



Does the Bible have anything to say about the war in Ukraine?

As I read Psalm 44 this morning I was very conscious of those who have been in the underground bunkers of the Azovstal steel works in Marioupol for more than 70 days.

Awake, why are you sleeping, O Lord, the Psalmist asks.

Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever.

Why do you hide your face?

Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?

For our soul is bowed down to the dust;

Our belly clings to the ground.

Rise up: come to our help!

Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

Reflecting on this Psalm in 2021 the poet, Malcolm Guite, writes.

How could it ever be God's Holy will

To raise an army, to inflict the harm,

The special horror of a holy war?

How could we ever conquer in his name?

O Jesus, did you sing this psalm before

You girded strength to brave your agony,

To fight the only holy battle for

The world you loved, and heal the misery

Of all mankind?

Victory was won for all of us, as it is written

'And so in Christ shall all be made alive'

And still we live as if we have forgotten

As I was writing this reflection, a message flashed up on my mobile:

Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister, Iryna Verschuck, has just confirmed that all women, children and the elderly have been evacuated from the steel plant in the besieged city of Marioupol.

David Parry - David Parry was a member of the TLM England and Wales Board from 1990 to 2002 and its Chairman from 1995 to 2002, and a member of the TLM International Board from 2001 to 2013 and its Chairman from 2009 to 2013. He is currently enrolled on a Certificate in Theology course at St Albans Cathedral, England where he has been a Guide since 2009.



Workplace perspectives - Part 1

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. Col 3:23

Work is a part of Christian calling. We often restrict Christian activities to Sunday churches, once a week cottage meeting and an occasional special activity with church members thrown in. Our workplace is an entirely different universe where we are diametrically opposite of what we are on “spiritual” days. Some say, “our faith has nothing to do with how we work – work and faith are totally distinct things, and faith is not to intrude into the workplace.”

Workplace truths were driven deep into our psyche by our mentors. Mission field was where we were currently placed, be it a college or a workplace where we were placed and call to work. It was unlike our perception of a remote mission station in the middle of the jungle. That changed our way of working, especially in challenging situations. Even though we were employed by humans we knew we were working for the Master, His business, The Kingdom of God.

In the parable of the workers in the vineyard, the opening line changes our entire perspective. “for the Kingdom of heaven is like a vineyard”. It is a far cry from the 4 walled cubicles in which you sit or a factory in which you work or hospital where you treat patients. yet the Bible is very clear. The vineyard can be any workplace and that workplace has been compared to the Kingdom of heaven. Sometimes, difficult to comprehend, but that is what Jesus has emphasised that all workplaces should be considered the Kingdom of heaven.

We often make the error of compartmentalization, separating work life from the spiritual but the gospel does not give us this option. Gods commands apply to all of life and not to some part. We are to do all that we do to the glory of God ([1 Corinthians 10:31](#)) and to do everything we do “in the name of the Lord Jesus” ([Colossians 3:17](#)). By living according to God’s commands in our workplace, we give expression to our faith in the world and reflect the character of God – thus pointing people to him.

Dear Father, I am privileged to be a worker in your Kingdom. Teach me to see beyond and envision the kingdom you are building.

Joydeepa Darlong Dr Head of Knowledge Management, The Leprosy Mission Trust India. A Family Physician, worked as Consultant and Deputy Superintendent for 15 years at The Leprosy Mission Hospital, Purulia, West Bengal, India.



Workplace perspectives – Part 2

Proverbs 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

Workplace consists of employees and it could be a small business with few or a large organization with hundreds of employees. Every enterprise has the potential to grow over time. There will be a constant need to hire every now as growth happens. That is why we should develop a recruitment plan to help streamline our hiring processes and make sure we have access to the talent we need when we need it.

In recent times, Staff were hired by a research project using no methodology, however. Within a few months, it was clear that the expertise hired did not match up to the work entailed. Subsequently, there was a decline in the progress of the project. Around the middle of the project, the manager left and soon a few others. It was a nightmare to complete the study and took longer than expected. It was a lesson learnt for lifetime. A recruitment strategy was developed. People thought through potential risks and put in mitigation measures.

The parable of the vineyard portrays a hiring strategy that was relevant to the times. Matthew 20:1 ¹For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. The landowner has the job description in mind. The job was to work in a vineyard and those experienced in this were hired. And they were also informed about the wages they would receive. Hiring was staggered, we do not know why, probably the work happened in a step wise manner. But the recruitment strategy teaches us that the work was done, and each got his well-deserved wages.

Those in leadership positions need to give a great deal of thought to the process rather than jumping into the activity itself. Meticulous planning and thoroughness save a lot of unnecessary trouble. In Luke 14: 28-33 The Bible tells about strategy, whether it is building a tower or going to war. It is the planning that matters. If we are diligently plan, success is ours, otherwise it will be blotchy business. Those CEOs and directors that recognize the value of having a strategy and make the commitment of time and resources to manage its execution will see a progress in its execution and completion.

Let us take a moment to the method of our working. Are we spending enough time on planning and strategy development? Do we rush to execute half baked ideas? God teaches us that the diligent plan to enrich but those in haste will always be poor.

Father, give me wisdom to envision the work that you have entrusted me in my organization.

Grant me the strength to let your Kingdom come where I have been planted. Amen.

Joydeepa Darlong Dr Head of Knowledge Management, The Leprosy Mission Trust India. A Family Physician, worked as Consultant and Deputy Superintendent for 15 years at The Leprosy Mission Hospital, Purulia, West Bengal, India.



Psalm 74

A *maskil* of Asaph.

¹ O God, why have you rejected us forever?
Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?

² Remember the nation you purchased long ago,
the people of your inheritance, whom you redeemed—
Mount Zion, where you dwelt.

³ Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins,
all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary.

⁴ Your foes roared in the place where you met with us;
they set up their standards as signs.

⁵ They behaved like men wielding axes
to cut through a thicket of trees.

⁶ They smashed all the carved paneling
with their axes and hatchets.

⁷ They burned your sanctuary to the ground;
they defiled the dwelling place of your Name.

⁸ They said in their hearts, “We will crush them completely!”
They burned every place where God was worshiped in the land.

⁹ We are given no signs from God;
no prophets are left,
and none of us knows how long this will be.

¹⁰ How long will the enemy mock you, God?
Will the foe revile your name forever?

¹¹ Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?
Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!

¹² But God is my King from long ago;
he brings salvation on the earth.

¹³ It was you who split open the sea by your power;
you broke the heads of the monster in the waters.

¹⁴ It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan
and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert.

¹⁵ It was you who opened up springs and streams;
you dried up the ever-flowing rivers.

¹⁶ The day is yours, and yours also the night;
you established the sun and moon.

¹⁷ It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth;
you made both summer and winter.

¹⁸ Remember how the enemy has mocked you, LORD,
how foolish people have reviled your name.

¹⁹ Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts;
do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever.

²⁰ Have regard for your covenant,
because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land.

²¹ Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace;
may the poor and needy praise your name.

²² Rise up, O God, and defend your cause;
remember how fools mock you all day long.

²³ Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries,
the uproar of your enemies, which rises continually.



The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost - 1

Acts 2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^(a) as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd.



The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost - 2

Acts 2

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd. "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

²² "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed

over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death,

because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him:

"I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

²⁹ "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place

one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised

this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the

Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

³⁵ until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet.”

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.



The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost - 3

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

A Story of Change

Hadiza from Nigeria, was affected by leprosy over 55 years ago and has lived her whole life in the Amanawa Kalgo leprosy community in Kebbi State. Hadiza said, *“Being diagnosed of leprosy at a young age was tough due to the stigma I suffered in my community before moving to Amanawa Kalgo leprosy clinic for treatment and thereafter residing at the leprosy community where I met my husband who is also affected by leprosy”*.

As the community women leader, Hadiza Hakimi Umbaru has been involved in various activities organized by The Leprosy Mission Nigeria (TLMN) both at the community and state level over the years. TLMN through its projects, especially the TLM Sweden / SMC funded project titled Enabling Disadvantaged Populations to Drive Sustainable Development (EDPOSD), continues to advocate for the needs of Leprosy-affected communities, alongside members of the communities.

One of the major successes of this group is that during one of the advocacy visits, the chairman of Kalgo Local Government Area awarded Hadiza Hakimi Umbaru Amanawa and 43 other community members with Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) for plots of land in their community. This gives them right to land ownership in the community.

Hadiza says *“TLMN made the whole process possible. TLMN is always there for us. They have never left us alone. God will continue to reward TLMN for all they are doing in the disability world! Thank you TLMN”*.



Hadiza Hakimi Umbaru Amanawa with her family Certificate of Occupancy



Beginning again

“Do not despise the day of small beginnings, for the eyes of the Lord rejoice to see the work begin...” Zechariah 4:10

Beginning.

There is a lot packed into that little word, isn't there? Excitement. Anticipation. Hope for what could be.

When you think of a word *'beginning,'* what comes to your mind?

A majestic sunrise?

A baby taking his/her first steps?

A giant pile of debris/rubbish?

If that last image sounds odd to you, you're in good company. That's probably how it looked to Zerubbabel, the man in charge of leading the Israelites in rebuilding the temple.

His *'beginning'* brought him face to face with a massive mound of rubble. Years earlier, the Babylonians had removed the temple, along with its former glory. Zerubbabel and a group of Israelites had returned from exile to start the painstaking process of reconstruction.

So, it's more accurate to say Zerubbabel *wasn't 'beginning,'* but *beginning again.* He had the unenviable task of not just 'starting,' but starting over after a national tragedy.

A few years into the process, progress had stalled. They had faced one setback after another. Excitement and anticipation had faded. And hope...well, hope was hanging on by a thread.

Zerubbabel and his disheartened crew stood at the crossroads between *giving up* and *pressing on.*

If you've been at a similar crossroad junction, you know how tempting it is to throw in the towel and call it quits. Rebuilding your life is overwhelming and exhausting. How do you possibly muster the strength to begin...again?

The good news is that, when we're in a season of "small beginnings," God promises to give us His strength.

Like fresh wind in their sails, Zechariah encourages Zerubbabel's team that they will accomplish this enormous task, not by their own "might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord" (Zechariah. 4:6). His Spirit will sustain them every step of the rebuilding process. Their role (and ours) is simply to rely on the Spirit one day at a time.

With a posture of fully depending on the Spirit, we join the Lord in His work, knowing that He will finish what He begins.

Yet, most of the time, He doesn't work as quickly as we desire. And when things don't move according to our timetable, we must guard against a poor attitude.

So, Zechariah instructs the Israelites (and us) not to "despise" or have contempt for the "small beginning." Though the work might appear modest; though progress might be off to a slow start, it's not an excuse for irritability and impatience. We are to joyfully do our part and leave the pace and results up to Him.

I confess. I'm challenged by Zechariah's words.

I don't despise "small beginnings," but I can easily get discouraged by them. Rather than have to trudge through the beginning, there's something in me that wants to skip to the ending...or at least to the middle.

That's why, in a season of "small beginnings," we must call to mind the words of Jesus, "the *kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed*, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and birds perched in its branches" (Luke 13:18,19).

Like a tiny seed, the work of the Kingdom often starts small, but gradually grows into a mighty tree.

The question to ponder becomes:

Will we trust Him with the tiny seed of our small beginning?

Will we courageously step out in faith and join Him in starting over?

Remember, it's always better to obey Him and begin small than to disobey Him and never begin at all.

And according to Zechariah, the Lord "rejoices" to see the work begin...again.

Dorothy Owen — On behalf of The Leprosy Mission PNG



The wonder of creation

How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Psalm 104:24

I went to the vet the other day. Not for myself – I'm not quite as disillusioned with the National Health Service as that – I took one of our dogs. While I was waiting I picked up a leaflet – "Caring for Elderly Dogs".

The leaflet began by describing old dogs and the more I read the more it sounded like me. "Greying round the muzzle" – yes, that's me. "Changes in body shape" – I'm afraid so. "Stiffness in the joints" – certainly in my knees. "Reluctance to take exercise" – yes, I admit it. "Bladder problems"... I'll stop right there otherwise it might get a bit personal. And I know people say that dog owners get to look like their pets but that's taking it a bit far.

It made me think though. The similarities remind me that we humans are as much part of God's creation as anything else and, if we realised that, we might begin to treat the earth and other living things a bit differently.

Of course we are different from animals in some ways – in being able to talk, to think, to imagine. And in our feelings for the spiritual. To wonder what life is about, and to realise there's more to it than just what we can see and measure. And that more is God, who created you and me, and my dogs, and wants the best for all of us.

And if we can begin to take that into account we may find it easier to live in harmony with each other, the world about us, and with the God who made us.

Extract from Slower than Butterflies, first published 1997.

*Lord God, Creator, all life is yours.
All that has come to be has come through you.
Lives in your energy, takes breath because you willed it.
Is clothed in your beauty, your dignity.
Part of your world. Valued and loved.*

With the kind permission of Judith Merrell – Book selection and Publishing Manager, TLM Trading

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 75

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." A psalm of Asaph. A song.

¹ We praise you, God,
we praise you, for your Name is near;
people tell of your wonderful deeds.
² You say, "I choose the appointed time;
it is I who judge with equity."
³ When the earth and all its people quake,
it is I who hold its pillars firm.
⁴ To the arrogant I say, 'Boast no more,'
and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns.'
⁵ Do not lift your horns against heaven;
do not speak so defiantly."
⁶ No one from the east or the west
or from the desert can exalt themselves.
⁷ It is God who judges:
He brings one down, he exalts another.
⁸ In the hand of the LORD is a cup
full of foaming wine mixed with spices;
he pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth
drink it down to its very dregs.
⁹ As for me, I will declare this forever;
I will sing praise to the God of Jacob,
¹⁰ who says, "I will cut off the horns of all the wicked,
but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up."



Psalm 76

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of Asaph. A song.

¹ God is renowned in Judah;
in Israel his name is great.

² His tent is in Salem,
his dwelling place in Zion.

³ There he broke the flashing arrows,
the shields and the swords, the weapons of war.

⁴ You are radiant with light,
more majestic than mountains rich with game.

⁵ The valiant lie plundered,
they sleep their last sleep;
not one of the warriors
can lift his hands.

⁶ At your rebuke, God of Jacob,
both horse and chariot lie still.

⁷ It is you alone who are to be feared.
Who can stand before you when you are angry?

⁸ From heaven you pronounced judgment,
and the land feared and was quiet—

⁹ when you, God, rose up to judge,
to save all the afflicted of the land.

¹⁰ Surely your wrath against mankind brings you praise,
and the survivors of your wrath are restrained.

¹¹ Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill them;
let all the neighboring lands
bring gifts to the One to be feared.

¹² He breaks the spirit of rulers;
he is feared by the kings of the earth.



**“...far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD
by failing to pray for you...”**

1 Samuel 12:23

This verse from Old Testament history is a watchword that has journeyed with me over the years. The prophet Samuel, God’s ‘representative’ when Israel was a ‘theocracy’, has been -in effect- sidelined by God’s chosen people choosing to seek a king (1 Samuel 8). God tells Samuel to let the people have their way, so he carries the process through, no doubt with God’s warnings in mind, with disappointment, and perhaps with a personal sense of rejection.

Although the error of Israel’s choice is acknowledged (1 Samuel 12:19), and although God’s warnings are realised (1 Samuel 13 etc.), nevertheless Samuel still loves God’s people, still works among them ‘from retirement’, and very much remains on their case. He is God’s ‘ambassador’ in what, in some ways, becomes a kingdom no longer of God but of men: Saul, David, Solomon and subsequent all-too-human kings.

1 Samuel 12:23 comes from Samuel’s ‘farewell speech’; -it reminds me of Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian elders, Acts 20:17-38, where he commits them to God’s grace and protection for difficult times.

Perhaps you felt something of the feelings of Samuel and Paul, when you left people you loved and were committed to. I recently left the pastorate of a church and community, people I had come to love. Leaving is part of life; we leave home, job, community, perhaps family, but they remain in our heart and thoughts, maybe with regrets as well as happy memories, as must have been the case for both Samuel and Paul.

But we continue to pray for those we have loved and left. To me the key point in this beautiful verse is that Samuel considers it a sin “*against the Lord*”, not just against the people, should he “*fail to pray*” for them.

So I’m in a fix; perhaps you can understand. I regard it as a duty, a privilege, a joy, to open the lists of loved-ones from churches, families and communities that I have left over life’s journey, whether I have moved on with a sense of completeness or of unfinishedness. But when I remember them, imagine them, pray for them, a sadness and sense of loss still comes over me.

In their farewell speeches both Samuel and Paul say that they had done all they could and done nothing wrong for their people (e.g., 1 Samuel 12:3, 5; Acts 20:20, 26, 33). Can we confidently say that, when we have moved on? I’m not sure I could risk the claim!

But what I can do is not to “*sin against the LORD by failing to pray for*” those that I have moved on from over the years. Praying means remembering, updating, keeping in touch, -which can bring that sense of loss from yesterday and concern for today. Samuel must have felt those, seeing the decline of his people under

kingship, and Paul had ongoing concern for the Ephesians, seen in his letters to them and to Timothy. But they prayed.

It's part of the journey of prayer that we share something of the heart of God for those we pray for, and something of human feeling. Yet we believe in the rightness of prayer and the power of God, who loves to the ultimate. And of course, these are God's people, not ours; we must pray, but not try to be any kind of king!

God bless,

David Beazley began involvement with The Leprosy Mission in 1992 when he came as Minister to a Church near the International Office in Brentford. He acted as an informal 'chaplain' to the Office, and served on the International General Council for some years. At the same time he became a member of TLM England and Wales Board, serving as Chairman for six years and on various committees. He chaired the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, and is also able to serve TLM by leading retreat days and other such things as opportunity allows. He has recently retired from the pastorate but continues as a volunteer speaker for TLM



Keeping it in the family

In August 2016, I wrote about Luke Aikins, who, without a parachute, jumped from a height of 25 000 feet into a net.

Well, he's been at it again. A few days ago, on 24th April 2022, he and his cousin flew alongside each other in their Cessna's, which they then put into vertical dives. They leapt from their aircraft, with the intention of free-falling towards the opposite Cessna, entering it, pulling it out of the dive and landing it. Luke managed to do this, but as he launched himself from his Cessna, it went into a spin and his cousin was unable to board it, so he had to deploy his parachute. That Cessna crashed, but Luke touched down safely and his cousin walked away from the parachute landing unscathed.

Luke now faces the wrath of officialdom and a long interview with his insurance broker.

His lark has drawn fierce criticism, but as someone who has probably watched way too many Bond movies, I have to confess to a grudging admiration for someone who would attempt something so 007ish. Planning, skill and courage in equal measure are required for such an audacious adventure – attributes which Luke and his cousin have aplenty.

The Scriptures abound in stories of people possessed of extraordinary courage:

Jael, lulling Sisera into a deep sleep and then driving a tent peg through his head; Esther, hoisting Haman by his own petard; David, unflinching in the face of overwhelming odds.

You could rename the Bible as the 'Encyclopaedia of the most courageous people of all time' and be well within the mark.

It seems that mankind is hard-wired to thirst for adventure, to face adversity. Joy is not found in a life of ease, but in a life of effort. Think of it: how many mountains can you name? And how many valleys? We were born to aspire to the summit, which is why your school had a mountaineering club, but no valley club. The peak may have been Mont-Aux-Sources rather than Mont Blanc, but it still took effort and determination to get there. You made a choice to climb it and to stick with your decision.

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Joshua 24:15

Serving the Lord is not the easy option. The world prefers being in service of other gods. For us, we choose each day to get up, stand up and climb up. We willingly choose the harder option.

You don't need to be Luke Aikins, but a bit of his boldness won't go amiss. As emissaries of the King, we can be nothing else.

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.



The Shepherd of Christ's Sheep

John 21 (15-19)

This is a very important saying of Jesus to Peter at the end of John's Gospel. Here is the scene which must have been printed forever in the mind of Peter.

(1) First we must note the question which Jesus asked Peter: *"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?"* As far as language goes that can mean two things equally well.

a. Jesus knew that Peter was a good fisherman and he liked his profession. Peter always wanted to be with his boats, nets, fishes and wanted to be in Lake for fishing. Jesus said to Peter: Simon, do you love me more than these things? Are you prepared to give them all up to abandon all hope of a successful fisherman to give up a steady profession and a reasonable comfort, in order to give yourself forever to my people and to my work?". This may have been a challenge to Peter to take the final decision to give all his life to the preaching of the Gospel and the caring of Christ's folks.

b. It may be that Jesus looked at the rest of the little group of the disciples, and said to Peter: " Simon, do you love me more than your fellow disciples do?" Peter has said earlier that though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away (Matthew 26; 33). It may be that Jesus was gently reminding Peter how once he had thought that he alone could be true and how his courage had failed.

It is more likely that the second meaning is right, because in his answer Peter does not make comparisons any more; he is content simply to say: " You know that I love you".

(2) Jesus asked this question three times; and there was a reason for that. It was three times that Peter denied the Lord, and it was three times that his Lord gave him a chance to affirm his love. Jesus, in his gracious forgiveness, gave Peter the chance to wipe out the memory of the threefold denial by a threefold declaration of love.

(3) We must note what love brought Peter

(a) It brought him a task." If you love me, " Jesus said, " then give your life to shepherding the sheep and the lambs of my folks." We can prove that we love Jesus only by loving others. Love is the greatest privilege in this world, but it brings the greatest responsibility.

(b) It brought Peter a cross. Jesus said to him: *"When you are young you can choose where you will go; but the day will come when they will stretch out your hands on a cross, and you will be taken in a way you did not choose."* The day came when, in Rome, Peter did die for his Lord; he, too, went to the cross, and he asked to be nailed to it head downwards, for he said that he is not worthy to die as his Lord had died. Love brought Peter a task, and it brought him a cross. Love always involves responsibility, and it always involves sacrifice. We do not really love Christ unless we are prepared to face his task and take up his Cross.

It was not for nothing that John recorded this incident. He recorded it to show Peter as a great shepherd of Christ's people. It may be, indeed it was inevitable that people would draw comparison in the early church. Some would say that John was the great one, for his flights of thought went higher than those of any other man. Some would say that Paul was the great one, for he fared to the ends of the earth of Christ.

But this chapter says that Peter, too, had his place. He might not write and think like John; he might not travel and adventure like Paul; but he had the great honor, and the lovely task, of being Shepherd of the sheep of Christ. And here is where we can follow in the steps of Peter.

We may not be able to think like John; we may not be able to go out to the ends of the earth like Paul; but each of us can guard someone else from going astray, and each of us can feed the lambs of Christ with the food of the word of God.

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



Christ's Ambassadors

...and he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5: 19-20

Sometimes when there has been political unrest abroad the BBC will interview a former UK ambassador to that country to hear their views on the situation. I usually listen with interest because he or she seems to speak with such knowledge about the country they served in. They understand the culture, the people, and the impact of any political, economic or social upheaval which is taking place.

It has made me wonder what qualifications are needed to be a foreign ambassador and I found a few which might apply:

1. they have studied the culture and history of their own country and the country they are being sent to, and are always curious to know more
2. they are diplomatic in their use of language both oral and written so that they do not cause offence to the people they serve
3. they are people of integrity, honesty and truthfulness. To be otherwise would mean losing the trust of the Government they serve and the repercussions could be serious for their own career and the relationship between both countries.

It isn't difficult to see how these qualifications can be applied to us as Christians. We are ambassadors sent from another country – our citizenship is in heaven - but we live out our lives in a place where we are aliens and strangers, bringing the message of reconciliation between our God and the people we meet in our daily lives. What kind of people are we to be as we tell others the good news about Jesus Christ? We should understand the culture of the people we are sent to witness to, have a thorough knowledge of scripture and long to know more; we are to be of gracious speech, bringing a message of good news in a winsome way; and we are to be people of good character, reflecting the person of Jesus Christ.

May we be the best ambassadors for Jesus Christ in this world that we can possibly be depending always on the help of His Spirit.



Learning from people affected by leprosy.

“and while they were going, it happened that they were purified” Luke 17.14

The Bible says: “Ten lepers came to meet him [...] and said: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! Seeing them, he said to them: Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, it came to pass that they were cleansed. One of them, seeing himself healed, retraced his steps and glorified God aloud. [...] He was a Samaritan. Jesus spoke and said: Have not the ten been purified? But the other nine, where are they? [...] Then he said to him: get up, go; your faith has saved you” (v.12-19). This episode teaches us three things.

1) Sometimes the answer is quick, sometimes it comes slowly, step by step. These men are purified during their journey. As we never know on which step the answer comes, we must continue to walk by faith. According to the Law, a leprosy patient had to be declared pure by a priest before returning to society. But Jesus was able to anticipate the change in this man because he had the power to bring about this healing!

2) Never give up, even if others reject you. These outcasts expected Jesus to treat them accordingly. But if we draw near to God, he will draw near to us (see Jon 4:8). Do you suffer from rejection from others? Jesus will not. He said, “Whoever comes to me I will not cast out” (Jn 6:37).

3) Never forget to give thanks to God. Only one out of ten thought of it. Would you have done it? When we know how sensitive God is to our gratitude, we never let a day go by without praising and worshiping him.

Prayer of the day

Thank you, God, for all you do for me.

Apprendre des personnes affectées par la lèpre.

« et, pendant qu'ils y allaient, il arriva qu'ils furent purifiés » Luc 17.14

La Bible raconte : « Dix lépreux vinrent à sa rencontre [...] et dirent : Jésus, Maître, aie pitié de nous ! En les voyant, il leur dit : allez-vous montrer aux sacrificateurs. Et, pendant qu'ils y allaient, il arriva qu'ils furent purifiés. L'un d'eux, se voyant guéri, revint sur ses pas et glorifia Dieu à haute voix. [...] C'était un Samaritain. Jésus prit la parole et dit : les dix n'ont-ils pas été purifiés ? Mais les neuf autres, où sont-ils ? [...] Puis il lui dit : lève-toi, va ; ta foi t'a sauvé » (v.12-19). Cet épisode nous apprend trois choses.

1) Parfois la réponse est rapide, parfois elle vient lentement, pas à pas. Ces hommes sont purifiés pendant leur trajet. Comme on ne sait jamais sur quel pas vient la réponse, il faut continuer de marcher par la foi. Selon la Loi, un malade de la lèpre devait être déclaré pur par un prêtre avant de réintégrer la société. Mais Jésus a pu anticiper le changement dans cet homme parce qu'il avait la puissance de provoquer cette guérison !

2) *Ne jamais abandonner, même si les autres nous rejettent.* Ces parias s'attendaient à ce que Jésus les traite en conséquence. *Mais si on s'approche de Dieu, il s'approchera de nous (voir Jon 4.8).* Souffrez-vous du rejet des autres ? Jésus ne le fera pas. Il a dit : « *Je ne jetterai point dehors celui qui vient à moi* » (Jn 6.37).

3) *Ne jamais oublier de rendre grâce à Dieu.* Un seul sur les dix y a pensé. L'auriez-vous fait ? Lorsqu'on sait à quel point Dieu est sensible à notre reconnaissance, on ne laisse plus jamais passer un jour sans le louer et l'adorer.

Prière du jour

Merci mon Dieu pour tout ce que tu fais pour moi.

Reverend Elie FOFOLO - Born on August 5, 1964, son of a Baptist Pastor, both parents died. I am a pastor of vocation and formation, in 2001 I had my degree in Theology at the Protestant University in Congo (U.P.C). After working as a Pastor in the local Church of Kingabwa 1 from 2004 to 2011, I had a meeting with Angelika Piefer who headed the Coordination of the Mission against Leprosy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from where I had this passion for people affected by Leprosy and I invited Angelika to come to World Leprosy Day in our church on Sunday 29/01/2012, in Kingabwa. This work led us to discover two girls from the same family with signs of leprosy, and their brother ended up being infected, but all three were treated and in good health. This sparked this passion to work as a volunteer in raising awareness, mobilization and the relationship with the local churches of the platform "Church of Christ in Congo" (E.C.C in acronym). - In July 2019, I obtained the Master in Psychotrauma, at the University of Kinshasa, at the Faculty of Medicine. Training that allows me to better listen to and accompany people who suffer trauma and stress for biopsychosocial care. - I am married to only one woman, Madame Espérance since 16/10/1988. From this union God gave us five children including two girls and three boys. Just like Abraham and Sarah, my wife and I, are willing to give up everything and go where the need for the Mission is felt. - Elie Fofolo is currently pastor at the local church of Masina 3, the 15th Congo Baptist Community in Kinshasa



Psalm 77

For the director of music. For Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm.

¹ I cried out to God for help;
I cried out to God to hear me.
² When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;
at night I stretched out untiring hands,
and I would not be comforted.
³ I remembered you, God, and I groaned;
I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.^(b)
⁴ You kept my eyes from closing;
I was too troubled to speak.
⁵ I thought about the former days,
the years of long ago;
⁶ I remembered my songs in the night.
My heart meditated and my spirit asked:
⁷ “Will the Lord reject forever?
Will he never show his favor again?
⁸ Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
Has his promise failed for all time?
⁹ Has God forgotten to be merciful?
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”
¹⁰ Then I thought, “To this I will appeal:
the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand.
¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the LORD;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
¹² I will consider all your works
and meditate on all your mighty deeds.”
¹³ Your ways, God, are holy.
What god is as great as our God?
¹⁴ You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.
¹⁵ With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
¹⁶ The waters saw you, God,
the waters saw you and writhed;
the very depths were convulsed.
¹⁷ The clouds poured down water,
the heavens resounded with thunder;
your arrows flashed back and forth.

¹⁸ Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind,
your lightning lit up the world;
the earth trembled and quaked.
¹⁹ Your path led through the sea,
your way through the mighty waters,
though your footprints were not seen.
²⁰ You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.



Psalm 78

A maskil of Asaph.

- ¹ My people, hear my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.
- ² I will open my mouth with a parable;
I will utter hidden things, things from of old—
³ things we have heard and known,
things our ancestors have told us.
- ⁴ We will not hide them from their descendants;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,
his power, and the wonders he has done.
- ⁵ He decreed statutes for Jacob
and established the law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach their children,
⁶ so the next generation would know them,
even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children.
- ⁷ Then they would put their trust in God
and would not forget his deeds
but would keep his commands.
- ⁸ They would not be like their ancestors—
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
whose hearts were not loyal to God,
whose spirits were not faithful to him.
- ⁹ The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows,
turned back on the day of battle;
¹⁰ they did not keep God's covenant
and refused to live by his law.
- ¹¹ They forgot what he had done,
the wonders he had shown them.
- ¹² He did miracles in the sight of their ancestors
in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan.
- ¹³ He divided the sea and led them through;
he made the water stand up like a wall.
- ¹⁴ He guided them with the cloud by day
and with light from the fire all night.
- ¹⁵ He split the rocks in the wilderness
and gave them water as abundant as the seas;
- ¹⁶ he brought streams out of a rocky crag
and made water flow down like rivers.

¹⁷ But they continued to sin against him,
rebellious in the wilderness against the Most High.
¹⁸ They willfully put God to the test
by demanding the food they craved.
¹⁹ They spoke against God;
they said, "Can God really
spread a table in the wilderness?"
²⁰ True, he struck the rock,
and water gushed out,
streams flowed abundantly,
but can he also give us bread?
Can he supply meat for his people?"
²¹ When the LORD heard them, he was furious;
his fire broke out against Jacob,
and his wrath rose against Israel,
²² for they did not believe in God
or trust in his deliverance.
²³ Yet he gave a command to the skies above
and opened the doors of the heavens;
²⁴ he rained down manna for the people to eat,
he gave them the grain of heaven.
²⁵ Human beings ate the bread of angels;
he sent them all the food they could eat.
²⁶ He let loose the east wind from the heavens
and by his power made the south wind blow.
²⁷ He rained meat down on them like dust,
birds like sand on the seashore.
²⁸ He made them come down inside their camp,
all around their tents.
²⁹ They ate till they were gorged—
he had given them what they craved.
³⁰ But before they turned from what they craved,
even while the food was still in their mouths,
³¹ God's anger rose against them;
he put to death the sturdiest among them,
cutting down the young men of Israel.
³² In spite of all this, they kept on sinning;
in spite of his wonders, they did not believe.
³³ So he ended their days in futility
and their years in terror.
³⁴ Whenever God slew them, they would seek him;
they eagerly turned to him again.
³⁵ They remembered that God was their Rock,
that God Most High was their Redeemer.
³⁶ But then they would flatter him with their mouths,
lying to him with their tongues;
³⁷ their hearts were not loyal to him,
they were not faithful to his covenant.
³⁸ Yet he was merciful;
he forgave their iniquities
and did not destroy them.
Time after time he restrained his anger

and did not stir up his full wrath.
³⁹ He remembered that they were but flesh,
a passing breeze that does not return.
⁴⁰ How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness
and grieved him in the wasteland!
⁴¹ Again and again they put God to the test;
they vexed the Holy One of Israel.
⁴² They did not remember his power—
the day he redeemed them from the oppressor,
⁴³ the day he displayed his signs in Egypt,
his wonders in the region of Zoan.
⁴⁴ He turned their river into blood;
they could not drink from their streams.
⁴⁵ He sent swarms of flies that devoured them,
and frogs that devastated them.
⁴⁶ He gave their crops to the grasshopper,
their produce to the locust.
⁴⁷ He destroyed their vines with hail
and their sycamore-figs with sleet.
⁴⁸ He gave over their cattle to the hail,
their livestock to bolts of lightning.
⁴⁹ He unleashed against them his hot anger,
his wrath, indignation and hostility—
a band of destroying angels.
⁵⁰ He prepared a path for his anger;
he did not spare them from death
but gave them over to the plague.
⁵¹ He struck down all the firstborn of Egypt,
the firstfruits of manhood in the tents of Ham.
⁵² But he brought his people out like a flock;
he led them like sheep through the wilderness.
⁵³ He guided them safely, so they were unafraid;
but the sea engulfed their enemies.
⁵⁴ And so he brought them to the border of his holy land,
to the hill country his right hand had taken.
⁵⁵ He drove out nations before them
and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance;
he settled the tribes of Israel in their homes.
⁵⁶ But they put God to the test
and rebelled against the Most High;
they did not keep his statutes.
⁵⁷ Like their ancestors they were disloyal and faithless,
as unreliable as a faulty bow.
⁵⁸ They angered him with their high places;
they aroused his jealousy with their idols.
⁵⁹ When God heard them, he was furious;
he rejected Israel completely.
⁶⁰ He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh,
the tent he had set up among humans.
⁶¹ He sent the ark of his might into captivity,
his splendor into the hands of the enemy.
⁶² He gave his people over to the sword;

he was furious with his inheritance.
⁶³ Fire consumed their young men,
and their young women had no wedding songs;
⁶⁴ their priests were put to the sword,
and their widows could not weep.
⁶⁵ Then the Lord awoke as from sleep,
as a warrior wakes from the stupor of wine.
⁶⁶ He beat back his enemies;
he put them to everlasting shame.
⁶⁷ Then he rejected the tents of Joseph,
he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim;
⁶⁸ but he chose the tribe of Judah,
Mount Zion, which he loved.
⁶⁹ He built his sanctuary like the heights,
like the earth that he established forever.
⁷⁰ He chose David his servant
and took him from the sheep pens;
⁷¹ from tending the sheep he brought him
to be the shepherd of his people Jacob,
of Israel his inheritance.
⁷² And David shepherded them with integrity of heart;
with skillful hands he led them.



"I confess - he did it"

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us ..." I John 1:9

The glass door separated the sitting-room from the long corridor leading to the bedrooms. Knowing that when a glass pane and a football come into violent contact with one another, the glass tends to suffer, the children had been strictly forbidden to play ball in the corridor.

One evening, I returned home to find a beautiful round hole in the glass panel. Although I had a pretty good idea of who was responsible, I hoped to get a confession, so I lined up the three children and asked "Who did it?" Total, long, embarrassed silence.

The question was repeated a couple of times but remained without answer. Finally I stated "If the one who did it does not have the courage to own up, I will have to punish all 3 of you and that would not be fair on the innocent ones, so, for the last time - who did it? Please own up"

Another lengthy quiet moment ensued. Finally, the middle child pointed at his younger brother and declared "Daddy, I confess, he did it." The fear of punishment did not elicit a confession but rather an accusation.

It is so easy in life to hide behind the sins of others, point a finger at them, justify our behaviour through circumstances. A guilty silence, a cover-up or an accusation may appear to deal with the problem but definitively does not bring peace of mind or a lasting solution.

In human relationships, confession may not guarantee forgiveness or restored relationships but will normally ensure the peace of mind of the one who admits to his shortcoming, error or omission.

In our relationship to God, confession always brings forgiveness and restored relationship. We serve a forgiving God.

Thought. Are there undealt-with issues in my life that create a barrier with God or with others?

Prayer. "Lord, give me the courage to confess my sins and experience your forgiveness."

Silvano Perotti . Secretary for Europe then Deputy International Director and Director for Support and Development TLMI
Born in Italy - retired in Switzerland.
Worked with TLMI until 1990.



A Gentle Whisper

1Kings 19:9b-15a

I have been listening to a series of reflections on the different ways and opportunities to listen to God. This passage in 1Kings is one that I have turned to many times during my life to remind myself that we should not be looking for God's voice in the clamour, in the upheavals, and in the dramas of our lives (wind, earthquake, fire) – yes those are the times when we need to hear God speaking to us but we need to turn aside and find the quiet places where God can talk to us and touch our souls.

The prophet Elijah was disappointed, angry, burned out, and really had come to the end of tether. He had taken the many opportunities God provided to confront King Ahab and his wife Jezebel and the prophets of Baal. He had spoken God's words to Ahab. Now his life was in danger and he ran away. He was ready to give up. But God was not giving up on Elijah, He provided food when Elijah was in real need allowing him to journey for another 40 days and nights when he finally collapsed in a cave on Mount Horeb [the same mountain where Moses met with God and received the 10 commandments].

Some of us will have been in not dissimilar situations. We have faced times when we just want to give up, when we just want life to get easier, when facing opposition to our Christian life and principles. In these situations, God wants us to hear His voice speaking to us. He tells Elijah to get up and wait for His presence to come to us. Elijah has an amazing experience outside that mountain cave when he faces the wind, then the earthquake, and then fire – in none of those dramatic events does he find God speaking to him – and finally there comes that *gentle whisper* of God speaking to him.

But what does God say to Elijah in his situation? He doesn't tell him he has done well and it is time to give up and retire gracefully. No, God sends him back – there is still work for Elijah to do. God has some very specific tasks for Elijah to complete before he is allowed to "retire".

I know that in the times in my life when I have been struggling – sometimes with health, sometimes with work pressures, sometimes not sure what my service to God (the actions resulting from my faith) should be – it is in these times that I have had to find a place of solitude, a quiet place where I can just spend time with God, to rest and find peace in His presence, a quiet place where I can listen for his "quiet whisper" whether that is in a verse from Scripture or a whisper in my soul. For each of us that place of quiet will be different, maybe even different places at different times in our lives. For Elijah it was a cave on a mountain. I have had to find that quiet place in my bed when I was ill; a walk and a seat on a quiet section of a beach; a visit and short stay a retreat centre.

When I was a child, the church my family worshipped with did not sing hymns, so I grew up with a real dependence on the Psalms – both sung and spoken. I still frequently spend times reflecting through the

psalms and I want to end this reflection with some words from Psalm 66 – read the opening verses of worship and then reflect on the words of verse 5 in the context of your own life and situation:

“Come and see what God has done, what awesome miracles He performs for people!”

Lord, today come and speak in that gentle whisper to those of your servants who really need to hear your encouragement, your leading, your healing. Lord, today help us to say “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening” (1Samuel 3:10b)

Christine Osman – Scotland - formerly Treasurer of The Leprosy Mission International



The Magnificence of the Cross of Calvary - Part 2

The Cross of Confrontation

Luke 23:35 "The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

Luke 23:39 "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

There were two criminals on their own crosses on either side of Jesus Christ at Calvary. There was a crowd of people and religious leaders near the cross. They were not satisfied even after they succeeded in having Jesus Christ crucified. They sneered at their common enemy. They screamed that if He really were the Messiah, surely, He could save Himself just as He had saved others. Jesus, the Messiah had challenged their customs, practices, power and understanding of the Law. He was a threat to their authority/power. They were displeased with Jesus.

Then there was a rebellious criminal who spoke first. The word criminal denotes a doer of evil things. Since he was crucified by Roman authorities, he could not have been a common criminal. He could have rebelled against the Roman rule. He must have committed heinous crimes against his fellow human beings. Harming others was his habitual way of life. There was an attitude of defiance in him. Most significantly he rebelled against God's goodness by mocking at Jesus.

The words "hurling insults" literally mean "blaspheming". This criminal had railed on, taunted, hurled insults, and began to blaspheme against Jesus. He was echoing all that he had heard from the shouting of the priests and the mob. For all that we know he had never seen Jesus before. He simply joined the hysterical cacophony of the crowd baying for the blood of Jesus.

The rebellious criminal kept on taunting Jesus, "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 'Come down from the cross and take us with you. If you can't get me off the cross, you are a bogus messiah'. It was a continuous rage of sarcastic, mocking, bitter insult. He only wanted relief from his punishment and pain. His utterance was not a sincere request for help. It was an impious arrogant demand. He only mimicked the scornful sneers of the religious leaders.

He made a foolish demand that Christ should come off the cross to save him! At the apex of Jesus' expression of love and sacrifice for the sinners (sacrifice on the cross) this impenitent fool said to the Saviour, "Get off your cross and save us." This rebel despised his cross. Rebellion has been man's nature from the time of his disobedience in the Garden of Eden. I don't mind being a sinner, but not wish to suffer for my crimes! I will continue to be and do what I desire, whether God likes it or not.

We may not be a robber, or a murder, or an insurrectionist, but deep down in our heart of hearts many of us say 'no' to Jesus. We all tend to rebel against God because of our self-created image of piety, importance

and arrogance. Many in our world still find fault with the Lord for not dealing kindly with them even when they rebel against Him. In times of a personal crisis many would say, 'If there is a God, why didn't He save us? Why did He let this happen to us?' The only proof of God's existence for them is that their personal needs are met, whether justified or not. Personal gain in all situations.

The cross of the criminal represents a rebellious confrontation with God. The cross of Jesus had confronted the criminal and he reviled against it in vengeance. Tragically he rebelled against Lord's love. This criminal actually had one hope, to ask the Lord to change his heart to say, 'Lord, I am living a life of enmity with you. Conquer me with your love!'. He had lost that opportunity.

Confronting the Cross undermines God's love.

Dr PLN Raju - Former Director (Resource Mobilization) The Leprosy Mission Trust India New Delhi



The Book of Galatians

The little book of Galatians is short—only six brief chapters. You can easily read it in half an hour. But do not be deceived by its size. A tiny stick of dynamite can blow up a big building. That’s more than a figure of speech; it’s a metaphor for the book itself. Galatians is spiritual dynamite. This is a dangerous book! Read it at your own risk. Martin Luther read it and an explosion went off in his heart that led to the Protestant Reformation. John Wesley heard a sermon based on Luther’s commentary on Galatians and was profoundly converted. From Luther to Calvin to Wesley to the Puritans to Spurgeon to Billy Graham, there is a direct line from this ancient epistle to who we are and what we believe today.

More than anything else, Galatians is a book about freedom. It answers the question, “How can I be truly free?” Free from guilt, free from fear, free from doubt, free from sin, free from always trying and never quite making it. When the world looks at that question, it offers two contradictory answers. Some people think freedom comes from keeping the rules. Do good, try harder, go to church, be baptised, give your money, follow the Ten Commandments. The list is endless because the human mind is endlessly creative in the ways it devises to please a God it cannot see or understand. But rule keeping always fails in the end because you can never be sure you’ve done enough.

On the other extreme are those who say that freedom comes by throwing all the rules aside. “Do what you want. Have a blast. You only go around once. There are no rules. If it feels good, do it.” But in the end, hedonism cannot satisfy either. You end up exchanging one form of slavery for another. You drink and end up with a hangover, you gamble and lose your money, you chase after wealth and never have enough. You end up like Solomon who had it all and tried it all and concluded with a cry of desperation, “I hated life” (Ecclesiastes 2:17-18). Rules can’t save you but you won’t be happy if you ignore the rules either.

But if legalism (trying to find happiness by keeping the rules) doesn’t work, and if hedonism (the pure pursuit of pleasure regardless of the rules) doesn’t work, where can we find true freedom in life?

Galatians offers us a simple and compelling answer: Freedom comes not from rules or the lack of rules, but in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The only true freedom is the freedom that comes from knowing him as Saviour and Lord. Those whom Christ sets free are free indeed.

We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone - that is the core message

of this little book.

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!



I thirst

John 19,28

Mother Teresa recalled that it was on a train journey to Darjeeling, on September 10, 1946, that she received a second vocation within religious life, “a vocation to give up even Loreto where I was very happy and to go out in the streets to serve the poorest of the poor.” In 1928 she had left her home in Albania to join the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland who, at her request, assigned her to teach in India. She felt an overwhelming desire not just to teach the poor in school and then send them home but also to go live among them and experience herself the poverty in which they lived. September 10 is observed as “Inspiration Day,” the true beginning of the Missionaries of Charity Mother Teresa was eventually allowed to found.

The mystical experience on the train placed her on Calvary with Jesus at the very moment he cried out, “I thirst.” She explained it this way to the Missionaries of Charity:

“I thirst”. Jesus said on the cross when Jesus was deprived of every consolation, dying in absolute poverty, left alone, despised and broken in body and soul. He spoke of thirst – not for water- but for love, for sacrifice.

Jesus is God. Therefore his love, his thirst is infinite. Our aim is to quench this infinite thirst of a God made man. Just like the adoring angels in Heaven, ceaselessly sing the praises of God, so the Sisters, using the four vows of absolute poverty, charity, obedience, and charity towards the poor, ceaselessly quench the thirsting God by their love and of the love of the souls they bring to him.”

Mother Teresa once summarized her life this way: “By blood, I am an Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith I am a Roman Catholic nun. I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus.”



Psalm 79

A psalm of Asaph.

- ¹ O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple,
they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.
- ² They have left the dead bodies of your servants
as food for the birds of the sky,
the flesh of your own people for the animals of the wild.
- ³ They have poured out blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and there is no one to bury the dead.
- ⁴ We are objects of contempt to our neighbors,
of scorn and derision to those around us.
- ⁵ How long, LORD? Will you be angry forever?
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?
- ⁶ Pour out your wrath on the nations
that do not acknowledge you,
on the kingdoms
that do not call on your name;
- ⁷ for they have devoured Jacob
and devastated his homeland.
- ⁸ Do not hold against us the sins of past generations;
may your mercy come quickly to meet us,
for we are in desperate need.
- ⁹ Help us, God our Savior,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us and forgive our sins
for your name's sake.
- ¹⁰ Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
- Before our eyes, make known among the nations
that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.
- ¹¹ May the groans of the prisoners come before you;
with your strong arm preserve those condemned to die.
- ¹² Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times
the contempt they have hurled at you, Lord.
- ¹³ Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture,
will praise you forever;
from generation to generation
we will proclaim your praise.



Psalm 80

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Lilies of the Covenant." Of Asaph. A psalm.

¹ Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.
You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth ² before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken your might;
come and save us.
³ Restore us, O God;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.
⁴ How long, LORD God Almighty,
will your anger smolder
against the prayers of your people?
⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.
⁶ You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors,
and our enemies mock us.
⁷ Restore us, God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.
⁸ You transplanted a vine from Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
⁹ You cleared the ground for it,
and it took root and filled the land.
¹⁰ The mountains were covered with its shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches.
¹¹ Its branches reached as far as the Sea,
its shoots as far as the River.
¹² Why have you broken down its walls
so that all who pass by pick its grapes?
¹³ Boars from the forest ravage it,
and insects from the fields feed on it.
¹⁴ Return to us, God Almighty!
Look down from heaven and see!
Watch over this vine,
¹⁵ the root your right hand has planted,
the son[Ⓜ] you have raised up for yourself.
¹⁶ Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire;
at your rebuke your people perish.

¹⁷ Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

¹⁸ Then we will not turn away from you;
revive us, and we will call on your name.

¹⁹ Restore us, LORD God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.



3D Protection

„You hem me in – behind and before-, you have laid your hand upon me.“ Psalm 139,5

Ongoing question: on our journey of life what should we learn of the past, for being wiser in the future?

I remember the frenetic experience in the early 1980s, when in the Futuroscope in Poitiers, France I first saw a film in 3D. The cinema became filled with thousands of butterflies from the Amazonian rainforests, and the audience was trying to protect their heads from the “invasion.” Nothing else happened. It was just that we had been given special eyewear at the entrance to provide the illusion of depth when viewing the film. The miracle had not been around the screen, but around the eyewear, adding one dimension to the otherwise flat presentation. We felt depth, space and wholeness, and saw the butterflies as God created them in reality.

This special eyewear is exactly what we need! To see all as seen by God! In His dimensions! Unless we have this, all we see is ‘flat’: just what we want, or might not have. Or what we missed, or dreamed about. The special eyewear with its dimensions can help us to realise its depth: what plainly looks “tough” is, in reality, God's 3D protection! Behind, before and upon us, hemming us in!

God sees all as complex. Our whole life from beginning to end, and our final benefit. His purposes we are not able to see ahead. All things are working together for our sake - for the good. Often His time has not come yet. Maybe we are still kept in a waiting phase when nothing happens! But He is in control all the time! Sometimes He hurries us, or slows us down, stops us for a while or puts us “aside” as He knows what ‘tempo’ suits us the best. We do not always understand or like it. Who likes pain, bitterness, disappointments and “tough times”? Nobody. But it is all for our benefit, and is a question of faith. The past is God's promise for the future. We should have no fear of hazardous and hectic events. God is faithful. He demonstrated His protection – and this experience anticipates He will do the same. In Him there is no change at all!

But His ultimate sign about His perfect protection is our salvation on the Cross. Therefore *“I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels, nor demons, neither the present, nor the future, nor any powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 8:38-39) Behind, before and upon: in all dimensions, in 2015 and in 2016 and onwards let us go on, believing in His perfect protection anew with the hymn:

*Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand.
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night lead me on to the light!
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home! - Amen.*



To Remember!

Psalm 105:4 "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done..."

To remember is to keep the memory of a thing, or of a fact in order to recognize it. The very meaning of our whole life is linked to memory. It starts with school where we learn to read and count. Our brain stores a lot of data that will be useful to us for the rest of our lives.

My mother, aged 93, said to me one day when I brought her back to the retirement home in which she was: "You mustn't ask me questions. It confuses me because I don't remember. Losing your memory is painful! I don't remember recent things. What is clear is the past and the future."

I understood her suffering, moreover her last remark challenged me. "I remember the distant past and the future." Her distant past brings her back to her childhood, where she was bathed in the Word of God, and that is what makes her say that the future is clear because all her faith is based on this hope of being one day with the Lord.

The writer Paulo Coelho, in his book "The Found Manuscript" says this: "We will not fear what will happen tomorrow, because yesterday we had someone who took care of us. And the same Presence will remain by our side. This Presence will protect us from suffering. Or will give us the strength to face it with dignity."

I am encouraged by this promise of God from the prophet Isaiah 46:4 *"Even to your old age and grey hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."*

Se souvenir !

Ps 105 :4 « Ayez recours à l'Éternel et à son appui, cherchez continuellement sa face ! Souvenez-vous des prodiges qu'il a faits. »

Se souvenir, c'est garder la mémoire d'une chose, d'un fait pour le reconnaître.

Le sens même de toute notre vie est lié à la mémoire. Cela commence par l'école où nous apprenons à lire et à compter. Notre cerveau enregistre quantité de données qui nous seront utiles pour la suite de notre vie. Ma maman, âgée de 93 ans, me disait un jour que je la ramenai à la maison de retraite dans laquelle elle se trouvait : « Il ne faut pas me poser de question. Ça me met dans l'embarras, car je ne me souviens pas. C'est pénible de perdre la mémoire ! Je ne me souviens pas des choses récentes. Ce qui est clair, c'est le passé et le futur. » J'ai bien compris sa souffrance, par ailleurs sa dernière remarque m'a interpellé. « Je me souviens du passé lointain et du futur. « Son passé lointain la ramène à son enfance, où elle a été baignée par la Parole de Dieu, et c'est ce qui lui fait dire que le futur est clair car toute sa foi repose sur cette espérance d'être un jour avec le Seigneur.

L'écrivain Paulo Coelho, dans son livre « le manuscrit retrouvé » dit ceci : « Nous ne craignons pas ce qui arrivera demain, parce que nous avons hier quelqu'un qui prenait soin de nous. Et la même Présence restera

à nos côtés. Cette Présence nous mettra à l'abri de la souffrance. Ou nous donnera la force de l'affronter avec dignité. »

Je suis réconforté par cette promesse de Dieu tirée du prophète Esaïe 46 :4 « *Jusqu'à votre vieillesse je serai le même, jusqu'à votre vieillesse je vous soutiendrai ; je l'ai fait, et je veux encore vous porter, vous soutenir et vous sauver. »*

Eric Chollet - I'm retired since years. I used to work with TLM Switzerland for 32 years. During that time, I have had the privilege to stand in different committees (e.g. executive committee - directorate) with TLMI, which has been very rewarding. All along these years of service, I have met a lot of wonderful and dedicated people. May God continue to bless the mission for His glory.



Living by the Word of God

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

When God made Adam (the first man), He did not first feed him with food, but God breathe into his nostril the breath of life and man become a living being (Genesis 2:7). God's original intention for human being is to live, operate and functions by every word that proceed from God. Every Word of God contain the breath of God 2 Timothy 3:16.

Why do we need to live by the Word of God? Because the world of God is 'LIFE'

In John chapter 6 when Jesus fed the thousands of people that came to him with bread and fish, he noticed the eagerness of the people to press on following him; he therefore warned them not to seek him because of food but for the word of God. The people find it hard to accept His word, even His disciples were also not getting it. He now told them 'the Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life' (John 6:63).

Every human being on earth today are seeking for food, cloth, pleasure, security and safety, many are displace and some became refugee in other land all because of this. Rarely do you see people spending time or making effort to seek God and His word.

In the means of the chaos in our world today, God want us (all His children) to come to the realisation that we cannot live or survive by any other means but by His word alone.

His word below, spoken in the wilderness to Israelite is still relevant today:

² Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶ He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. ¹⁷ You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you

*the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.
(Deuteronomy 8: 1-3, 10-18 NIV).*

*May God open our ears and heart to receive and accept His word so that we can live and fulfil the plan and
purpose of Him for keeping us alive in this world.*

Bunmi Oluloto - a Brother and Servant of Christ planted in Niger Republic as TLM Country Leader for Niger and Chad.



Touch

Sometimes I am asked: „Why do you need a leprosy mission? You don't have a mission for chicken pox or a mission for various infectious diseases.

Why does the Christian church need to get into this business of treating leprosy in such a special way?

Why single out this one disease? *Matthew 10,7-8*

The answer is: because more than any other person in the world the person with leprosy needs to be treated by somebody who will reach out his hand in the name of the Lord Jesus and touch him because, in that personal touch backed by love and affection and devotion and compassion, we are mediating the love of Jesus Christ that this man, isolated by the world, should be welcomed into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe that if we are to exist with any worthwhile purpose in our lives, it is to follow in the steps of our Master and to seek to do in some way what He did, and what He still wants to do through us. And I would like to base my thoughts on an action of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was repeated over and over again, probably every day of His public ministry:

Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man who was sick, the woman who was faint, the people who needed Him.

Dr. Paul Wilson Brand, CBE- (17 July 1914 India – 8 July 2003 US) was a pioneer in developing tendon transfer techniques for use in the hands of those with leprosy. He was the first physician to appreciate that leprosy is not a disease of the tissue but of the nerves: it is the loss of the sensation of pain which makes sufferers susceptible to injury and leads to tissue rotting away, especially in the extremities. Brand contributed extensively to the fields of hand surgery and hand therapy through his publications and lectures, and wrote popular autobiographical books about his childhood, his parents' missionary work, and his philosophy about the valuable properties of pain. One of his best-known books, co-written with Philip Yancey, is *Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants* (1993), republished in 1997 as *The Gift of Pain*

Authors in ABC Order**Country****Textuarium in Canonic Order**

<i>Anne Muirden</i>	<i>16 June</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Joshua 24,15	<i>14 June</i>
<i>Asaph, psalmist</i>	<i>4, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26 June</i>	<i>Israel</i>		1 Sam 12,23	<i>13 June</i>
<i>Bunmi Oluloto</i>	<i>29 June</i>	<i>Niger/Chad</i>		2 Kings 19, 9/b-15/a	<i>21 June</i>
<i>Christine Osman</i>	<i>21 June</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Psalm 44	<i>1 June</i>
<i>David Beazley</i>	<i>13 June</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalm 74	<i>4 June</i>
<i>David Parry</i>	<i>1 June</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalm 75	<i>11 June</i>
<i>Dorothy Owen</i>	<i>9 June</i>	<i>Papua New-Guinea</i>		Psalm 76	<i>12 June</i>
<i>Eddie Askew</i>	<i>10 June</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalm 77	<i>18 June</i>
<i>Élie Fofolo</i>	<i>17 June</i>	<i>DR Congo</i>		Psalm 78	<i>19 June</i>
<i>Eric Chollet</i>	<i>28 June</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Psalm 79	<i>25 June</i>
<i>Gordon Brown</i>	<i>23 June</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Psalm 80	<i>26 June</i>
<i>Joydeepa Darlong Dr</i>	<i>2, 3 June</i>	<i>India</i>		Psalm 104, 24	<i>10 June</i>
<i>Luke MD, evangelist</i>	<i>5, 6, 7 June</i>	<i>Israel</i>		Psalm 105	<i>28 June</i>
<i>Marta Risko</i>	<i>27 June</i>	<i>Hungary</i>		Psalm 139,5	<i>27 June</i>
<i>Mother Teresa of Kolkata</i>	<i>24 June</i>	<i>Albania/India</i>		Prov 21,5	<i>3 June</i>
<i>Paul W Brand MD</i>	<i>30 June</i>	<i>USA</i>		Zechariah 4,10	<i>9 June</i>
<i>Peter Laubscher</i>	<i>14 June</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Matthew 4,4	<i>29 June</i>
<i>Pradeep and Sarah Failbus</i>	<i>15 June</i>	<i>India</i>		Matthew 10, 7-8	<i>30 June</i>
<i>Raju PLN Dr</i>	<i>22 June</i>	<i>India</i>		Luke 17,14	<i>17 June</i>
<i>Silvano Perotti</i>	<i>20 June</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Luke 23, 35	<i>22 June</i>
<i>TLM Nigeria</i>	<i>8 June</i>	<i>Nigeria</i>		John 19, 28	<i>24 June</i>
				John 21,15-19	<i>15 June</i>
				Acts 2	<i>5, 6, 7 June</i>
				2 Cor 5,19-20	<i>16 June</i>
				To the Galatians	<i>23 June</i>
				Col 3,23	<i>2 June</i>
				1 John 1,9	<i>20 June</i>