continuing desire for the throne (1:3, 2:22). So he is executed (2:25).

VITAL TRUTHS ABOUT SIN

(1) *Sin in the believer.* David was a man after God’s own heart, yet look at the sin that still dwelt in him – adultery and murder, with the deceit that sought to cover it up. Let every believer tremble and fear for, but by God’s grace, anyone is capable of such sin. It is a warning to those of us who have been Christians for a long time, and especially after times of spiritual success. Remember Proverbs 4:23 and 1 Corinthians 10:13. A profession of salvation is not an immunization against sin, like having the covid-19 jab. So give no opportunity to sin, for it is like walking through fire thinking you will not get burned. Be careful what you read, hear, and see and where you go. In everyday life you do not deliberately put yourself into physical danger. For example, you are more careful at night because of unseen dangers. We have had to ‘socially distance’ so as not to catch the virus. If you are a young person reading this, we do not write to stop you from enjoying life. But we do know “there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Proverbs 16:25). Many of us have learned the bitterness of sin, as David did, once the initial joy has passed (so Moses, Hebrews 11:25-26). Don’t say it will not happen to you. Who would have believed David would have sinned like this, or that Peter would have denied his Lord?

(2) *The folly of hiding sin.* What happened when David determined to cover up his sin? He was trapped into more and more sin. Just see what he did to loyal Uriah. A refusal to put one serious wrong right leads to yet worse wrongs. The way of sin is always hard, for God will often allow His people to indulge in their lusts, but not to remain content in their sin (Proverbs 28:13). What about you? Are there sins you are seeking to hide? Is there immorality, adultery that you excuse as ‘friendship’? Is there stealing that you call ‘diverting funds’? What does your conscience testify? Remember that God is displeased with it. If you are indeed a true Christian then such things surely bother you deep down. You cannot live as if nothing has happened. The only solution is for you to humble yourself and confess them to God, and to others where necessary.

(3) *God forgives sin.* If David’s sin puts on guard those who have not yet fallen, the reality of God’s forgiveness saves from despair those who have already fallen. On two counts David deserved to die – adultery and murder. But the punishment was graciously cancelled. David’s experience shows the blessing

of free forgiveness (Psalm 32:5). Whatever your sin, there is no greater encouragement to confession than to know that God is willing to receive it because He is gracious. The final proof of this is Jesus Himself. It does not matter for how long you have hidden it, or how many times you have done it. Humble yourself that the Lord may cleanse your evil conscience and set you free. Such an unspeakable blessing is yours right now in Christ.

(4) *The consequences of sin.* Even when as Christians our sin is forgiven, we are still liable to feel God's rod of chastisement. God forbid that we should be thinking all that needs to be done afterwards is to confess and everything will return to what it was before. This would be to turn God's grace into licence. What awful consequences David had to live with for the remainder of his life. You know some of the bitter fruits of immorality – AIDS, venereal diseases, unwanted children and abortion, the start of a life of immorality, marrying a careless man or even no husband. God may very well appoint some such things to remind you so as to be humble the rest of your life. Are you a young person reading this? Possibly you have many years ahead of you, but listen to David whose life experience is shouting at you this warning. Don't be controlled by your desires but by the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14).

(5) *Family discipline.* David only had anger against Amnon, no concrete action (13:21). He wrongly reconciled with him when there was no confession of wrong doing (13:37, 14:33). He did not ask Adonijah any question about his self-exaltation (1 Kings 1:6). How important is the consistent use of reproof and the rod to bring children under a sweet subjection to the will of God and to honour the parents (Proverbs 22:15, 29:15).

(6) *God's true Messiah.* There is something deeper here.

- David, as great as he was, could not be the Messiah, for he had sin of his own. He points forward to One who would come who, although tempted in every point as we are, yet is without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He alone is fit to be our Saviour (Hebrews 7:26-28).
- Israel rejected the Lord's choice of David as their king. The people rather chose Absalom the proud, instead of the humble David. People have always rejected God's deliverer, even as the Jews rejected Christ (Matthew 22:33ff., Luke 13:34, Acts 7:51-53). Did they think David was too humble, too dependent upon the Lord? So they despised Jesus. Yes, it is too humbling to be identified with Him, One who was crucified as a criminal. You must be crucified with Him (Galatians 2:20), as the only way your sins can be dealt with.

A LOT TO LEARN FROM LOT

Eric Abwao

Eric Abwao is a pastor with Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi. This article is the substance of an address given at church Family Workshop in June 2021.

Christians know and even expect that unbelievers will often vilify God's saints. What catches the believer flat-footed is the sad reality that sometimes Christians are vilified by other saints. The mistreatment by fellow Christians can at times be as terrible as that by non-believers. May God forgive us for the evil of participating in such wickedness against His chosen and may He teach us and strengthen us to have the grace to bridle our actions and especially our tongues. One of the men who has been maligned by those who ought to have highly esteemed him is Abraham's nephew Lot. This man has been repudiated by many theologians, commentators and preachers throughout history. He has been denounced in many writings as vile and reprobate. To my shame, I have also been guilty of misrepresenting him. With all his weaknesses and sins, the Bible's commentary through the Apostle Peter on account of our brother Lot reads this way:

and if he rescued **righteous Lot**, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment... (2 Peter 2:7-9)

Here the Holy Spirit identifies Lot as a truly righteous man. He sadly lived among wicked men. His righteous soul was tormented over the lawless deeds that he saw and heard.

You may be familiar with the story of Abraham and Lot. In Genesis 13:10-13 they parted company when strife arose between their herdsmen. They did not part company in bitterness, but as friends and brothers. The reason why they parted company was that the strife between their herdsmen might cease. Abraham, being a man of magnanimous character, offered Lot the choice of the land.

Some fourteen years or more later, when the kings of the plain were taken captive, along with the inhabitants and possessions of Sodom, Lot and his family were taken into captivity, but not for long. Abraham took three hundred men and delivered Lot, the kings, and the people of Sodom from the hands of their enemies.

Lot and his family continued to dwell in Sodom until God sent his angels to destroy the wicked cities of the plain along with all their inhabitants, except for “just Lot” and two of his daughters. They were delivered from the cities of destruction by the direct intervention of God.

After being delivered from the cities and from the impending judgment of God upon them, Lot was twice enticed by his daughters into a drunken stupor and into incest. As a result, he sired the wicked, cursed nations of Moab and Ammon.

Lots to learn from Lot

1. Lot was a righteous man.

This is not something we have to guess or surmise for ourselves because the Bible plainly calls him ‘righteous Lot’ and describes him as having a ‘righteous soul’. Obviously he was not naturally righteous. Like all who know this privilege, he was made righteous by the grace of God. Those who are righteous are declared so because they have been clothed in Christ’s righteousness. Then they begin to walk in the way of the Lord as a truly righteous person. How did Lot show himself to be righteous?

2. Lot lived in an evil world.

Lot was a righteous man who lived in the terribly evil society of the Sodomites. He lived, worked and raised his family among a people whose lives were beyond wicked and abominable. Their lives were filthy! We are told that Lot “...was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard...” (2 Peter 7:8). As a child of God, being taught of God by “the grace of God that brings salvation” (Titus 2:11,12), Lot lived soberly, righteously, and godly in Sodom and among the Sodomites.

God’s saints are by no means perfect in this world. Not one of them makes any pretence to sinlessness. Believers know the evil of their own hearts and lives. But in the tenor of their lives, all believers live in righteousness. Grace makes men gracious so that as they live by faith in Christ, they no longer live according to the lusts of the flesh. In the habit of their lives they live as godly men and women in a crooked and perverse generation.

Lot lived among filthy men who openly practiced and promoted the filth of homosexuality and the various perversities it spawns. He is truly a righteous man who lives alone in righteousness among unrighteous men. The filthy men and women of Sodom did not corrupt this righteous man. He persevered in the way of faith and righteousness.

3. Lot endured great troubles.

Lot was a righteous man who endured great troubles and sorrows all the days of his life. Faith in Christ and righteousness living in a godless world do not exempt believers from trouble and sorrow. "In the world you shall have tribulation" (John 16:33).

Frequently, our trials, troubles, tribulations, and sorrows as believers come as a direct result of our own sinful behaviour. God will at times chasten His children by giving them what they think they want and then make them to experience and live with the consequences of their disobedience.

Certainly, that was the case with Lot. Once he moved to Sodom, he could not extricate himself from the place, though he grew to despise it. We are not told why he would not or could not leave but there was something holding him in that abominable place which he could not leave until God destroyed it.

Be warned! Everything we do, every choice we make, be it good or bad, has its consequences upon us and upon those we influence. Lot made a bad choice early in his adult years for which he suffered until he died. It was a choice that resulted in the destruction of his wife, his sons-in-law, and his daughters. The choice to go to Sodom. You cannot take fire to your bosom and not get burned.

4. Lot was a preserver of others.

Lot was a righteous man for whose sake a wicked people were temporarily preserved from destruction and given space for repentance.

When the kings of the plain and the Sodomites were carried away into captivity, they were delivered from their captors because Lot was among the captives. The angels of judgment were not allowed to pour out the fire and brimstone of God's wrath upon that reprobate society until Lot had been delivered from the city. If only they had known who Lot was and what mercies they enjoyed because of him, they should have thanked him every day they lived for living among them. As long as Lot was there, they were spared. As long as Lot was there, they had space for repentance. As long as Lot was there they were out of hell!

Even so, today, God spares the world and holds back his utter wrath from the ungodly for the sake of his elect. "The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

God's longsuffering is not an indication that he will not judge the wicked, though many foolishly imagine that this is the case. God tolerates the ungodly and spares them for a season only because of his determined mercy upon his elect. And so God instructs us to, "...count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him" (2 Peter 3:15).

5. Lot's life was governed by God.

Lot was a righteous man whose life was absolutely ruled by his God for his everlasting spiritual good, for the good of all God's elect, and for the glory of God in the accomplishment of his sovereign, eternal purpose of grace in Christ.

In Lot we see this marvellous display of God's sovereign providence, by which he rules the world and overrules even the evil actions of men. God overrules even the sins of His own people for their spiritual, eternal good and the glory of his name.

Lot was sadly involved in a drunken, incestuous act with his firstborn daughter and this was the beginning of that cursed race of people called Moabites (Genesis 19:37-38). Have you ever noticed that though they were a cursed people, the Moabites were under special, divine protection when Israel was commanded to destroy other pagan nations?

So we went on, away from our brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road from Elath and Ezion-geber. "And we turned and went in the direction of the wilderness of Moab. And the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab or contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the people of Lot for a possession' (Deuteronomy 2:8-9).

Considering the origin of that nation, the wickedness of it, and the destiny of it, why do you suppose God protected it? In Matthew 1 we see the reason.

Matthew 1:1 "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Matthew 1:5-6 "and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king."

Matthew 1:16 "and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ."

The thing which is the most abhorrent of all Lot's abhorrent deeds was overruled by our God to accomplish his salvation and ours! In fact, had Lot not gone to Sodom, he would not have been brought to such a low position and Moab would never have existed, Ruth would never have been born. Ruth was one of the great grandmothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ we would never have been redeemed, and God's purpose of grace would have been destroyed. But such suppositions are totally absurd because our God rules! As we read Romans 8:28, we should understand more in light of what God did through the life of Lot.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified (Romans 8:28-30).

Blessed be the name of God! Nothing comes to pass but that which He has purposed and brings to pass for our good and his glory! Oh, for grace to trust him!

6. Lot tormented his righteous soul

Lot was a godly man who was "tormenting" his righteous soul from day to day with the ungodly deeds of the people among whom he lived (2 Peter 2:8).

The exact word here translated "tormenting" or in another Bible translation, "vexed", is only used one other time in the entire Bible. In Acts 7:24 it is translated "oppressed." This is one of those words that has many shades of meaning. In order to get some idea of what the Holy Spirit is here telling us about Lot's attitude toward the ungodly of his day, we must understand the meaning of this word tormenting. Other words that can be used in place of tormenting are oppressed, tormented, distressed, sickened, miserable, pained, exhausted, or worn down with toil.

These words pretty well describes the experience of a Christian in our generation. What is your experience as a Christian who is on a pilgrimage through this world? Are you a tormented soul in this reprobate age? I am fairly certain that those things which tormented Lot in Sodom are the very things that torment the Christian in our time.

- Lot was tormented by the idolatrous religions of Sodom. He knew what Paul later wrote in Romans chapter one, that the root cause of the filthy, unnatural, beastly behaviour we call homosexuality is idolatrous, man-centred religion.

- Lot was tormented by the utter immorality of the society in which he lived. He was weary, worn-out, pained, sick, and exhausted with the evil around him. Seeing them and hearing them constantly, everywhere he went, everywhere he turned, simply ate away at his soul! I think I know exactly what he felt.
- Lot was tormented by the reality of the impending wrath of God upon unbelievers. In His humanity, our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ had compassion upon the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. As a man, he looked upon that rich young ruler as he walked away to hell, and loved him. Like his Redeemer, Lot was tormented by the wrath of God that would soon fall upon the inhabitants of Sodom.
- Lot was tormented by the indifference of those who heard the message of the gospel. We have no idea how many people heard the call to repent and believe in God for His saving mercies in Sodom. It is reasonable to suspect that Lot's wife, daughters, sons-in-law and probably some of his neighbours heard the call to repent and believe in God. None, not even one person in Sodom was aroused by the message of God's gracious call to repentance. They were all indifferent! Lot seemed as one who mocked, as one who made a big deal about nothing!
- Lot was tormented by the sin, callousness, and indifference of his own heart. Nothing so pains the believer as much as they pains himself. Nothing so distresses the Christian as much as the distress he brings upon himself. Nothing torments me like me!

Romans 7:18 "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out."

Romans 7:24 "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

7. Lot was a delivered man

Lot was a righteous man delivered from sin, sorrow and the wrath of God by the grace of God. The Lord brought him out of Sodom and at last brought him up to glory. We can learn from Lot that our God is able to save His chosen ones to the uttermost. Blessed be His name, soon, we too will be delivered!

KILLING REMAINING SIN IN OUR LIVES

Geoffrey Thomas

Geoffrey Thomas was pastor with Alfred Place Baptist Church in Aberystwyth, U.K. for 50 years until 2015. He now resides in London and continues to minister the gospel. He has visited Kenya on many occasions to teach and preach.

There is the story that is told of Spurgeon's grandfather, whose heart was broken in his ministry, by the life and bearing of one particular professing Christian who had backslidden and had begun to frequent pubs. Spurgeon the child was grieved at what this man had been doing to his grandfather and so he went out looking for him and he found him sitting outside a pub with a glass of beer. Young Spurgeon walked up to him and put this question to the man as he sat at his drink, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" What are you, a Christian, what are you doing in this particular situation? What are you, a new man, doing here? What are you, a regenerate man, doing here? What are you, a man in union with Christ, doing in this particular condition? Do not give in to your flesh. Put to death your sinful nature. The Lord Christ spoke very vividly of this, of gouging out your right eye, and amputating your hand or foot (Matthew 5:29-30).

Jesus is making mortification something very close and vivid. Now, of course, it's figurative language. Why does Jesus use such terms as cutting off a limb? He wants to impress the duty of mortification upon our memories. He wants to wake us up, to make us think. He wants to make it unforgettable. Once you've heard these words, they stick, this cutting our hand off, cutting our foot off, plucking our eye out and throwing it away. He means none of it literally, of course, but he uses this kind of figure in order to startle us and stop us short. It is wonderful pedagogy; this is something we'll remember in days to come in very different circumstances, because we're not going to have a preacher preaching to us when we are alone in a room with a member of the opposite sex. Then we will need the words of Jesus to come home to us, and so he makes them unforgettable. You understand what he is saying? If you don't have an eye then you are unable to see the pornography. If you don't have a hand you can't drape your arms around a woman's waist. If you don't have feet you can't walk to the harlot's house. "Make it impossible for yourself to break the seventh commandment," Jesus is saying.

What Jesus is talking about in this passage is our response to what he has done in coming and living in our lives. This is what we Christians have to be doing. There are those who think that they have to do it all by blood, sweat and tears – and they are wrong. There are those who think that the Spirit of God does it all

and you just let go and let God do it – and they are wrong too. The biblical picture always is that the human and the divine work together. We have to work out seriously the implications of our inward conflict because God is not simply a spectator; he is working in us even now. Paul exhorts the Romans, “By the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body” (Romans 8:13). You do it, but you do it by the energy that God the Holy Spirit supplies, and that’s what we have to keep in mind. So, the chief end of this radical amputation that Jesus is talking about in the Sermon on the Mount is that mortification makes sinning harder to do. Let’s apply it to Christian people with their problems.

i] Here’s a man who has habitually struggled with alcohol and he comes to put his faith in Jesus Christ. He finds in the Saviour forgiveness for all his drunkenness. You’ve become his new friend as a fellow believer, and you want to help him. You counsel him, “You have to avoid every contact with that old way of life. When you come to church don’t take the approach that passes by the pub you used to visit. Avoid that entire street; come another route. In the supermarket don’t go down the aisle with all the bottles of liquor. Imagine that you no longer have a hand to reach out for a glass of spirits; you’ve cut it off. You no longer have an eye to see the bottles. You don’t have a nose to smell the stuff. You don’t have feet to walk there. Don’t even think of meeting with the old crowd.” You give him a verse: “I Corinthians 15:33 says ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ You have to break off bad associates because their influence will destroy all the things the gospel has been teaching you. Rather now you need to hang around with the people who are going to help you (or at least make it easier for you) to solve this problem of abusing alcohol and abusing your own body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Come to the Men’s Breakfast, and be in the Prayer Meeting each week and we’ll pray for you and you can tell God there in the presence of us all how hard it is, and we will weep with you when you fall. We will be your friends and we will do things together.” There is the amputation of the hand that holds the drink. That is one case of putting sin to death. Again . . .

ii] Here’s a Christian who’s been unfaithful to his wife. One of the first things you say to him is to urge him to delete from his mobile phone directory that telephone number or the numbers of the other women who’ve been in his life. If you keep them, it’s going to be another temptation for you to fall into that same kind of sin in the future. You are repentant of your sin and you really want to stop, but the problem is that in your mind you are constantly thinking of her. So you ask the man if he has a photo of her. “Give it to me.” “What are you going to do with it?” “Well, I’m going to take it, and I’m going to tear it into little pieces and throw them in the waste paper basket right here where it belongs.” You do it. You just amputated the picture. “How about letters? Do

you have any old letters of hers or text messages saved on your cell phone?” “Yes.” “I want you to delete those texts right now, and when you get home hand whatever packet you have of those letters from their hiding place to your wife, and she’s going to burn them. Right?” “I sure will; she’ll burn them.” “Now, I suppose you have a key?” “Yeah, I do have a key to her house.” “Let me have it.” “What do you want it for?” “I’ll show you in just a moment.” As he gives you the key, you pull open a drawer in your desk, take out an envelope, put the key in the envelope, lick it and seal it, and say, “Now, write her name and address on it.” He does that, and now give it to your wife to mail. “Did you have dalliances in the car?” “Yes,” he says. “Regularly?” He nods. “Then you might have to sell the car and get another.” And off you go down the line, amputating the picture, the letters, the key, the car, whatever there is that’s remaining of the sin.

The principle of mortifying remaining sin applies across the board. In killing remaining sin it is the Christian who has to act definitively: no half-hearted, halfway measures will do. These examples that Christ gave are examples of irremediable action. They burn that bridge. The foot is cut off, the hand is gone, the eye is ripped out. Even today, we have a hard time replacing those limbs adequately with something mechanical.

You will even notice that it’s not just the hand, the eye, and the foot that Jesus speaks of. It’s the right hand, the right eye, the right foot. For most people, that’s the most important one. If you’re left-handed, then it would be fine for you to think in terms of radically amputating your left hand and the like. What Jesus is saying is that it is the hand that you type with that may have to go — or the foot that you use to kick a ball. It may mean that you will have to get rid of some of the things that are most important to you, like playing football for the local team. It is perfectly permissible for a Christian to play football but if it is drawing you into compromise with sinful actions then you have to stop it. And if it’s the right eye – maybe the one that you use to look through your favourite telescope, or the one you use to line up the thread in the sewing machine – you’ll have to learn a whole new way of sowing and knitting.

iii] Here is a man and his problem is internet pornography. More than 150 million people every year visit porn sites, and soon the figure will be hundreds of millions as the developing world hooks up to the Internet. The images they will look at are shockingly explicit. Never before in human history have so many middle class people discovered the sin that is active in their own hearts. I am saying that internet pornography is the quick road to addiction. There are patterns of behaviour in our living rooms that were unthinkable a decade ago. The environment has been meticulously engineered to alter our mood and

behaviour. Technology is producing sharper and smarter hits that create craving. This means of temptation entering our homes is new to most human beings, and it is intensifying all the time. In the past only monstrous tyrants could behave (in many ways) like that. These 150 million people are like alcoholics taking their first drink. They have no idea where they will end up, but many of them don't care!

We do care! We say to them what Paul said to the Philippian jailor, "Do yourself no harm." And then we tell all who'll hear us the gospel, and we pray for them to have a new heart, and to know the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, a new energy and strength to resist. We long for them to know the expulsive power of a new affection for Jesus, to love and serve him most of all, every day in every way. And then we teach the man watching internet pornography about mortification, killing remaining sin, that this is one of the key ways of deliverance, that it is indispensable for his eternal good. We meet with them together every week for counsel. We say quietly to him on Sundays, "Had a good week?" And they know what we are asking and they just nod, or they shrug. We tell them about a programme on the web called 'Covenant Eyes' which we urge them to join so that the heading of every website they visit in a week is sent to us, and they go to their laptops knowing that they are accountable to us, that we are going to see what they've been watching at the end of every week. It is a Christian programme called 'Covenant Eyes.'

What I am doing – do you see? – is taking the words of Jesus on mortification in the Sermon on the Mount and I am telling men to pluck out the right eye so that they can't see those ugly pictures. I am telling them to amputate their fingers so that they cannot type in the addresses of the porn. I am not talking of literally doing that, of course. I am talking about behaving so that that stuff is unattainable to you. You are weakening your desire for it. The choice I tell you is very stark; it is either addiction, or it is mortification by the Spirit.

For deliverance there has to be such single-minded commitment to putting to death remaining sin. Let me give you an illustration of this. This was the experience of an acquaintance of mine. Let him tell his own story:

A few years ago a pastor brought a troubled man to me for counselling. When I asked him about his problem, he replied, "I want to serve the Lord but I am having a terrible time." "What seems to be hindering you?" I asked. "Everything and everybody it seems," he said. "Let's get down to particulars," I insisted. This is his story.

"There is my wife. She thinks I am a fanatic and she says if I insist on living a Christian life, she is going to leave me. She wants to have some fun, and I don't

want to go back into that kind of life; but I don't want to lose my wife. Then there is my business partner. He is not a Christian and we are having a conflict over some unethical business deals he wants to pull. He says I am holding back the business with my stupid morals and if I don't shape up he is going to force me out. Then, last week I was in in a restaurant feeling sorry for myself and this young divorcee approached me. She liked me and made some obvious suggestions and approaches. I almost fell into what she was proposing. But, I don't want to live like that. I'm just in a terrible mess." "You surely are," I said, "but, maybe I can help you get some things settled. It seems to me you have about four options here. You can only take one of them so you may as well eliminate the other three. Let's find out which ones you can take and which ones you cannot and then see what we have left.

Here is your first option. You can walk out that door the same way you came in with nothing changed and nothing settled. Can you do that?" "I don't want to." "But can you?" "If I had not wanted help I would not have come here." "But can you leave without it? Are you willing to walk out of here the same way you came in? If you can do that, then go ahead and do it now. Let's not waste any more time. He looked at me, saw I meant it, thought about it a bit and then said, "No, I can't do that. I have got to have some help. I cannot live any longer the way I am. Something has to be settled."

"Then we can eliminate that option. It no longer exists. Something has to be settled before you leave here tonight. Now we have only three left. Here is your second option: Forget about being a Christian and forget about mortifying sin. Put the thought of it out of your mind and go ahead and do what you like. If your wife wants you to go out and get drunk and raise hell with her, go ahead. If your partner wants to pull some fast deals that can make you rich and won't get you in jail, go for it. Take advantage of anybody you can, make as much money as you can, do what you like and live it up. If you see that divorcee again, take her up on the proposition. Whatever you feel like doing, help yourself."

He stared at me incredulously wondering was I serious. "Can you do that?" I asked. He shook his head, "No, I can't do that. I can't live that way." "Are you sure?" "I'm sure." "Think about, it now, and settle it. If you can do that then you ought to go ahead because you will sooner or later. But if you can't, then settle it in your mind that you can't and forget about it. It's no use you ever thinking about it anymore. It is an utter impossibility." He replied, "I can't do that."

All right, that eliminates two options and two more are left, here is your third one. Go home. If you do not have one at home, stop off at a pawn shop and pick yourself up a pistol. Get out in the yard so that you won't make a mess in the

house for someone to clean up, take good aim so that you don't miss and put a bullet in your brain." He jerked his head back and stared at me. "I can't do that. I'd go to hell." "Probably so," I said, "but at least you wouldn't have to live in this hell till you get to the next one." "No, I can't do that."

"Then it looks like you have only one course left. Follow the Lord and declare war on your sins without surrender. If your wife leaves you, follow the Lord. If you lose your business and all your money, follow the Lord. If it costs you all your pleasures, put to death remaining sin. You really don't have any other option. You cannot do anything else. Live, die, swim or sink, you must follow the Lord and keep killing your sins." He thought awhile, then lifted his head and slowly as the truth began to dawn upon him, a relieved smile spread across his worried face. "That's right isn't it? It's really very simple. He is my only hope of life. There is nothing else to do." I prayed with him and went.

Nearly two years later I was back in the same city and this man came to the meeting. His wife was with him, clinging to his arm. They had been, it seemed, through the toughest time of their marriage. His faith had been tried in the fire. The devil had exhausted his resources in his attempt to shake him from the commitment he made that night. But when he had left that counselling session, he was a single-minded man with only one place to go. His eyes were steadfastly fixed upon God as his deliverer and sin as his enemy. That is mortification.

I am urging you today to face up to your lostness; to deal with the sin that so easily besets you and ask the Saviour to help you. Go to him. Today is a wake-up call. God has brought you to hear these words to save you from hell. Here is a Saviour whose name is Jesus. He can save you from hell, but he can also save you from making a mess of your life in this world. You must go to him. You must pray to him, and in your own words tell him how weak you are, that you are helpless to resist temptation, and that you need his love to help you, you need his presence in your life and his forgiveness for all the things you've done wrong. His grace is greater than all your many sins. "Come into my heart Lord Jesus. Come and clean it up. Give me strength to resist these temptations that are crippling me. Help me to live a righteous and useful life. Deliver me from the hypocrisy I feel right now, with so many people, even my family and* friends, never suspecting for a moment how badly I am living. Wash me. Strengthen me. Help me kill my sins. And come into the future with me. Let me learn to glorify and enjoy you now and for ever. Amen"

BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

Murungi Igweta

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4

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. Many Christians think that the way a church is led is not that important. Would you say that about the Government of your own country? Rather we should say that there is nothing more important than leadership. And the Lord Jesus Christ, as Head of the church, has not left us to work it out ourselves and establish whatever kind of leadership we think is best for us. The church is His, He knows what He wants His church to be like, and He knows how it can be achieved. Of course the will of Christ is best. May there be a reformation in Biblical Eldership in our churches.

Many churches do not practice authentic biblical eldership. But if we are interested in planting and building biblical churches then biblical leadership is crucial. It begins with the spiritual leaders in these churches. The pastors' character and ministry greatly impact what the church becomes. Therefore, we shall consider whether these men are biblically qualified, and then encourage them to offer a loving pastoral care, strong shared leadership, sound bible teaching and be a sacrificial example to the church.

The title, 'overseer', or 'bishop' in Titus 1:7 replaces 'elder' in verse 6 to show that it is a reference to the same office (read Acts 20:17-35 to see that they are used interchangeably in reference to the same office). He is entrusted by God with the church. Always bear in mind that the responsibility to be pastors of God's church is a privilege (not a right) of trusteeship.

Therefore, they need to be careful to watch over themselves and the flock. As a pastor, I should have such a character that befits God's stewards, knowing that I will give an account to Him. Elders will have to give an account for every soul. This is why you (church) should not make it difficult for us (being one of them) but rather help us to do it with joy and not with groaning because that will be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17).

Biblically Qualified

1) Elders must be blameless in their character (verses 7-8)

So as God's stewards, elders-overseers must be:

a) **Negatively:**

- *Not arrogant* – Stubborn, self-willed, so as to get one’s way. Unwilling to listen to others or take criticism.
- *Not quick-tempered* – Impatience with people and therefore anger and wrath is a great temptation to us all but particularly to pastors who deal with slow and obstinate people, who though by now ought to be teachers are still on the basics.
- *Not drunkards* – Not necessarily teetotallers but the moderate ones so that they do not lose control over themselves, lacking sobriety.
- *Not violent* – Pastors should avoid forceful disposition, rather it is by example (1 Peter 5:3)
- *Not greedy for gain* – seeking dishonest gain and love of money will always land one into trouble because “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is root of all kinds evils” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

b) **Positively:**

- *Hospitable* – Willing to welcome into his home brethren and visitors, entertaining and accommodating.
- *Lover of good* – He has to be a person who generously supports good causes for the good of the church in particular and the society in general for the glory of God.
- *Self-controlled* – Sober, reasonable and controlled in his judgments or governance of the church.
- Upright – He deals with people honestly in good conscience.
- Holy – His standing, attitude and conscience before God is good.
- *Disciplined* – He is to be self-controlled and honours the Lord in everything so that the Lord is glorified.

2) **Elders must be blameless in their family life (v.6)**

Charity begins at home and therefore, “The home is regarded as the training ground for Christian leaders”. Therefore, the one who is to be appointed to this noble office of eldership must have such home qualities that show his capability to exercise oversight in the church of Christ. This is to be manifested in his marriage life.

- **Above reproach in marriage.** He is to be “*the husband of one wife*”. That is literally ‘a one-woman-man’. If he is married it has to be in a monogamous relationship. He must be a man who is committed to one woman as his wife. This disqualifies any woman because no woman can be

a husband! This is not designed to exclude the unmarried from being elders, but it is to qualify those who are married.

- **Above reproach in parenting.** Their children are to be ‘believers’, which is explained in the context, *not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination* (Titus 1:6), having been brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. The man has to learn to teach his family the Word of God and correct them in the manner that the children come to faith. Obviously, it doesn’t say that they must save their children, it is for the Lord to save them, but it is for the man to use the right means to bring them to faith in Christ. They are *NOT to provoke their children to anger, but to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4). The children must be obedient, faithful, pious and not be in open rebellion and debauchery or unruly or wicked like Eli’s sons.

“Children so faithful and obedient,” says Mathew Henry, “and temperate, will be a good sign of faithfulness and diligence in the parent who has so educated and instructed them; and from his faithfulness in the less, there may be encouragement to commit the greater, the rule of government of the church of God.”

3) Elders must be blameless in their doctrine (v. 9)

Well taught and grounded in the knowledge of God’s Word.

The elders must be those with a firm and strong grip of the truth, which is described as the trustworthy word taught. This is the objective faith taught by the Lord and the Apostles as well as the prophets both in the Old and the New Testaments. This trustworthy word is the basic thing that the elders are expected by the Lord to hold firm and keeping on holding. They are to be people who well understand the word of truth for they will need it:

a) To be able to give instruction in sound doctrine

It is the responsibility of the elders to feed the flock with the right diet, that is, the word of God, which alone is able to make people wise for salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). The eldership is made up of men who are apt to teach others so that they may bring them up to maturity of faith so that they can be profitable to the Lord. The teaching ministry is very basic in the continuity and profitability of the church to its Master. The elders should seek to use the word of God to encourage and convince believers to godliness pointing them to Christ. In fact, the authority of pastors in preaching is only in faithfully teaching and applying the Word of God in the lives of those in the church. They need to present the whole counsel of God diligently explaining and expounding as heralds sent by God, with God’s authority, to declare His will and as evangelists to win sinners to faith by proclaiming to them the gospel.

b) To be able to rebuke those who contradict the truth

These men need to know how to expose error, uproot it where it had roots, to overthrow and destroy it where it had overcome some truth. It is the responsibility of the elders to make sure that the flock is not fed on falsehood. So they have to warn the church of both false teachings and the false teachers as Paul did in 1 Timothy 1:19-20. He exposed Hymaneus who was blasphemously teaching that the resurrection is already past (2 Timothy 2:17-18). This is protecting the church from being trapped into the snare of false teaching.

Loving Pastoral Care

What is his work? Peter, exhorts the elders (this is the most common term in Scripture referring to the pastors), to *shepherd the flock of God by exercising oversight* (1 Peter 5:2). They are to do this *not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have them*. They are not to do it *for shameful gain* or for money, *but eagerly*. They must not be *domineering over those in their charge, but being examples to the flock*.

Shepherding is the same as pastoring – it is the same word. We can discern the work of a shepherd from the rest of the Scripture. In Psalm 23 David, who was himself a shepherd, writes about the Lord as his Shepherd. He says that the shepherd makes sure that the sheep are not lacking anything (verse 1). This is the general statement, and it plays out in the following areas:

- a) He feeds the flock (verse 2)
- b) He leads them in righteousness (verse 3)
- c) He protects the flock from danger (verse 4)
- d) He keeps, cares or tends the flock (verses 5-6)

Ezekiel spoke against the elders of Israel because they had failed in caring for the flock of God that was among them (chapter 34). Many pastors should face this indictment for the way they have dealt with the flock of God. They devour, destroy and kill the flock. Shame on them! But we learn from this indictment what God expects the elders to do:

- a) Feed the sheep (verses 2,3)
- b) Strengthen the weak (verse 4)
- c) Heal the sick (verse 4)
- d) Bind up the injured (verse 4)
- e) Bring back the straying ones (verse 4)
- f) Seek the lost (verse 4)
- g) Rule with gentleness (verse 4)

The Lord called Himself the Good Shepherd in John 10:11. We can understand the work of a shepherd from His example. He said, “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*” The shepherd should be willing to *lay down his own life*, and suffer for the sake of his sheep, to protect them from wolves. This is what Christ did – He laid down His life even to the point of death. He died to purchase the flock with His own blood!

How many of the under-shepherds are willing to bear any discomfort for the blood-bought flock of God? Unless the pastor is willing to sacrifice his comforts, and sometimes personal cares and ambition to tend the flock, he will not be a faithful shepherd. How much is your pastor willing to give in terms of time to serve the church? Pastoral ministry is a 24/7 service. There may be no time to rest. Unless one is prepared to count the cost, and give his all, he cannot be a faithful disciple leave alone an effective pastor.

Strong Shared Leadership

The church of Christ in the New Testament is led by multiple pastors. Therefore, plurality of elders for each local church is a goal to be pursued. This way the believers can benefit from multiple gifts from these men and will not have to suffer under the deficiencies of one person. This way, the Lord has provided for the church a strong leadership so that those who are better in administration, or visitation or preaching and teaching all contribute towards the wellbeing of one church. The common model of one pastor is just not fitting but can only be accommodated or tolerated as efforts are made to search for additional men to serve the church.

Every time we hear of the spiritual leaders of the church in the New Testament, it is composed of many men. Paul called for the elders of the church in Ephesus in Acts 20:17. Paul urges the Thessalonian church to respect *those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you* (1 Thessalonian 5:12). Paul left Titus in Crete so that may put what remained into order and appoint **elders** in every town (Titus 1:5). The author of Hebrews exhorts his readers to *obey your leaders and submit to them.* (Hebrews 13:17). Peter exhorted elders among you (1 Peter 5:1).

Sound Bible Teaching

The shepherd must be deliberate in the care for the flock:

- a) Teaching and preaching.
- b) Praying for them.
- c) Visitation.

- d) Comforting the grieving and the bereaved.
- e) Private counselling.
- f) Providing forum for accountability and discipline.
- g) Recommending excommunication to unrepentant members.

Therefore, the teaching ministry is so vital in the life of a local church.

- a) **Discipleship** – *And what you have heard from me ... entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).*
- b) **Hermeneutics** – *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).* A pastor is expected to be careful and scientific (use proven interpretation principles) in his exegesis of passages of the Bible that he teaches. Knowledge of original languages is an added advantage, which must be sought. A serious pastor should own such Bible commentaries that have been tested over the years as faithful.
- c) **Homiletics** – *Preaching ministry. I charge you... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Timothy 4:1-2).*
- d) **Apologetics and polemics** – *Defending the faith. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil (2 Timothy 2:24, Titus 1:9).* A Pastor should be prepared to refute error, rebuking those who contradict sound teaching. It is the work of pastors to charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to fairy tales.
- e) **Evangelism** – *Making the gospel known. Do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5), by being faithful heralds of the gospel.*
- f) **Public reading of Scripture** (1 Timothy 4:13). *Devote yourself to the public reading of Scriptures.* Elders need to ensure that Scriptures are read at every church service so that God's will is known.

The church should do everything possible to relieve their pastors from material responsibilities such as mercy, property management, administration, etc. so that they can devote themselves to preaching and prayer (Acts 6:4).

Sacrificial Example

Paul set this example of shepherding in Ephesus. Speaking to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-38, he explained how his ministry was among them as the paradigm for theirs. He said:

1. He served the Lord with all humility and tears and with trials.
2. He did not withhold anything that was profitable to them but declared the whole counsel of God. A true pastor must be committed to preaching

through the whole Bible – Genesis to Revelation!

3. He taught them in public and from house to house.
4. He did not discriminate, but testified both to Jews and to Greeks.
5. He urged a response of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
6. He was not afraid of sufferings and persecutions such as imprisonments and other forms of affliction.
7. He did not account his life of any value or precious to himself.
8. He was interested in finishing his course and ministry that he received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.
9. He pleaded innocence of anyone's blood, and very clearly says that he coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.
10. He worked hard both in ministry and with his own hands (in tent-making) to cater for his own needs and those of his companions.

Any pastor who is committed to this level of faithfulness will fulfil his ministry. It is based on this pattern that Paul exhorts these pastors to do the following in their own ministry:

1. Pay careful attention to themselves and to all the flock.
2. As overseers appointed by the Holy Spirit, they are to care for the church of God.
3. To be alert and so protect the church from the wolves (false teachers/prophets) who were to come both from within and without.
4. To admonish people, even with tears.
5. To commend them to God and to His Word of grace which is able to build them up and to give them inheritance.
6. To work hard and so help the weak.

In Conclusion

Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus in the pastoral letters are instructive to us on the work of the pastor. Paul gave his own testimony of conversion (1 Timothy 1:12-17). The point is that every single pastor should be one who has been truly saved from his sins and has been made alive in Christ. Men who exercise oversight must themselves be godly in their conduct. They *must keep a close watch on themselves and their teaching* (1 Timothy 4:16). Private discipline to godliness and study (1 Timothy 4:7) is very needful.

This is the fifth of a series of articles on marriage matters.

It is reported that the divorce rate in Kenya is at 17.7 (2020). This means that out of 100 couples almost 18 end up in divorce. A study conducted by Daystar University last year showed most couples file for divorce before their 10th wedding anniversary. The study also showed 42% of the 1200 couples sampled had divorced by their fifth anniversary, while 77% had divorced by their tenth anniversary.⁷ If these statistics are true, then we need to do everything we can to model our marriages after the design given by God. To begin, we need to ask, what makes so many marriages fail? I believe it is to do with the couples involved failure to take their marital roles seriously. God's design for marriage does work, where those instructions are regarded. We shall consider the design of marriage and these gender roles.

1. *The Design of Marriage*

Marriage was ordained by God at creation. It was God Himself who brought the first woman to the first man because he was lonely. By God's own assessment of His creation, He said that it was *not good for man to be alone* and so He made Him *a helper fit for him* (Genesis 2:18). Genesis 2:24, see also Matthew 19:5-6, 1 Corinthians 7:2-5,10, states the divine design for marriage – a man (and woman) shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

1 Corinthians 7:2 provides the biblical definition of Christian marriage. Therefore,

- ❖ **Marriage is monogamous.** It is to be between one man and one woman. This discounts polygamy because it is not lawful for any man to have more than one wife, or for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time. Polygamy and polyandry are discounted by the statement, “... *each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband*” (emphasis mine).
- ❖ **Marriage is heterosexual.** It is between a man and a woman – “*each man... each woman...*” The Bible very categorically condemns any homosexual relations and the Lord is categorical that those who practice homosexuality have been given up by God to their debased minds to those

⁷ <https://nairobiwire.com/2020/12/divorce-rate-in-kenya-the-latest-statistics-2021.html>

unnatural appetites (Romans 1:26-28) and so they will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9).

- ❖ **Marriage is meant to curb sexual immorality of all forms.** Prostitution, incest, paedophilia, pornography, bestiality, etc. is sinful. Marital infidelity or sexual immorality of whatever nature is a devil's weapon to destroy marriages and families as an upfront to God's created order. *"Therefore, because of temptation to sexual immorality..."*
- ❖ **Marriage is for men and women not children.** The verse is clear that it is man and woman, not child, or kids, showing that these are mature of age. The rest of the scripture condemns marriage between relatives.
- ❖ **Marriage is a normal and natural, honourable, and holy state before God.** Marriage is the normal that is why it states "each man... each woman" for it is for everyone. Not marrying is the exception, not the rule. Only those who have the gift of celibacy are the ones who may not marry. God says in his word, *"Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous"* (Hebrews 13:4). Men and women should desire to marry in the Lord.
- ❖ **Marriage is Complementarian by Design:** This means that man is man, and he is to be manly and masculine; while woman is woman and she is to maintain her womanhood. Each person in a marriage (husband and wife) has definite roles to play as ordained by the Designer of marriage. The husband must realize that there are things that he simply can't do because of the way God created Him – he cannot give birth, nor nurse the baby (for he does not have breast milk). His specific role is to provide a loving leadership, spiritually, financially, and socially, and offer protection to His family.

2. Roles of Husband and Wife in Marriage

a) Husbands

1. *Husbands are called upon to love their wives.* The standard of their love is Christ's own love for the church. How did Christ love the church? *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* Ephesians 5:25-28.

This love must be a –

- i. *Realistic* love: The husband is to love his wife, despite her failures, mistakes, inadequacies, and sins. The husband must never say that his wife is unlovable for, the church is unlovable in multiple ways, but Christ loves the church nonetheless.
- ii. *Self-Sacrificial* love: As Christ gave Himself for you, true Biblical love gives. He left the glory of heaven, humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross in order that he would be the eternal sacrifice to redeem the church. Now this is love beyond degree that Christ loved his church, and this is what he expects of men who marry to offer their wives.
- iii. *Purposeful* love: Just as He gave Himself to make the church perfectly holy, so a man purposely get married to make his wife holy. Christ loved the church that he might sanctify her by the washing of water with the word, so men are to deliberately ensure that their wives would be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish before Christ. Gary Thomas in his book *Sacred Marriage* says that God intended for marriage to make us holy not happy! Husbands have a responsibility of presenting their wives holy to Christ as part of this church.
- iv. *Exclusive* love: Christ loved the church and only the church. So men are to love their own wives to the exclusion of any other woman. If these statistics are true, then we need to do everything we can to model our marriages after the design given by God. To begin, we need to ask, In fact, a man is to love his wife as himself – to nourish and cherish her as Christ does the church (Ephesians 5:29).

About love we read from God’s Word that: *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8.

It is upon this love that a lifelong friendship is built. Friendship based on this kind of love comes with a life-commitment to the covenant of marriage. Friendship in marriage is something to be deliberately established and perpetuated, and the husband needs to be at the forefront of building and developing it.

2. Husbands are called upon to be heads of their wives. The Bible says that head of a wife is her husband (1 Corinthians 11:3). How are husbands to be heads of their wives? By leading them lovingly. The word translated ‘head’ can also be translated chief, cornerstone, superior, principal, one to whom others

are subordinate. Whereas husbands are not masters of their wives, yet the buck stops with them in decision making. The manner of exercising this headship is love. That is leading her patiently, kindly, without arrogance or rudeness. Without insisting on his own way, without being boastful or envious, without being irritable or recently. Not rejoicing in her wrong or failures but rejoicing with the truth. It is bearing all things with his wife, believing all things, hoping all things and enduring all things! (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8).

Male headship should be demonstrated in four ways:

- i. *Prophet*: The Christian husband has a responsibility of bringing the Word of God to bear in the life of his wife and family, so that he reveals the will of God. He is to lead in the family devotions daily, so that the voice of God, who brought them together, is heard daily. As the husband loves the wife as Christ loves the church, he is to emulate the example of Christ who was raised by God as the prophet in the manner of Moses. This offers spiritual oversight by which the family is trained to be more godly and Christ-centred. This is one of the means by which children are brought to Christ.
- ii. *Priest*: The husband has to be willing to sacrificially serve his family, not just in working hard to provide, but also in praying for his family both in their presence and in his closet. He should set an example of prayer for his family so that they may know that they fully depend on Christ. He is also to show his priestly leadership in rendering service to the Lord by his involvement in the life of the church.
- iii. *King*: The husband's leadership is especially seen in how he rules, manages and exercises oversight in the affairs of his family. He is to protect and defend his wife and children from all external aggression. He is to restrain evil and sin in his family by leading in the exercise of discipline of his children.
- iv. *Friend*: If the home is going to be a haven of peace and tranquillity, then the husband and father has a leadership role to foster a peaceful environment. He must guard against loneliness and bitterness and ensure that there is mutual trust so that joy is enhanced daily. This way everyone would desire to be home and enjoy the time together, rather than sinking to gadgets such as TVs, computers, and smartphones.

3. Husbands must provide for their wives and families. Husbands must provide for their families both spiritually, emotionally, socially, and materially. Husbands must be hard workers ensuring that their families are not in any need. Part of being a husband and a father is working to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, health, and any other need of their family. The husband

should be deliberate in providing the emotional support, guidance and strength for the wife and children. He and his wife should build friendships not just with relatives but with other believers in the church and neighbours and acquaintances, who would be useful to the family at any time. *Friends love at all times, but a brother is born for adversity* (Proverbs 17:17). When there are conflicts with the neighbours, the husband must be at the forefront of seeking reconciliation.

b) Wives

1. There is absolute submission on the wife's part. For to the wife the Word of God says, "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord... As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands*" (Ephesians 5:22). Moreover, they are to be *submissive to their own husbands* (Titus 2:5).

- The nature of submission is to *trust him, gratefully and joyfully to receive his leadership* as the husband is the head of the wife. It involves not only deferring to him but respecting and promoting this leadership always.
- The extent of this submission is *in everything*, covering every area of life – spiritual, social, ambition, manner of talking, financial as one who is before the presence of God, our Eternal Father who gave us this instruction. Submitting is taking his leadership even where the wife disagrees with him.
- The manner of this submission is *obedience*. Sarah obeyed Abraham (1 Peter 3:6). The wife needs to listen and follow the instructions of her husband. She is his chief adviser and confidant, but where the husband insists on his own way the wife need to entrust herself to the Lord God who gave this man to her and let the Lord vindicate. Obviously, the obedience is "***in the Lord***". You only obey when it does not contradict the instructions of God. If the husband requires the wife to sin, then she has to obey God rather than man.
- The goal of this submissive love is *God's glory*, so that those who look on this marriage see something of that loving and trustful submission that the church gives to her sovereign, the Lord Jesus Christ.

About submission we read from God's Word:

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewellery, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed

Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening (1 Peter 3:1-6).

2. Wives are to respect their husbands. Sarah respected her husband and even called Abraham ‘*Lord.*’ This is the way in which wives are likely to win over their husbands, even *without a word by the conduct* (1 Peter 3:1). This is the conduct that is very precious to God – *respectful and pure conduct* (1 Peter 3:2). Therefore, wives, aim at establishing such conduct that can be described as *a gentle and quiet spirit*. This kind of character is described as *imperishable beauty* and it is very precious in God’s sight. Therefore, wives are to be reverent in behaviour (Titus 2:3).

3. Wives are also to love their husbands and children (Titus 2:4-5). How are they to show this love? By being self-controlled, pure, kind, working at home. Self-control is necessary because wives are more emotionally wired than men. Moreover, chastity and purity of heart, mind and heart is a necessary ingredient so that she is content with her own husband as the primary source of attention, affection and approval. She is to be kind to her husband, ensuring that he is well fed, cooking for him. Ensuring that he and the children well kempt in terms of his cleanliness in the house, clothing, etc. House management is primarily the wife’s domain as she seeks to be ‘helper suitable for man’.

4. She has a role of bearing children and showing kindness in nurturing them. While children are a heritage of the LORD, they are also the fruit of the womb as a reward (Psalm 127:3). We depend on the Lord to give children. It is for the wife to conceive (as the God-appointed means to this end), and give birth and look after the babies, while the husband takes care of other responsibilities. She is to be a fruitful vine within the house (Psalm 128:3). So she is to tend these children like the olive shoots round the table.

Conclusion

Marriage is a creation ordinance – it is for everyone – Christians and non-Christians alike. Even unbelievers do marry and God does bless them with children and many other things in marriage. But the bottom line of Christian marriage is that it is not possible for a non-believer to be in a Christian marriage. Unless you are in Christ, you cannot possibly enjoy fully His blessings. Before committing to living with another sinner, why not commit to Christ, the only Saviour of sinners, and builder of families? He has said in His Word, “*Unless the Lord builds the house(hold), those who build it labour in vain*” (Psalm 127:1). Turn to the Lord and you will find eternal hope for your soul and wonderful blessings for your family.

SUBSCRIPTION

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

Subscription to Grace & Truth is free but if you are able to help towards the costs then please send Kshs.100 a copy or Kshs.200 for the year through the provided address below. You are also welcome to give donations as well on M-Pesa Paybill No. 727440.

We pray that the Lord will greatly profit you through this magazine.

Please pray that the Lord will use this periodical for His glory.

We welcome your feedback on the magazine sent to you.

You may send your subscription and comments by e-mail to:

gntmag@gmail.com

or by mail to

P.O.Box 57907 00200 NAIROBI.

Chief Editor:
Keith Underhill

Editor:
John Muketha

Producer:
Murungi Igweta

Design
RefHub

Published by:
Trinity Baptist Church
P.O. Box 57907 00200 NAIROBI.
Cell Phone: 0728 431067

E-mail: trinityboffice@gmail.com

Website: www.trinity.or.ke

You may send your questions,
comments and compliments to:

THE EDITOR,
GRACE & TRUTH MAGAZINE
Using the address above.