



TLM Daily Devotions

August 2019





Blessed are the Merciful – Beautiful Eulogy featuring Art Azurdia

Capitalization is original to the author. You can also listen to the piece here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmDi20SXX5Y>

Are you merciful? Why?

Because Jesus healed the sick,
because Jesus fed the multitudes,
because Jesus gave legs to the crippled,
because Jesus granted sight to the blind,
because Jesus opened the ears of the deaf,
because Jesus found prostitutes and tax collectors and drew them into the sphere of His love.
Because Jesus touched the untouchable, and loved the unlovable,
and forgave the unforgivable,
and welcomed the undesirable.

Because Jesus even now saves the otherwise unsavable, why!?

Because they deserve it!?

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,
He saved us NOT because of works done in righteousness,
NOT because we met Him halfway,
NOT because we took the proper steps forward,
and in good faith have elevated ourselves to the place of the deserving poor,
but according to His MERCY!

We are here because Jesus Christ didn't say with cold indifference,
"Give them what they deserve, they brought it on themselves!"

Jesus Christ IS the Mercy of God!

And seeing us in our misery and need,
He doesn't just feel for us,
He takes the necessary action to relieve our distress.
He leaves the eternal glory of heaven and the perfect fellowship of the Trinity.
He condescends to us,
lives among us,
suffers like us,
dies for us!

Do you understand this!?

Have YOU experienced this!?

How then is it possible to EXPERIENCE it and not DISPLAY it!?

IT ISN'T POSSIBLE!!!

YOU HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED IT IF YOU DON'T DISPLAY IT!!

The evidence of God's mercy in your life isn't determined by how much theology you know, by how many books you read, but by your active goodness to people in misery and in need!

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (Matthew 5,7)



Fresh water!

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4, 13-14

In this longlasting heatwave what we have been experiencing almost all over Europe this summer we desire nothing more than fresh water... Water business is flourishing: they are selling water everywhere, on critical days even distributing it free. This fresh water is either cool, or sparkling, or still, or cheap, or expensive – all the same: should it refresh us! Water to drink, drink, to wash our face, our arms, to cool ourselves down in the street even by pouring fresh water upon us, protecting our neck with fresh watered towels, no problem! it gets dry in a minute!

This “fresh water-issue” has been permanently in my mind since starting The Bridge. Each month when opening mails with beautiful devotionals coming from all ends of the world I am amazed: endless source of fresh water bubbling, flowing, pouring, refreshing.... flood of Message which is never similar, never the same, never “old”, never repeated, but fresh anew and anew. A real miracle.

Often happens (also in this set!) that different TLMers write about the same Biblical text, having got inspiration separately, thousand of miles distanced from each other, maybe not knowing each other at all: but the fresh water is pouring, flooding infinitely, differently, watering souls, cleansing dirt, creating freshness and release.

This very water has longlasting effect. Not lasting just for few minutes, then thirst and suffering overcomes... Saving power and strength, sufficient not just to this life, but for that one as well to come.

Stimulated by the Holy Spirit, cleansed by the Word, by this fresh water, false thoughts get corrected, fears disappear, spiritual spots are washed off – yes, a miracle!

And you experience fullness. Satisfaction and peace. You have found what you had been longing for to reduce your thirst. Abundantly and forever.

Marta Risko – country leader of TLMHungary



Psalm 119

Taw

¹⁶⁹ May my cry come before you, LORD;
give me understanding according to your word.

¹⁷⁰ May my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.

¹⁷¹ May my lips overflow with praise,
for you teach me your decrees.

¹⁷² May my tongue sing of your word,
for all your commands are righteous.

¹⁷³ May your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.

¹⁷⁴ I long for your salvation, LORD,
and your law gives me delight.

¹⁷⁵ Let me live that I may praise you,
and may your laws sustain me.

¹⁷⁶ I have strayed like a lost sheep.

Seek your servant,
for I have not forgotten your commands.



Psalm 120

A song of ascents.

¹ I call on the LORD in my distress,
and he answers me.

² Save me, LORD,
from lying lips
and from deceitful tongues.

³ What will he do to you,
and what more besides,
you deceitful tongue?

⁴ He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows,
with burning coals of the broom bush.

⁵ Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek,
that I live among the tents of Kedar!

⁶ Too long have I lived
among those who hate peace.

⁷ I am for peace;
but when I speak, they are for war.



**"Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD,
"and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"**

Jeremiah 23:29

The recent winter rains have led to a spurt of growth in my garden. A small shrub, growing the cleft of a boulder, suddenly doubled in size and a few days ago, I noticed that it had split the boulder in half. Several other boulders in my garden have been split by shrubs and trees, but this is the first time I've seen it happen almost in real time. It virtually defies belief that such a small plant, with almost no nutrients, has managed to crack one tonne of rock like an Easter egg. I've noticed several other succulents nestled in the eroded surfaces of the rocks and boulders in the garden – I've tugged at a few of them and have been amazed at the tenacity of their grip. I'm going to let them be. Although the boulders are perched on the hillside above my house, I don't think there's any risk of the rolling down onto the house. [A boulder from a neighbouring house rolled down the hill some time ago, but it missed everything and crashed harmlessly into the road below us].

I'm not sure when the shrub's first precarious hold on life began – maybe ten years ago – and since then, it has endured the ferocious heat and wind of summer, months without a hint of moisture and the "polyphagous shot hole borer," an insect that is destroying many of our trees in the Cape.

I got to thinking about people in the Bible who endured for years before their purpose became evident. I suppose that near the tip of most lists would be Abraham: *'When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."' Genesis 17:1-27*

At the time of life when surely almost everyone would say "This is it – I'm done", God says, "This is it, I'm making a fresh start!" And what a new beginning it turned out to be for "the father of a multitude of nations." The reason that you and I are talking to each other today is because we share a common lineage through Abraham. Day by day, his family – our family - continues to grow. Frequently, when I meet people for the first time and they hear about my link with the Leprosy Mission they'll say, "Oh ***** from the Leprosy Mission lead me to the Lord / inspired me to devote my life to missions / set me in a new direction." These predecessors of mine have long since passed on to Glory, but their fruit remains. The Word they planted in the hearts of Sunday Schoolers is still splitting rocks. One thing that stands out about my forerunners is that they were tenacious – they preached the Word in and out of season, year in and year out.

I encourage you to be tenacious today. Maybe you feel that things haven't quite taken off for you. Possibly it feels as it must have done at times for my shrub during the drought – "the rain will never come." Fear not. Press on. He will send the rain. You will grow. You will produce fruit. Your roots will expand. The rock will be split.

Peter Laubscher - Country Leader, Southern Africa. Peter and Elizabeth Laubscher have worked with the Leprosy Mission since 1981. They are blessed with three children. Peter cruises the waters of False Bay when he's not trying to polish scratches out of telescope mirrors.



This is my story: The Lord's hand in my life

I was born in a city east of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the late 1970s, in a family was Christian but not practicing. But I have seen the hand of God throughout my life through my surroundings.

I began to attend church, to listen to the word of God from a young age, thanks to a neighbouring family. This family used to go to church with all their children and they did not hesitate to bring us with them.

I followed the instructions to receive the sacraments through an aunt. This aunt lived in another neighbourhood but she enrolled me in the group of children to follow the instructions for the sacrament of baptism. The instructions were given twice a week, on a Tuesday and a Thursday, for more or less 1h30. I remember it was the time when television appeared in our community. This time of baptismal instruction was the time when the local chain was making the TV movie that all the children of the city were waiting for. So it was already a great exercise of renunciation. And so, for 4 years, except during holidays, we learned to do without this entertainment.

In high school, I studied at a Catholic boarding school where we had Mass every morning. And so for 6 years, we were able to be fed to the point that after a few years we had memorized several texts of the liturgy. But we also had the opportunity to attend the spiritual deepening groups that gave us the opportunity to have some perspective in the approach of some reality of the world.

Here again, I must note that the hand of God has manifested itself in my life because it is an associate of my father who enrolled me in this school and as my father travelled every weekend it is his friend who for 6 years accompanied me and at every parents' meeting he was present.

I knew TLM thanks to a friend of the University.

Today, I have been working with TLM for over 14 years. It is an exceptional grace to work in a Christian organization.

We are Christians, we work in The Leprosy Mission, we need to consider that as a privilege because many would like to be in our place and are not there. Many Christians today are exposed in their professional life but we have the advantage of working where we remember God and where Christ is at the Centre.

Consider this with greater value and keep this unique treasure that the Lord put at our disposal by living in consistency and providing the proper care to all those affected by leprosy in the name of Christ Jesus.

While working, our lives are Christ centred and guided by the values of compassion, humility and integrity.

Thus, chosen by God Himself, we are called to bear fruits and fruits that remain.



The new commandment

When we read following verses of the New Testament then we came of know about the two New Commandments of Jesus Christ. *Matthew 22 (37-38), Mark 12(30-31), Luke10 (27), John13 (34)*... these are again repeated by Jesus in the Gospels.

This final teaching of Christ is called New Commandments because there were similar type of teachings in Old Testament about loving the Lord in the Ten Commandments and loving the neighbors in Leviticus,19(18). But for Christ's disciples, it was new, because it was marked for their brotherhood, created by Christ's greatest love for them. These are also called, The greatest Commandment in Matthew and Mark.

The first commandment on loving to the Lord... is accepted and agreeable to all. When Jesus quoted this sentence as the first command, every devout Jew would agree with this. - In the original context of 2nd command, Leviticus 19(18), on loving your neighbour as yourself it has to do with a man's fellow Jew. It would have not included the Gentiles, whom it was quite permissible to hate. Jesus did one thing with the 2nd command; He quoted it without qualification and without limiting the boundaries. He took this old law and filled it with a new meaning. The new thing that Jesus did was to put these two commandments together. No rabbi had ever done that before and no one until Jesus put the two commandments together and made them one. Religion to Jesus was to love God and to love men. Jesus would have said that the only way in which a man can prove that he loves God is by showing that he loves men.

With my experience of Christian life, I am sure others also have the same experience, I realize that I it much easier to follow and practice the first command, to love our Lord with... but it not easy with our strength alone to follow completely the second command of loving the neighbours as ourselves. This becomes more difficult as we correctly understand now the real meaning of neighbour. Jesus has explained very clearly about this in the story of the Good Samaritan. We have problems of relationship with the family members, relatives, friends, actual neighbours, church member, colleagues, and known persons and some time also unknown persons. Loving God whole heartedly is a personal relationship of two people. Our God is so loving, caring and forgiving, so one individual Christian does not find hard to go back to HIM again after involving in some wrong doing because we know that we can ask forgiveness from the Lord and He will surely forgive us. We can always bring our difficulties, problems and mistakes to the Lord easily because He knows us anyway. We also know that He will not break the relationship with our wrong doing as long as we have strong desire to stop all these and to make improvements.

Where as in the relation with others (Christian concept of neighbours as mentioned above) we are very careful about our outer image, what people think of us? We do not want to be real with them. We are not honest in our dealings and relationship with them. We think if we start loving all others, it will be too much for us. Sometimes we think, even in church that some Christians who live ordinary life are below of our standard and we do not like to keep any relationship with them. We think that it will cost us more of our time, energy and money, if we start loving all others (neighbours). One of the main reasons is that we do not want to come out from our comfort zones to love others. The command itself is of very high standard, we have to love all others (neighbours) and love them like we love ourselves.

But the challenge remains there always for us to obey the first command and also the second command of loving others as ourselves. We cannot give any excuses for not obeying this second command. This may be difficult but not impossible; therefore Christ has given this new command. The Good Samaritan sets a very high standard of love for us to love our neighbour. The Good Samaritan loved the injured and needy Jew who did not like him.

Can we do this? I feel strongly that we have to ask God to grant us special strength and talent to love others as we love ourselves. We may not be able to follow this command completely with our own strength.

We must pray to God seriously for this gift to love others as per command of Jesus.

Pradeep & Sarah Failbus - Worked for 39 years and 29 years with TLM(most at Anandaban,Nepal) Now retired and settled at: Kathgodam, District Nainital Uttarakhand, India



Gospel! – Part 1

When a missionary friend of mine was asked what his favourite Bible word was, he emphatically answered –“GOSPEL!”...(it includes ALL the other names/words)

Some powerful gospel verses we must never forget!:

A SIGNIFICANT REVELATION!

Matth.6:33 – “But seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness and all these things will be added to you.”

->Have you already had a divinely orchestrated ‘BORN AGAIN’ experience?

Rom.14:17,18 – “For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.”

A CLEAR-CUT CONFESSION!

Matth.16:16 – (Peter)“You are the Christ, the Son of the LIVING GOD.”

John 20:28 – (Thomas) “My LORD and my God!”

->Do you have such TOTAL CONVICTION OF WHO JESUS IS TO YOU?

A FIRST REALIZATION!

Mark 8:38 – “For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

->DON’T EVER BE ASHAMED OF YOUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOUR, here on earth...

Peter denied Jesus 3x before the cock crew...what a devastating experience it was
Thankfully, after Jesus’ resurrection, Peter was restored 3x by Jesus (cfJohn18+21)

A SECOND REALIZATION!

Mark 10:44 – “Whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”

->DON’T PUSH/VAUNT YOURSELF TO BE FIRST/FOREMOST!

Rom.12:3 – “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”

->Most NT letters begin with “a slave of Jesus Christ”!.....

A THIRD REALIZATION!

Luke 4:8 – “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.”

->WORSHIP, ESTEEM, LOVE AND SERVE JESUS!...not God and mammon!

Gal. 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. (cf. John 15)



Gospel! – Part 2

A FOURTH REALIZATION!

Luke 6:28 – “Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”

->In this fallen world, with its billions of people, we ‘stamp on each other’s toes!’

WE CONSTANTLY NEED TO FORGIVE EACH OTHER: Jesus in me says ‘bless’/‘pray’!

Matth.28:19,20 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

A FIFTH REALIZATION!

John 3:36 – “Whoever believes in the Son has Eternal Life.

Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see Life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

->HEAVEN/HELL ARE A REALITY!

Heb.9:27,28 – “And just as it is appointed for man to DIE ONCE, and after that COMES JUDGEMENT, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the SINS OF MANY, WILL APPEAR A SECOND TIME, not to deal with sin but to save those who are EAGERLY WAITING FOR HIM.”

->DO YOU/I HAVE THAT ‘BLESSED ASSURANCE’/‘MARANATHA’ GRACE?!

A SIXTH REALIZATION!

John 14:6 – (Jesus) “I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life – no one comes to the Father except through Me!”

->THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY OF ETERNAL SALVATION, FROM GOD, TO MANKIND

Matth.7:13,14 – “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and THOSE WHO FIND IT ARE FEW.”

->There are many philosophies/religions/etc.–BUT ONLY ONE TRUE FAITH-LIFE!

CONCLUSION: Acts 4:12,20 – “THERE IS SALVATION IN NO ONE ELSE, for there is NO OTHER NAME under Heaven given among men, by which we MUST BE SAVED.” (A GOSPEL OF NO COMPROMISE !)

“For we CANNOT but speak of what we have seen or heard.”

(A GOSPEL OF TOTAL COMMITMENT !)-Amen.



Psalm 121

A song of ascents.

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
- ² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
- ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.



Psalm 122

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹ I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”

² Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.

³ Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.

⁴ That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the LORD—
to praise the name of the LORD
according to the statute given to Israel.

⁵ There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.

⁷ May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”

⁸ For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”

⁹ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your prosperity.



My part – His part

The Leprosy Mission Worldwide: You exist because of the provision Our Heavenly Father sends your way.

My part & His part! Is there a part in my Christian walk that I have to do? I think yes. With this thought in my mind the following scripture came to mind: *Psalm 18:25-29 NIVUK* “*To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd. You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty. You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.*” I love the interaction that the psalmist uses swaying back and forward:

My part & His part! He uses these introductions: “*To the...*” and “*you show yourself...*” - it’s about *My part & His part!* The wonderful thing about His part is that it enhances whatever I do!

" To the faithful - One of the main attributes of God is that He is faithful. What does that mean to us? ALWAYS: He is, steadfast in His love and care for us; He is absolutely true to His Word and promises to us; He is always the same to us. There are many more but these are a taste of Our Heavenly Father’s faithfulness.

TLM’s: Be faithful, be loyal, be merciful in what ever you are doing, no matter how menial it seems to you, do it as if your life depends on it. When you are doing that Our Heavenly Father is watching you so that He can add His portion to it. He turns a task into a treasure.

" to the blameless

TLM’s: Let our lives be above reproach, don’t give anyone the right to point a finger at what you are doing or have done. It’s been said: Honesty is the best policy in life. Can I say, honesty is the **ONLY** policy to have in life. You are either honest or (can I dare say) dishonest!

TLM’s: Be bold and be blameless! Our Heavenly Father will enhance your actions, He will add to it.

" to the pure Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Matthew 5:8)

TLM’s: Let the purification work of Holy Spirit have it’s full effect in our lives. We represent the Kingdom of Heaven to people on earth. Be pure and perfect in His eyes!

" but to the devious - A warning; Do not try and cheat God, He knows our scheming plans. In life it’s His way or the highway!

TLM’s: This is just another call to be faithful, blameless and pure in God’s Kingdom

" You save the humble In the Kingdom of God there is absolutely no place for human pride and self exaltation. It’s all about what Jesus has done for us!

TLM’s: At the cross on our knees redirecting all praise, honour and glory to Our Heavenly Father is the only place to be. ...*Lord keep my lamp burning!* “*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you...*”
2 Timothy 1:6

TLM's: *LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.* Has there ever been a time when what we've been called to do seems hard, in a situation where there seems no answer, no way out? Cry out to our Lord: *LORD, keep my lamp burning;* my God turns my darkness into light.

TLM's: My part & His part! - 1. " *To the faithful* - 2. " *to the blameless* - 3. " *to the pure* - 4. " *but to the devious* - 5. " *You save the humble*

Lord keep my lamp burning!

Dan Izzett - Zimbabwe. Retired pastor. I was diagnosed with lepromatous leprosy in 1972. Served on TLMI board for eight years and on the Zimbabwe board for 15 years. I now serve on the ALM board and do advocacy for them.



Choose life, and take up your cross

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Matth 16:21-27

I guess we may have heard the saying that: God who made you without your cooperation will not save you without your cooperation. Life is a matter of choice. Every choice and every decision we take has a price as well as a prize. There is something to gain and something to lose. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells us that God has set before us life/good and death/evil, blessings and curses. If you choose to serve God and obey his commandments, *“You shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land.” (Deuteronomy 30:19)*. But if you ignore God and go against his commands; *“You shall perish, you shall not live long in the land...”* In other words, there is a good choice and a bad choice. We are free to choose but we are not free to avoid the consequences of our choices. I have come to realize that the best choices are usually those that appear more painful at the onset. Choices which demand a lot of sacrifice and pain from us initially end up becoming our saving grace in the end. This is exactly what Jesus wants to bear in mind when he says: *“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me for whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.” (Matthew 16: 21-25)*

Jesus is literally asking us to choose life, not earthly life but eternal life, the greater life that never ends and this great life demands death to worldliness, death to the worship of money and material things. Self-denial is saying “No” to your flesh. Another word for self-denial is self-discipline. It is taking control of your inner man. It is refusing to allow your flesh and its desires drive you into sin like a donkey running hard to get a carrot it sees not knowing the carrot is attached to its nose. No one ever became great without self-discipline.

In choosing life and taking up our cross, let others see God in us! When people see God at work in your life, they’ll be drawn to you.

It happened to a short-order cook named Nicholas Herman. Dissatisfied with his life, he worried constantly about whether or not he was even saved. Then one day as he studied a tree, he was struck by the truth in Psalm 1:3: that the secret to growing spiritually lies in being rooted and grounded in God. So he decided to make his life an experiment in what he termed ‘the habitual, silent, secret conversation of the soul with God’. Today he’s better known as Brother Lawrence, the name his friends gave him. Chances are, you’ve heard of him and his writings. Although he spent his life in obscurity working in a monastery kitchen, how he interacted with God caused people from around the world to long to know God like he did. His friends said he ‘found God everywhere...as much while repairing shoes as...praying with the community’. And after he died they compiled a book of his letters and conversations called “The Practice of the Presence of God”. It’s one of the most widely read books of the last four centuries.

The more you cultivate the presence of God in your life, the more others will be attracted to Him. So, let others see God in you! Jesus said, *‘If I am lifted up...will draw all peoples to Myself’ (John 12:32)*.

We could pray thus: *“Lord, may my life activities be ordered to show the light for everyone to behold, realizing the many blessings in obeying Your guidance. Jesus, I trust in You.”*

Moses Onoh, MD, is a former Country Leader of TLM Nigeria. He is currently with the World Health Organization (WHO) Nigeria Country Office; serving as National Professional Officer for Tuberculosis in the Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases Cluster, North West Nigeria.



Just a word!

Matt 8:5-13 The story in the Gospel is about a man and his amazing respect of the word of Jesus. Of course, he was a military officer, he knew a lot about authority. In the military structure authority is the crucial point. If someone senior to you gives a command, you have to obey. And if you order someone inferior to you to do something, he must do it! This officer understood the spiritual authority of Jesus and his position in the unseen world.

“Say just a word!” What a confidence in the word and power of Jesus!

And it's true!

The word of God has a huge power and an enormous authority and impact. Just a word from God has a divine power in itself.

1. *“And God said”Let there be light” and there was light” Genesis 1:3 The word of God created everything.*
2. *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” Hebr 11:3*
3. *“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” Hebr 1:3*
4. *“...who calls into being things that were not” Rom 4: 17*

Just a word! What is that word? The word is a name. And the name is Jesus!

1. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” Joh 1:1-2,14*
2. *“...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.” Hebr 1:1-2*
3. *“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Col 1:16-17*

There are so many wonderful examples in the Gospels when Jesus just said a word and the sick were healed, the demon-possessed were set free and even the wind and the waves had to obey his word. Peter said after Jesus told him to do something that was impossible in his own eyes: *“But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”*

Outside the tomb of Lazarus Jesus called the dead man back to life by his word.

The most powerful word of Jesus was pronounced on the cross. His final word on this earth was *tetelestai* (“It is finished”) and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. That very word changed everything when Jesus had fulfilled his task to create reconciliation with God and forgiveness for all sins. His last word had an eternal impact in heaven, on earth and in the invisible world.

Say just a word! That word is a name! And the name is JESUS!



Abraham's Dream

Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness *Genesis 15*

Abraham and Sarah were childless, but on more than one occasion they received God's promise that they would have a child and many descendants. In Genesis chapter 15 when the promise was made again, a very strange thing happened. God told Abraham to collect a heifer, a female goat, and a ram, all three years old, together with a turtle dove and a young pigeon. Abraham cut all these in two except for the birds, and lay the pieces opposite each other in two lines, with one bird in each line. Then as the sun was setting Abraham fell into a deep sleep and the Lord not only reiterated his promise that he would have descendants, but also gave him a prophecy about what would happen to them in the following years. When the sun had finally gone and it was dark 'a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces' and the Lord made a covenant promise to Abraham about the size of the land that his descendants would occupy.

I struggled to find a commentary that would explain what was going on here, until I found a Jewish commentary on line, entitled 'myjewishlearning.com'. This explained that the covenant between the pieces was an ancient Near Eastern method of 'cutting a deal' or making a covenant. The less powerful party was to walk between the cut pieces with the understanding that his or her fate would be that of the cut pieces were he or she to violate the terms of the covenant.

The Jewish commentary also referred me to a passage in Jeremiah 34 which talks about the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests and all the people of the land passing between the two cut parts of a calf in honour of a covenant they had made with God.

But interestingly in Abraham's vision, it is not Abraham who walks between the pieces; it is the flaming torch, the symbol of God's presence! God himself, who we would consider the more powerful party, is the one to show vulnerability in the covenant with Abraham as He takes the lesser role.

I was stunned by this beautiful picture of God's love and graciousness offered to one man as shown in these early Biblical writings. But, of course, it is the same vulnerability that God shows to each one of us through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. It is a good example of the Old Testament directing us to Jesus.



Something for nothing

“Freely you have received, freely give.” Matthew 10:8

Time to renew my motor insurance. Same time every year. Do I look for a new insurer, or stick with the old? Everyone seems to want my business. Adverts everywhere saying, “We’re cheaper than the others. Save money with us.”

I had this idea. If I went to an insurer who said he was cheaper and got a quote, I could mention that to the next insurer and get one cheaper still. Then on to the next and, if I worked at it, I’d get insurance cover for nothing. And, in my deepest fantasy, someone might even pay me for joining them.

The trouble is it doesn’t happen like that. Something for nothing never works out that way. Not just in motor insurance but in relationships too. Relationships cost. They cost in commitment; we can change our motor insurance every year but if we try that in our relationships we’re soon in trouble. They cost in effort too. In caring for the other person. It doesn’t come cheap but in our relationships the more we give the more we get in return, although that’s not why we do it. It’s all about that four-letter-word: love.

*Generous Lord, nothing comes for nothing, except your love.
Thank you.*

Extract from Chasing the Leaves first published 2003.

Eddie Askew (1927-2007) devoted half a century to leprosy and its consequences. In 1950 he and his wife Barbara set sail for India. Eddie's first placement was in Purulia, West Bengal. In 1965 Eddie took up the post of executive secretary at TLM's office in London. His first overseas visit in this new role was to Ethiopia, where he learned of plans to set up a leprosy training centre that would benefit patients and medics throughout Africa. He offered to become a founding member and signed TLM up to support what was to become ALERT (All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre). The following year, the organisation now known as the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) was set up. In 1974 Eddie became general director of TLM. He was keen to develop TLM's work elsewhere, and took a team into the closed land of Bhutan in response to a request from its government. - Inspired by his travels and his Christian faith, Eddie found an outlet for his creativity in painting and poetry. He retired in 1987. From 1998 until his death he was TLM- vice-president, and in 2000 he was awarded an OBE. (Fiona Spence)



Psalm 123

A song of ascents.

¹ I lift up my eyes to you,

to you who sit enthroned in heaven.

² As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress,

so our eyes look to the LORD our God,

till he shows us his mercy.

³ Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy on us,
for we have endured no end of contempt.

⁴ We have endured no end
of ridicule from the arrogant,
of contempt from the proud.



Psalm 124

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹ If the LORD had not been on our side—
let Israel say—
² if the LORD had not been on our side
when people attacked us,
³ they would have swallowed us alive
when their anger flared against us;
⁴ the flood would have engulfed us,
the torrent would have swept over us,
⁵ the raging waters
would have swept us away.
⁶ Praise be to the LORD,
who has not let us be torn by their teeth.
⁷ We have escaped like a bird
from the fowler's snare;
the snare has been broken,
and we have escaped.
⁸ Our help is in the name of the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.



Humility

1 Peter 5 verse 5

A man received a promotion to the position of Vice President of the company he worked for. The promotion went to his head, and for weeks on end he bragged to anyone and everyone that he was now a VP. His bragging came to an abrupt halt when his wife, so embarrassed by his behaviour, said, "Listen Bob, it's not that big a deal. These days everyone's a vice president. Why they even have a vice president of peas down at the supermarket!"

Somewhat deflated, Bob rang the local supermarket to find out if this was true. "Can I speak to the Vice President of peas please?" he asked, to which the reply came: "of fresh or frozen?"

Humility is not a popular human trait in the modern world. It's not touted in the talk shows or celebrated in valedictory speeches or listed with core values. And if you go to the massive self-help section of a book shop you won't find books on humility.

But, the Bible has a different perspective. The Apostle Peter says in his first epistle that we are to be "*clothed with humility*" (1 Peter 5v5).

What exactly do we mean by 'humility'? I believe we should be careful not to think of it as 'humiliation'. To 'humiliate' someone would be to shame them or belittle them—to rob them of their human dignity and make them less in everyone's eyes. To 'humiliate' would be something that we would do to someone else—and it's something that should *never* happen in the household of God.

But to practice 'humility' is different. It's something that we do to ourselves—to 'humble' ourselves in the sight of others. To 'humble' ourselves means that we cease trying to elevate ourselves above each other, and willingly accept the position of service toward one another.

I would suggest that the greatest picture of 'humility' is our Lord Jesus. During His last supper with His disciples, He—the King of kings and Lord of lords—willingly rose from the table, tied around Himself the apron of service, and washed the feet of His disciples. He—who would have been absolutely within His rights to expect to be served by His followers—willingly and generously accepted the lower position of a servant, and served His followers.

That's humility. It's what each of us in the household of faith are to be clothed with toward one another.

The world is watching us, and it's watching how we treat each other. When they see us as Christians, they need to see the kind of humility exhibited in us that was manifest in our Lord. That's one way that they will know that we are His.

Humility can only survive in the presence of God. When God goes, humility goes. In fact you might say that humility follows God like a shadow.

Gordon Brown - Scotland - 2008-2011 Vice Chair of TLM Scotland, 2011-2015 Honorary Treasurer of TLM International. Kindly sending his good wishes to the TLM family!



This Little Light of Mine

These are the opening words of a chorus I remember singing as a child. But read *Psalm 18, particularly verses 1-2 and 28-32*. Verse 28 reminds me of the words of another chorus “Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning”. However, in another translation, verses 28 and 29 read:

“You also will light my candle: The Lord my God will make my darkness light. For in you I will discomfort a host of men: and with the help of my God I will leap over the wall.”

Did you know you had a candle? Everyone has a candle, or a light to shine in the darkness – are you musical? Are you good with technology? Do you make friends easily? Do you have “green fingers”? Can you make a cup of tea? Can you wash the dishes? I am not talking about geniuses but ordinary people, you and me, the person next to you. We all have a candle and God, yes God is the one who lights our candle. Some people have more than one candle.

In the parable of the talents, recorded in Matthew 25:14-30, one man was given 5 talents, another 2 and yet another one – for talents read “lit candles”. No blame was attached to the man with only one talent but he got into serious trouble for not using it, or to put it another way, for letting his candle “go out”.

God has lit your candle, and mine. We are each accountable to God. God lit many candles in David’s life – he was a marksman, a musician, a poet, good at martial arts, worked well with sheep. He was not imprisoned by the humble nature of his birth but rather with God’s help he was able to “leap over the wall” – he did and he became King David.

Let us strive, each one of us, to keep our candle(s) alight.

Let us leap over the wall, each one of us, to help others (including those affected by Leprosy) to know that they have a candle, a candle that God wants to be a real flame, a light to those around them.

May God bless you and light your candle today that you may shine out to others. Don’t hide your light – Jesus said in Matthew 5 “neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men....that they may praise your Father in heaven.

“This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine”.



Refugees – waiting to be made welcome

The Bible is full of stories of people migrating: the patriarch taking his family to seek an unknown land wherein to worship their God, a community migrating to Egypt to escape famine, a couple going to Moab when their crops failed and then the young foreigner following her aged mother-in-law back to the latter's homeland, a forcefully-exiled community straggling back to their homeland after many decades and so on throughout the old Testament. The second chapter of the New Testament describes a young family fleeing the ruler's anger when he thought there might be another born to be king in Israel. People migrating is part of normal life on this earth, and I believe the Lord wants us to welcome strangers who come to live amongst us, especially if they are in need.

Refugee Tales is an organisation I support, which campaigns on behalf of people who are kept in indefinite detention in Immigration Removal Centres in the UK. Though not a Christian foundation, it obeys the Biblical mandate to *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly, defend the right of the poor and needy"* (Proverbs 31 v. 8). Refugee Tales publicises the stories of those who have asked for their tales to be told. Here is one of them (much abridged*):

"He was a student of epidemiology. Back in his country he used to meet with friends in his restaurant at nights so they could talk of Christianity and read the Bible. There were Christian signs in the restaurant. They knew they might be arrested for this. But faith is faith. At prayers one Friday the authorities denounced him by name. When the intelligence services came to his grandmother's flat looking for him, his uncle said "Flee, your life is in danger" so he fled, leaving everything. He drove from city to city... he wondered where he should go and an uncle said, "The UK is good". Days in darkness inside a lorry as it drove north. He called the police from the frozen dark inside the lorry. The police opened the doors and took him to a cell. And when he requested asylum, they took him to an Immigration Detention Centre. The situation in detention was very bad. There he tried to buy fruit and lentils for the children because he saw they were malnourished. "I want to be useful, he says, I don't want to spend my time in this hostel waiting, I want to take my part in this society" He is young. He is a student, an epidemiologist, a Christian a refugee. He wants to help people"

He is waiting in detention for someone he never met to decide on his asylum case. He is waiting to be welcomed into the UK. He is a lonely man.

As Christians don't we have a responsibility to seek and defend those who are at, or outside, the margins of our society, whether they be people who are mentally ill, people who are physically disabled, people who have leprosy, people who look different, or people who have arrived from abroad seeking asylum? Let us welcome into our lives, such people who have had to leave everything behind and flee for their lives. We read that *"The Lord watches over the alien..."* (Psalm 146 v 9). Let us also look out for the strangers amongst us.

**Taken from Refugee Tales vol 2, edited by David Herd and Anna Pincus. Published 2017 by Comma Press, UK). In the quotations I have changed the pronouns.*

C Ruth Butlin Dr - A British doctor, previously TLM overseas staff but now retired and living in Sussex, who has not lost her concern for the leprosy work, so gives voluntary service whenever or wherever she can. Recently this has often entailed short visits to Bangladesh for capacity development or to support national staff with their research work".



My grace is sufficient for you – Part 1

When Paul first preached the gospel in Corinth he had success (Acts 18), but subsequently the Corinthians began to question Paul's authority as an apostle. They wanted proof that Christ was speaking through Paul (2 Corinthians 13:3). The Corinthians were wrestling with a significant question: What does Christian power really look like? More specifically in relationship to Paul was the question of what apostolic power ought to look like. The question had already caused a divide over which apostle/ teacher Corinthian Christians thought was the most special — Paul, Apollos, Peter, or Jesus himself (1 Corinthians 1:10-17). This question was at the heart of the tension between Paul and the “super-apostles” who had come into town challenging Paul's authority and vying for power (2 Corinthians 11:5).

The problem confronting Paul was that he did not embody any of the marks of power the Corinthians valued. In many ways, he was the exact opposite of what they desired: He did not have an impressive physical presence, he lacked bravado and confidence, and he was meek and gentle in his leadership (2 Corinthians 10:10). He did not speak with eloquence (2 Corinthians 11:6), and he did not boast in money, intentionally refusing to take money for his “services,” choosing to work a menial job that would have been socially dishonorable (2 Corinthians 11:7).

On top of all this, Paul experienced continual suffering and hardship (2 Corinthians 11:21-30). Each of these things was a sign of weakness in the eyes of the Corinthians. The totality of Paul's weaknesses had become unpalatable to them. The Corinthians wanted a super-apostle, not an apostle of weakness.

In the face of the Corinthians' critique of and open opposition to his authority, we might expect Paul to have marshalled a persuasive defense, silencing the Corinthians with an overwhelming display of his authority as an apostle of Christ. Or, at the very least, we might expect him to have hidden the weaknesses that were cause for criticism. He faced the potential of losing the Corinthian believers to a false gospel (2 Corinthians 11:1-6), and the stability of the church at Corinth largely rested on how Paul would respond to the critiques of his apostolic authority. Rather than meeting the Corinthians' expectations, however, Paul shone a light on the very weaknesses that caused him criticism, putting his weakness front and center

(2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 2 Corinthians 6:2-10; 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:10).



My grace is sufficient for you – Part 2

Radically, Paul embraced the very things that the Corinthians rejected, identifying these weaknesses as signs of his true apostleship. He argued that his weakness was actually verification of the power of God working through him, and he rejected the Corinthian view of power as worldly success, bravado, and status. For Paul, the power to dominate and win was antithetical to the nature of the gospel. This is not merely a question of what leadership “style” you like, but a question of whether you embrace the way of Jesus.

The high point of Paul’s defiant response to the Corinthians’ lust for power is found in *2 Cor 12:9-10*: *‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* Paul viewed an embrace of weakness as an embrace of strength, because in weakness he depended upon the strength of God. His weakness was the source of his power.

Paul tells the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). In other words, Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that embracing weakness and depending upon God’s power is the way of life that all Christians are called to live, not just an apostle.

This is precisely because it is the way of Jesus himself: *For He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God.* — 2 Corinthians 13:4

This call to know the power of God in the midst of weakness is our calling in Christ today as well. We are those who gain our lives only when we lose them for Christ’s sake (Matthew 16:25). We are called not to rely upon ourselves, “but on God who raises the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:9). In a culture fixated on power to control and to dominate, the notion of embracing our weakness and trusting in God for power surely appears foolish. We spend our lives pushing our gifts, abilities and talents front and center, in order to hide our weaknesses. We celebrate those who embody power to control, dominate and win, while we shame the weak.

Paul tells us that the way of power in weakness displayed on the cross is indeed folly to the world, but to those who have been called in Christ it is where true power is found (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). We do not look to ourselves to overcome sin, to become a better parent or to establish a “successful” ministry. We do not appeal to our strengths and abilities to get things done in the kingdom of God. Rather, we are called to look to God alone; ever clinging to His grace, abiding in His love and trusting in His power alone. Indeed, apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). When we do so, we bear fruit.

When we embrace our weakness and trust in the power of God we bear witness to Christ in a world obsessed with forms of power that oppose the way of the cross.

When we embrace our weakness and abide in God’s strength we bring glory to God.



Psalm 125

A song of ascents.

¹Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

²As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people
both now and forevermore.

³The scepter of the wicked will not remain
over the land allotted to the righteous,
for then the righteous might use
their hands to do evil.

⁴LORD, do good to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.

⁵But those who turn to crooked ways
the LORD will banish with the evildoers.

Peace be on Israel.



Psalm 126

A song of ascents.

¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.

² Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, LORD,
like streams in the Negev.

⁵ Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.



The treasure is nearer than you think

This is a story of an ancient parable from the East. It is about a wealthy merchant who had undertaken a lengthy journey, carrying with him his most valuable jewels. Along the way, another traveller befriended him, making it look like a chance meeting, but with the sole intent of laying his hands on those precious stones. At the end of each day when they arrived at a local inn, they would share the room for the night. As was customary, each received his mat and pillow and also a wash basin with a towel for his nightly ablutions.

The merchant somewhat suspicious of his new found friend's real motives, devised a scheme to safeguard his valuables, that was to leave his ill intentioned companion completely befuddled. Before they turned in for the night, he would graciously offer the would be thief the privilege of washing first. As soon as the thief left the room, the rich man would take his bag of precious stones and hastily hide it under the pillow of the thief. When the thief returned the rich man went out to take his turn to wash. Awaiting this moment of opportunity, with preditorial glee the rogue would plunge into the rich man's belongings, rummaging through his bag and looking in and under the rich man's pillow, feverishly searching for the precious stones. His fruitless attempt left him utterly frustrated, and eventually he would lay his head on his own pillow, very angry that he had failed to locate the treasure.

Finally on their last day together, the rich man began his farewell pleasantries, and to the speechless astonishment of his companion, informed him that all along he had been painfully aware of his real motives. Then came the agony inflicting revelation. "You poured out all your energy looking everywhere, except under your own pillow. The treasure was nearer to you than you realised!"

Isn't this just like us in our Christian walk? Our loving Heavenly Father is the Creator of all things, and holds us all in His hands. He is our Saviour and Redeemer who gave His life for our sakes. We go through life often bowed down with problems and concerns, thinking we have to work out all the answers. All the time our Gracious Lord longs for us to seek Him for all the answers.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Nehemiah 8:10.

He makes His strength perfect in our weakness. 2Corinthians 12:9.

He gives us peace that passes all understanding. Philippians 4:7.

He wants to open the windows of heaven and pour out His blessings.

Malachi 3:10, and so much more.

His treasures are ours for the asking, they are much nearer than we think!

We need only to believe and receive, and rest in Him and His love.



Musing on Leadership

This morning I was reading the story of Micah, and a Levite who acted as his priest for a while. *Judges 17* Micah made an idol from silver, which he originally stole from his mother. I wondered why such a story is recorded in the Old Testament, and what does it have to say to us today? As I pondered, I read further and saw that it was the second generation after Moses, (during the time of various dubious judges), in fact during the time of Moses' grandson. It seems that generation didn't really know the God of Israel, as they appeared to be coveting and worshiping idols, which of course they were forbidden to do. They had the trappings of religion, but no relationship with the Lord who had brought their forefathers out of Egypt. The Levite was looking for somewhere to stay as this priestly tribe were not allocated land, they were to be dispersed throughout the twelve tribes. The Levite was installed as Micah's priest, and the last verse of the chapter says *And Micah said, "Now I know that the Lord will be good to me since this Levite has become my priest"*.

Then chapter 18 gives a twist to the story. The tribe of Dan had still to conquer the land which had been allotted to them. The Danites were bullies and stole the Levite and the idol, as they thought their needs were greater. What a mess, I thought.

There was no real leader and everyone seemed to do what was right in their own eyes. Yes, they had the ten commandments, the Levitical rules and the tabernacle but they seemed to be too unconnected to daily life it would appear.

Shiloh was the place where sacrifices were offered, and that is where we come across Eli, whose sons displeased the Lord, but where Samuel grew up who did pay attention to the Lord, and developed a deep relationship with him. The prophet Samuel was later to lead Israel, giving Godly instruction to the people until the time of the kings.

Perhaps this story is recorded so that we may understand the need for Godly leadership; those who know and teach us what the Lord requires. It certainly made me realise afresh the need to pray for our leaders, who ever they may be, because they have been given a huge responsibility which impacts the lives of others under their care, as well as influencing the course of history.

Lord, we pray today for those in authority over us that you would give them wisdom to lead with integrity according to your law; so that you may bless and prosper all that we do, and so that our love for you will grow deeper. Amen.

Joyce Missing - Living in retirement in the south of England. Formerly a staff member. I worked in Bhutan from 1973 – 1991 [nurse/administrator]; then at the International Office 1991-2006



Freedom in Christ

On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., delivered a message titled, *"I Have a Dream."*

He concluded the message with the following words:

*"And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring,
when we let it ring from every village and every
hamlet, from every state and every city,
we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children,
black men and white men,
Jews and Gentile, Protestants and Catholics,
will be able to join hands and sing
in the words of that old Negro spiritual:*

'Free at Last! Free at Last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at Last!'"

2 Cor 3,17 The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom!



Grace of God Vs Greed of Man - Part 1

What is the dynamic between a gracious God and a greedy Man? In *Nehemiah Chapter 9*, the Holy Spirit records 3 aspects: **(A) God's Nature**; (B) Man's Nature and (C) God's Desire.

(A) God's Nature

God is the supreme creator. He is above and beyond all creation. He is the source of everything that exists in the universe. He is the giver of all life. He created both inanimate and animate things in the world. The creation belongs to Him. It (including Man) owes it all to the creator (Verse 6).

The greatest virtue of God is His righteousness. It is His perfect holiness. He is right in every respect. His norms for us are always appropriate. There is no sin or guilt in Him. The rights and wrongs are determined by Him. God is the gold standard for all human thought and behaviour. All values flow from Him. He defines laws for the righteous living of Man. Only a righteous God can give mankind guidelines for a righteous living. There are no paths for us other than those that God lays out. God's rules are for our benefit and not harm (Verses 8 & 13).

God always hears the cries of His people. When we approach Him with our struggles and lamentation, He lends us patient ear. God never shuts His people out in their times of challenges. A suffering believer has the everlasting hope of being heard by God. God's love for man compels Him to listen to the utterances of a hapless Man. Irrespective of the condition that I am in, I am confident that He hears my cry. He is a good listener all the time, including in my troubled times (Verse 9).

Out of God's immense love for man flows His forgiveness, grace, compassion and patience. All of Man's misdemeanours are covered by the love of God. It is a love without boundaries; it's limitless. He gives us ample time and opportunity to turn away from our wayward ways and return to Him. Being a patient God, His anger does not flare up in a flash. He is patient (Verse 17).

God always gives the direction for the Man to go and the destination to reach. His voice is heard by those who desire to hear it. His direction is clear for those who desire to see it. Wherever He leads Man with His voice, He also provides for his needs. Deprivation is not on God's agenda. He meets all of Man's genuine needs. Starvation of man is not in God's plan. His plans for Man are in His instructions through the Holy Spirit (Verse 20).

To those who obey Him, he gives the riches of the world. Man is made to rule the world. Satan has usurped that which rightfully belongs Man as given by God. Man is God's representative in this world to enjoy His bountiful creation. The believers are expected to be blessed in all respects including authority, material wealth and status. That's God's desire. What is God's, rightfully belongs to a God fearing Man (Verse 22).

The righteous God is a God of justice as well. His justice is embedded in His grace and mercy. There are rights and wrongs, dos and don'ts in God's kingdom. There are thoughts and behaviour which glorify God. God delivers His justice with the expectation that Man repents and returns to Him. The norms of God's justice are for convicting Man to do the right things rather than condemning him to eternal hell. God does not send Man to eternal hell, but Man makes a conscious decision to walk the path of Satan (Verse 27, 31).

I adore and worship my living God for who He is. Not necessarily because of what He does for me. It is not conditional. There is no give and take with God. I don't buy His favour. I acknowledge His supremacy in all areas of my life. I give Him all honour and glory in complete humility, obedience and submission. He is one who is above everything in the universe.

In gratitude, for His glory.



Grace of God Vs Greed of Man - Part 2

What is the dynamic between a gracious God and a greedy Man? In Nehemiah Chapter 9, the Holy Spirit records 3 aspects: (A) God's Nature; **(B) Man's Nature** and (C) God's Desire.

(B) Man's Nature (Verses 16-17)

The Holy Spirit tells us what Man's nature is under Satanic influence. Man will be arrogant, stiff necked, disobedient, deaf to the voice of God, ungrateful and rebel against God. Even after receiving God's grace, Man's inherent sinful nature (flesh) continues to exist. It is deep rooted. His "I" supersedes everyone and everything, again and again. Self-righteousness is the entry point for Satan into Man's mind. Man takes undue advantage of God's love. God's mercy is not honoured. But a patient God gives Man repeated opportunities to mend his ways.

In his greed for material wealth and physical comforts, Man wants all of God's blessings, but not acknowledge or respond to His grace. God's blessings have become "rights" for Man. They are self-justified as rewards for Man's good works. On the contrary, God blesses Man to do good works and be a blessing for others so that God's name is glorified. These are gifts of grace and not earned through good works. Man is only a vessel in God's hands for Him to pour out His blessings.

Man is self-conceited. Man's attitude is that of "I can do everything". He is proud of his achievements, wealth, possessions, power, authority and control even when he fails miserably in God's eyes. Satan deceives Man to behave like God by taking credit for his achievements.

The riches in nature are created by God. Man consumes what God creates. The originator of creation is God. Man is himself a creation of God in as much as the world he lives in. Man's abilities are given by God and not self-acquired. He only discovers them. Satan makes Man think otherwise. Man refuses to accept that all glorious acts in the world are done by God. Satan deceives Man to presume that he has done them himself. Satan's deception is subtle and convinces Man to believe that he is all powerful and able.

Man wants God to listen to his cries when in need but pay no heed to His voice otherwise. Man's God given sensitivity to listen to His voice is made numb by Satan. Man can hear only his voice and justify all his actions even when they are against the will of God. Man remembers God only when his plans go awry, or when challenges in life become unsurmountable. When Man hits a wall, God is remembered. When Man's plans fail, he seeks God's intervention to set them right; once again. Even in his cry more often there is opportunism than true repentance. It is seeking God as per Man's convenience and in desperation rather than seeking His wisdom in humble submission. If Man does not face any adverse circumstances, then God is not needed. God's mercy is merely a bridge to cross over a difficult situation, for personal gain, to be forgotten later on.

Material riches and physical prowess (which actually are God's gifts) make Man proud, arrogant and rebel against God's discipline. When Man assumes the position of the creator, he does not accept any discipline from God. He is above any correction. The thinking is that Man can do no wrong, even when he does so.

Man, many times looks for his convenience and comforts in flesh, even after being saved by God's grace. An ungrateful heart walks away from God's discipline. But when the God of mercy who also is a God of justice disciplines Man, it is construed as an intrusion and lack of compassion by God. How can a God of love and mercy be a stern disciplinarian? Discipline is denial of Man's freedom to do what he wishes to do.

In gratitude, for His glory.

Dr PLN Raju - Former Director (Resource Mobilization) TLM Trust India, New Delhi

(The third part of the serie can be red on 2nd September)



Psalm 127

A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

¹ Unless the LORD builds the house,
the builders labor in vain.

Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.

² In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat—

for he grants sleep to those he loves.

³ Children are a heritage from the LORD,
offspring a reward from him.

⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.

⁵ Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.

They will not be put to shame
when they contend with their opponents in court.



Psalm 128

A song of ascents.

- ¹ Blessed are all who fear the LORD,
who walk in obedience to him.
- ² You will eat the fruit of your labor;
blessings and prosperity will be yours.
- ³ Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
- ⁴ Yes, this will be the blessing
for the man who fears the LORD.
- ⁵ May the LORD bless you from Zion;
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.
- ⁶ May you live to see your children's children—
peace be on Israel.

Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Allan Ekstedt	14 August		Genesis 15	15 August
Christian Bulambo	6 August		Judges 17	27 August
Christine Osman	20 August		Psalm 18,1-2 and 28-32	20 August
Dan Izzett	12 August		Psalm 18,25-29	12 August
Eddie Askew	16 August		Psalm 119	3 August
Glynis Forbes	15 August		Psalm 120	4 August
Gordon Brown	19 August		Psalm 121	10 August
Jeffrey Tan	22, 23 August		Psalm 122	11 August
Joyce Missing	27 August		Psalm 123	17 August
Marta Risko	2 August		Psalm 124	18 August
Martin Luther King	28 August		Psalm 125	24 August
Mollie Clark	26 August		Psalm 126	25 August
Moses Onoh MD	13 August		Psalm 127	31 August
Otto Kingsley	8. 9 August		Psalm 128	1 September
Peter Laubscher	5 August		Psalm 66,19	11 July
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	7 August		Proverbs 31,8	21 August
Raju PLN Dr	29, 30 August		Jeremiah 23,29	5 August
Ruth Butlin MD	21 August		Nehemiah 9	29, 30 August
Tim Collison	1 August		Matthew 5,7	1 August
			Matthew 8,5-13	14 August
			Matthew 10,8	16 August
			Matthew 16,21-27	13 August
			Matthew 22,37-38	7 August
			Matthew 28,19-20	9 August
			John 4,13- 14	2 August
			Romans 14,17-18	8 August
			2 Cor 1,3-7	22 August
			2 Cor 3,17	28 August
			2 Cor 12,9-10	23 August
			2 Cor 12,9	26 August
			1 Peter 5,5	19 August

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

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