



TLM Daily Devotions

May 2023





International Workers' Day

In many countries this day is celebrated as International Workers' Day or Labour Day.

The Biblical teaching on labour and its outcome (blessing) is well known written in

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.*

Labour is the consequence of sin: "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Genesis 3, 17-19

But God's promise is poured out upon us by grace:

*May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us;
establish the work of our hands for us—
yes, establish the work of our hands. Psalm 90,17*



Trees - 2

Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. Psalm 96:12 - 13

When I leave home and drive through the village onto the road into town I pass a lovely group of beech trees. They've become old friends. They're tall, mature trees and there's a grace about them that always gets through to me. I love them most in winter when the winds have whipped their leaves away. Then you can see their structure, the trunks and branches that form their character.

Trees are honest. They never try to be other than what they are. Someone said* that a tree reveals God's glory simply by being a tree. It doesn't pretend to be anything else.

A few days ago I was dismayed. The trees had all been cut down. Maybe they'd become diseased, or were a danger to passers-by, I don't know. All I know is that they've all gone. They're just a pile of logs, a heap of sawdust and a memory. It's sad.

Life moves on. Things happen that we don't understand or welcome. But the trees still speak to me, even though they've gone. They tell me to value today. Enjoy the beauty of the moment. Hold on to today's blessings and don't let them go by unnoticed and unappreciated. They're precious. And tomorrow is in God's hands.

Lord of eternity, my time is in your hands. Teach me to savour every moment.

* Thomas Merton

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)



A Story of Change

The power of voice: story of Zara in Bisidimo, Ethiopia

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Matthew 25

Zara is a 28-year-old widow with four young children living in a village near Bisidimo. When Zara was 15 years old, she noticed patches on her skin and sometime later she started to develop deformities in her hands. Her family took her to the Bisidimo Leprosy hospital, where she was diagnosed with leprosy. Due to stigma and discrimination related to the disease, they left her at the hospital and returned to their village. She received treatment at the hospital, but was left with grade 2 disability.

Zara was assigned a house near the hospital, alongside many other people affected by leprosy who were settled there. It was uncommon for them to associate with people who are healthy. Here she met her husband and in time they had four children. Sadly, her husband passed away, which left Zara alone, to care for her family.

Leprazending (TLM Netherlands) co-ordinates the “*We are Able*” project in this area. This project creates opportunities for food security and sustainable livelihoods for people affected by leprosy and disability through rights awareness and advocacy. Zara attended the lobby & advocacy training, which informed her about her rights. She also attended the business & skills training. She trained in chicken farming and with a government loan; she was able to buy a few chickens.

Zara dreams of moving on to cattle farming/fattening. This requires a larger investment, but could also generate more profit. The income would help Zara to increase her living space- currently a one-room tenement; and ensure her children can go to the local school.

“Thanks to the leprosy hospital in Bisidimo and the We are Able! project, I am no longer socially excluded,” Zara says. “I now have opportunities and dreams to develop further and can take care of myself and my family.”



The right answer

“We glorify even in tribulations” Romans 5.3

During World War II, Viktor Frankl was deported to a concentration camp by the Nazis. The guards deprived him of everything. They separated him from his wife and his family, they stole his clothes and even his wedding ring. But he had one thing that no one could take from him. He writes: “The last of human freedoms is the ability to choose one's behavior in a given set of circumstances.” No jailer could take this freedom of choice away from Frankl. We don't know what will happen tomorrow, or even today.

We cannot control events, but we can control how we respond to them. You can decide that an experience makes you stronger or weaker, increases faith or fear, makes you better or more bitter. There is a saying: “The same sun that melts butter hardens clay. God wants our struggles to strengthen us. Paul writes:

“We glory even in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces patience, patience tried faithfulness, and tried faithfulness hope. But hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (v.3-5).

And here is another very important thought. The tests and trials we go through in this life are what qualify us to rule and reign with Christ in the next life. Knowing this will help us react in the right way!

Pray

Thank you, Lord, for giving me the Holy Spirit to discern how to respond. AMEN!

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

« NOUS NOUS GLORIFIONS MÊME DANS LES TRIBULATIONS »
ROMAINS 5.3

Lors de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, Viktor Frankl est déporté en camp de concentration par les nazis. Les gardes le privent de tout. On le sépare de sa femme, de sa famille, on lui vole ses vêtements et même son alliance. Mais il possède une chose que personne ne peut lui prendre. Il écrit : « La dernière

des libertés humaines est la capacité de choisir son comportement dans un ensemble donné de circonstances. » Aucun geôlier n'a pu retirer à Frankl cette liberté de choix. On ne sait pas ce qui va se passer demain, ni même aujourd'hui.

On ne peut pas contrôler les événements, mais on peut contrôler la façon d'y répondre. On peut décider qu'une expérience rend plus fort ou plus faible, augmente la foi ou la peur, fait devenir meilleur ou plus amer. Un dicton affirme : « Le même soleil qui fait fondre le beurre durcit l'argile. » Dieu veut que nos luttes nous renforcent. Paul écrit : «

Nous nous glorifions même dans les tribulations, sachant que la tribulation produit la persévérance, la persévérance une fidélité éprouvée, et la fidélité éprouvée l'espérance. Or, l'espérance ne trompe pas, parce que l'amour de Dieu est répandu dans nos cœurs par le Saint-Esprit qui nous a été donné » (v.3-5). Et voici une autre pensée, très importante. Les tests et les épreuves que nous traversons dans cette vie sont ce qui nous qualifie pour gouverner et régner avec Christ dans la prochaine vie. Savoir cela nous aidera à réagir de la bonne manière !

Prière

Seigneur merci, de me donner l'Esprit Saint pour discerner de quelle manière répondre. AMEN !



How biblical was Augustus Toplady's hymn "Rock of ages"?

Rock of Ages cleft for me
 Let me hide myself in Thee
 Let the water and the Blood
 From Thy riven side which flowed
 Be of sin the double cure
 Cleanse me from its guilt and power

(Psalm 62:5-8)
(Exodus 33:22)
(1 John 5:6)
(John 19:34)
(2 Kings 2:9,10)
(Isaiah 1:19)

Not the labour of my hands
 Can fulfil the law's demands
 Could my zeal no respite know
 Could my tears forever flow
 All for sin could not atone
 Thou must save and Thou alone

(John 5:30a)
(Exodus 3:22)
(Psalm 69:6a)
(Psalm 6:6)
(Hebrews 10:5,6)
(Hebrews 10:8-10)

Nothing in my hand I bring
 Simply to Thy Cross I cling
 Naked come to Thee for dress
 Helpless look to Thee for grace
 Foul, I to the fountain fly
 Wash me Saviour, or I die

(Isaiah 4:1)
(Galatians 6:14)
(Romans 13:14a)
(Philippians 4:13)
(Psalm 2:7)
(John 13:8b)

While I draw this fleeting breath
 When my eyelids close in death
 When I soar to worlds unknown
 See Thee on Thy Judgment Throne
 Rock of Ages cleft for me
 Let me hide myself in Thee
 -Amen.

(Psalm 103:15,16)
(Ecclesiastes 12:3-7)
(John 14:2,3)
(Matthew 25:31)
(1 Corinthians 10:4c)
(Psalm 16:1-8)

("PRAISE THE LORD IN SONG" by Marilyn Tomkins, pg.148)

On youtube you can find a variety of this hymn – enjoy it!



Psalm 137

¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.

² There on the poplars
we hung our harps,

³ for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

⁴ How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?

⁵ If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.

⁶ May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy.

⁷ Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did
on the day Jerusalem fell.

"Tear it down," they cried,
"tear it down to its foundations!"

⁸ Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy is the one who repays you
according to what you have done to us.

⁹ Happy is the one who seizes your infants



Psalm 138

Of David.

¹ I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.

² I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,
for you have so exalted your solemn decree
that it surpasses your fame.

³ When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me.

⁴ May all the kings of the earth praise you, LORD,
when they hear what you have decreed.

⁵ May they sing of the ways of the LORD,
for the glory of the LORD is great.

⁶ Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;
though lofty, he sees them from afar.

⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.

You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;
with your right hand you save me.

⁸ The LORD will vindicate me;
your love, LORD, endures forever—
do not abandon the works of your hands.



The Power of Prayer

But this precious treasure—this light and power that now shine within us—is held in a perishable container, that is, in our weak bodies. Everyone can see that the glorious power within must be from God and is not our own. (2 Corinthians 4:7)

The power of prayer

When the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven and left his disciples behind, they could no longer see or touch him. Nevertheless we – who are insignificant and sinful human beings – can touch Him every time we bow our knees in prayer. Every time we do that, some of his power flows towards us and enters our bodies and souls. Not only that: Through us this power flows out towards others as well. This power is so rich, so mobile, that we only need to point in prayer to the people we want to share this power with. And He, the Lord, will immediately send the necessary support to the place we indicated.

This power is independent of time and space. At the same time we pray for our brothers and sisters in Kwazulu Natal, Nigeria, Indonesia, China or Brazil, God's power is transferred to them. Here is an example of wireless communication that far surpasses the possibilities of even the most advanced technology.

Pray for the unreached people of the world, whether in your own country or thousands of miles away. We can reach them through our prayers. Ask God to open their hearts to the message of Jesus Christ. Pray for the believers among them, that God will give them a powerful testimony. Pray for the missionaries who give themselves to make known the name of Jesus among them.

These thoughts come from Ole Hallesby, a Norwegian Lutheran theologian, from his book entitled *Prayer* published in 1931. I read a Dutch translation, then revised the text to be more tuned to modern ears, then translated into English and added an item for prayer. So it is not literally what he wrote, but it does faithfully reflect what Hallesby wanted us to understand.

Johan Velema is an epidemiologist and theologian. He worked with TLM International from 1999 to 2011.



Just let Jesus touch your life.

Mark 5 ²⁷ & ⁴¹⁻⁴² *When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,*

⁴¹ *He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha koum!' (which means 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!').* ⁴² *Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old).*

It is fascinating how memories are triggered.

A few Sundays ago, in my church, we read how Jesus raised a dead girl and healed a sick woman. The preacher drew our attention to Jesus' focus on touch in both stories. The words 'touch' and 'touched' triggered deep memories for me.

Memory 1

When I was a house-parent in a school for missionary and expat children, I spent several years in the early 1980s looking after 30, 11-13 year old boys.

Every morning, for a whole term, one lad would make his bed whilst singing an old Gospel Song,

*"She touched the hem of his garment,
As to his side she stole.
Amid the crowd that gathered around Him
And straightway she was whole."*

None of his peers bothered about his daily song, but it is implanted in my memory.

Memory 2

A few years after Memory 1 the relationship I thought would last, 'until death did us part' collapsed. I was devastated. God had removed his touch.

And I reacted by not wanting to be touched.

I didn't want to be touched by well-meaning words and Bible verses, by sympathetic looks and certainly not by any form of physical touch.

It took several years, and I know much prayer by others for me to accept God's touch again and to allow anyone, family included, within touching distance.

But God is good.

Memory 3

January 8, 1990. Our first child was due in 5 weeks; however, my wife had been kept in hospital for observation as her blood pressure had been rising.

At 06.00 I got a call from the hospital to come immediately. When I arrived her high blood pressure had become full-blown pre-eclampsia and the obstetrician was going to do an emergency section. I was told to prepare for the worst-case scenario. I sat alone in a waiting room not knowing if I she or the long hoped for

baby would survive. In God's good grace the emergency section was a success and in a short time I held our son in my arms and held my wife's hand as she slowly recovered.

My take-away from the sermon and my memories, is, just let Jesus touch your life.

In his time, he'll restore you, make you new, turn you the right way round, guide you, walk beside you, encourage you, comfort you, protect you, teach you and so much more.

And finally, he will be there to welcome you into his home and his loving embrace.

John Twynam – Perkins - Formerly chair of TLM Scotland



Today is TLM Day of Prayer!

Find out from your respected national TLM office how you can join the

worldwide joint prayer sessions!



Christian Purpose: Revitalized in Resurrection – Part 1

Does God have a purpose for my life?

The purpose for my life is in my identity! I am not a random event in the evolution of the universe. I am not wandering aimlessly in this world. I am part of God's grand design which He fulfils in His own way for His pleasure. I am the workmanship of God, moulded by Him with care, every day. God has a purpose for me at creation and on being redeemed by the blood of Jesus (*Psalm 86:12, Isaiah 12:4*).

My purpose in life is subsumed in God's plan for me. It is located in the dominion of His supreme Will for me. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught His disciples (us) the purpose of a believer; to establish God's rule i.e., His Kingdom on earth (Matthew 6:9-10). My purpose is part of God's purpose for mankind. By God's grace I am an instrument in His hands to accomplish His purpose. My course in life has already been charted in detail by God; I only need its revelation day after day. I eagerly seek my purpose in reverential fear, in complete submission to the One who is Supreme. I need not reinvent my purpose in life. It is already determined by God. I only seek its revelation, daily.

Because of the gift of free will that God has blessed me with, I tend to go my own way at times, away from His presence. But I realize the futility of that very soon. Ultimately God's purpose and pleasure prevail in my life. God's plans for me supersede those of mine. My calling is from high heavens.

God has an over-arching purpose for every believer: to conform to the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ (in whom He is well pleased) and be the channel for the Gospel (redemption in Jesus Christ) to reach the unsaved souls in the world (II Peter 3:18). Salvation is for one's personal benefit as well as for the benefit of those who are yet to be saved. My purpose in life is to tell others about Jesus' love for them and allow the Holy Spirit to equip me to make them experience that love through me. I am the channel of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ and in obedience to His supreme Will.

We must be conformed to the image of God's Son for the advancement of God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 5:17-18, Romans 8:29). My purpose is to grow into Christ's likeness and with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, bear fruit for His glory i.e., manifest Christlike love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. I am an instrument to establish God's kingdom on earth where people shall live by what Jesus had exhorted them to: forgiveness, humility, faithfulness, gratitude and love for one another. People must experience joyful life in God's kingdom here on earth and expect to be in His presence eternally, after our spirit leaves our earthly bodies.

As I mature in faith in Jesus Christ, I will encounter many trials and tribulations in this world. That is how He equips me to serve Him in all circumstances (Romans 5:3-5). But I have the assurance that whether I am down in the 'valley' or standing on top of the 'mountain', His abides in me. He has overcome the world (John 16:33). He will never leave me alone nor forsake me. I shall rejoice in every situation including persecution for the sake of serving Jesus Christ (James 1:2-4).

God's purpose includes responsible stewardship of God given abilities and authority. He gives me such abilities, gifts and means so that I act as per His Will to fulfil His purpose. They are all given by His grace. I receive them humbly in gratitude and bear fruit for Jesus Christ (Galatians 5:22-23). I am an ambassador of Jesus Christ bringing Him glory by being a testimony to everyone around. God has planned specific 'good' works for each of us which are unique, custom-made (Ephesians 2:10). Since His plan is perfect and the works are 'good', I do them diligently with utmost sincerity (James 2:14). All of God's plans and His purpose for us would ultimately bring Him glory, in Christ Jesus.

Life is purposeful, in God's Will.

In gratitude for His grace

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



Homeric wisdom

I had a chuckle a few weeks ago when Sheldon reminded me of a Leprosy Mission promotional film in which I appeared during the early 1980s. I was running the leprosy programme in the Kingdom of eSwatini at the time. There I was, still with some [dark] hair, a beard and slender of waist.

The hair and beard vanished decades ago. The waistline expanded. Glass half full?

Is that a look of optimism or apprehension in my eyes?

I recalled an early episode of the Simpsons where Marge reprimands Homer for his self-destructive behaviour.

Homer waves her away. *“That’s a problem for future Homer. Man, I don’t envy that guy.”*

Homer is a fool, but he’s a wise fool.

It’s a good question to ask – will future me be pleased with the choices I’m making today? Will I look back saying, ‘if only’ or will I say, ‘I am so thankful’? This week, ‘future me’ has been reviewing investments ‘past me’ made in the mid-1970s. They looked promising at the time, but the decades have not been kind to them, certainly not as kind as the salesman said they would be! Judging by the size of the Porsche 911 the salesman was driving, the investments were definitely kind to him.

“Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.” Ecclesiastes 11:6

Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, ‘future me’ is the backdrop to many of Solomon’s admonitions:

“...know that for all these things God will bring you to judgement” Ecclesiastes 11:9

We think of judgement as a once off event in the future, but judgment also plays itself out year by year, as our future selves inherit the fruits of the wise or unwise choices we make day by day.

What is the answer to ensuring that ‘future me’ looks back with fondness and gratitude at ‘past me’? Solomon offers at least three steps towards a grateful future me:

- Understand the season [Ecc 3:1-8] – there are plenty of old grey guys in my neighbourhood who pretend they are living in a different season, speeding around in topless coupes – they’re fooling no one;
- Live in fellowship with righteous people [Ecc 4: 12] – the righteousness of God is the third strand in this cord; and thirdly,
- Relish the task at hand [Ecc 9: 10].

In which season are you living? Which season is next? What are you doing to make sure that ‘Future You’, be they three years or three decades away, will look back in loving thankfulness at the you of today?

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.



Psalm 139

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

- ¹You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
- ²You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- ³You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
- ⁴Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
- ⁵You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
- ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
- ⁷Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
- ⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- ⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
- ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
- ¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
- ¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
- ¹³For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
- ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
- ¹⁷How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!
- ¹⁸Were I to count them,

they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

¹⁹ If only you, God, would slay the wicked!
Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!

²⁰ They speak of you with evil intent;
your adversaries misuse your name.

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, LORD,
and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?

²² I have nothing but hatred for them;
I count them my enemies.

²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.



Psalm 140

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

- ¹ Rescue me, LORD, from evildoers;
protect me from the violent,
² who devise evil plans in their hearts
and stir up war every day.
³ They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's;
the poison of vipers is on their lips.
⁴ Keep me safe, LORD, from the hands of the wicked;
protect me from the violent,
who devise ways to trip my feet.
⁵ The arrogant have hidden a snare for me;
they have spread out the cords of their net
and have set traps for me along my path.
⁶ I say to the LORD, "You are my God."
Hear, LORD, my cry for mercy.
⁷ Sovereign LORD, my strong deliverer,
you shield my head in the day of battle.
⁸ Do not grant the wicked their desires, LORD;
do not let their plans succeed.
⁹ Those who surround me proudly rear their heads;
may the mischief of their lips engulf them.
¹⁰ May burning coals fall on them;
may they be thrown into the fire,
into miry pits, never to rise.
¹¹ May slanderers not be established in the land;
may disaster hunt down the violent.
¹² I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.
¹³ Surely the righteous will praise your name,
and the upright will live in your presence.



Unity

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesian 4:3)

Unity is one of the main themes in NT. The devil divides: this is his specialty from the garden of Eden all through human history. God unites: this is his specialty through the Bible. The letter to Ephesians speaks a lot about real, spiritual and genuine unity and fellowship. In this letter, Paul gives us some beautiful and strong pictures in order to help us to understand what real unity is. We may call Paul’s letter to Ephesians “the letter of unity”.

1. A family (Ephesian 5:1).

We belong to a family with the same father. We are God’s children. As brothers and sisters, we keep together even if we sometimes disagree. The weakest person in the family is always in focus.

2. A building (Ephesian 2:20-21)

We are living stones built together in a structure to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. The temple is the place where the glory of God is, a place for worship, prayer and offering.

3. A body (Ephesian 4:15-16)

We all have the same spiritual DNA and we are united in a perfect way, not as an organization, but as a body. Christ is the head. Notice the teaching of Paul about the body in 1Cor.12:24-27:

“But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

4. A marriage (Ephesian 5:31-32),

“So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together...” Two persons but one flesh (1+1=1)! This is opposite what we learnt in school (1+1=2). God joins us together in the same way (a mystery)! We are different but complementary and perfectly united. A unity of love.

5. A citizenship (Ephesian 2:19)

We are citizens of God’s kingdom, with rights and responsibilities. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God and have the same kind of passport.

6. An army (Ephesian 6:10-12)

No soldier fights for himself alone but always together in an army. One commander in Chief and the army keeps together protecting and supporting each other to fight a common enemy. An army keeps together. We know that the strategy of the enemy is often to scatter the soldiers in order to win the fight.

We do not have to create All unity, it is already done by Jesus on the cross (**Ephesian 2:14**). Our task is to keep the unity, to preserve and maintain what God has done through Jesus.

To keep unity requires:

1. An effort from everyone
2. The Holy Spirit, without the Spirit, no authentic unity. We need the Holy Spirit!
3. The bond of peace creates a genuine and deep unity, not a superficial or cosmetic unity.

“...love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” (Colossians 3:14)

Allan Ekstedt – TLM Nordic Hub coordinator



The Man Who Gave Jesus a Tomb (The Last Gifts to Jesus)

Mark 15:42-47 and John 19: 38-42

Jesus died at three o'clock of the Friday afternoon and the next day was Sabbath. The new day started in Jew culture at 6 p.m. Therefore when Jesus died, it was already the time of preparation for the Sabbath, and there was very little time to waste. For after 6 p.m. the Sabbath law would operate and no work could be done. The friends of Jesus, the disciples were poor and ordinary people, they could not arrange to give an appropriate funeral to the dead body of Jesus. They did not know what to do at this stage. But two people came forward.

Joseph of Arimathaea was one. He had always been a disciple of Jesus; he was a great man and a member of the Sanhedrin, and up to now he kept his discipleship secret for he was afraid to make it known. Nicodemus was the other.

Joseph of Arrimathaea acted quickly. It frequently happened that the bodies of criminals were never buried at all, but were simply taken down and left the vultures and the scavenging wild dogs to deal with it. Golgotha may have been called the place for a skull because it was littered with skulls from previous crucifixions. Joseph went directly to Pilate and asked for the dead body of Christ. Pilate was amazed that Jesus was dead only six hours after he was crucified. But when he had checked the facts with the centurion, he gave the body of Christ to Joseph. Then the body was taken to a new tomb, which was not used before. This tomb was in the garden near the crucifixion place.

It was the Jewish custom to wrap the bodies of the dead in linen clothes and to put sweet spices between the folds of the linen. Nicodemus brought enough spices for the burial of a king.

So Joseph gave Jesus a tomb; and Nicodemus gave him the clothes to wear within the tomb and spices for the burial.

There is both tragedy and glory in these incidents:

1. There is tragedy. Both Joseph and Nicodemus were members of the Sanhedrin, but they were secret disciples of Jesus. Either they had assented themselves from the meetings of the Sanhedrin which examined Christ and formulated the charges against him, or they sat silent through it all. What a difference it would made to Jesus, if, among these condemning, hectoring voices, one voice had been raised in his support. What a difference it would made to see loyalty on one face amidst that sea of bleak, envenomed faces. But Nicodemus and Joseph were afraid to speak in favour of Jesus in Sanhedrin.

We so often leave out tributes until people are dead. How much greater would loyalty in life have been than a new tomb and shroud fitting to the dead body of Jesus. One flower in real life time is worth all the wreaths in the world of death; one word of love and praise and thanks in life is worth

all the panegyrics in the world when life is gone. Joseph is the man who gave Jesus a new tomb when he was dead but kept silent when he was alive. It is one of the commonest tragedies of life that we keep our wreaths for people's grave and our praises until they are dead. It would be definitely better to give them some of these flowers and some of these words of gratitude when they are still alive.

2. But there is glory here, too. The death of Jesus had done to Joseph and Nicodemus what not even his life could do. No sooner had Jesus died on the Cross than Joseph forgot his fear and bearded the governor with a request for the body. No sooner had Jesus died on the Cross than Nicodemus was there to bring a tribute that all men could see. The cowardice. The hesitation, the prudent concealment were gone. Those who have been afraid when Jesus was alive declared for him in a way that everyone could see as soon as he was dead. Jesus had not been dead an hour when his own prophecy came true: "And I, when I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). It may be that the silence of Nicodemus of his absence from the Sanhedrin brought sorrow to Jesus; but it is certain that he knew of the way in which they cast their fear aside after the Cross, and it is certain that already his heart was glad, for already the power of the Cross had begun to operate, and already it was drawing all men to him. The power of Cross was even then turning the coward into the hero, and the wavered into the man who took an irrevocable decision for Christ.

It may well be that it is from Joseph that all the information came about the trial before the Sanhedrin. Certainly none of the disciples were there. The information must have come from some member of the Sanhedrin, and it is probable that Joseph was the one. If that is so, he had a very real share in the writing of the gospel story.

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



You will be my witnesses

Acts 1:1-10

I don't know why, but I'm not very good at saying goodbye. I somehow want to get it all over with and move on to the next step. In my work with TLM I did a lot of travelling – the airport routine was very familiar to me and my family. But I would become restless in the hour and the minutes leading up to leaving home. I just wanted to get the emotional farewell over with and start the journey.

For my wife Jan, it was a different set of emotions of course watching me leave the house. She knew she would be without me for a couple of weeks, no doubt a bit anxious in case anything went wrong on my travels – or indeed in the home while I was away.

So, I wonder, how did the disciples feel when they had to say farewell to Jesus for the last time. There were some very mixed emotions no doubt. Luke gives us a few headlines:

- Jesus' instruction to stay put in Jerusalem till the Holy Spirit comes. They were not to know how long that would take, or that he would come in great power just 10 days later. But they stayed put as instructed.
- Then there's that naïve question about when Jesus would restore the Kingdom of Israel. I wonder which apostle asked that one? Whoever it was still hadn't taken on board the fact that Jesus' Kingdom was not about returning to earth to become an earthly king. Everything had now changed.
- Jesus responded kindly, ducking that question, saying in effect that's not important now. What he didn't add is that when the Holy Spirit came, they would see all these things with a new clarity. The question would no longer be relevant.
- Then finally, and probably the most important of all – that there was kingdom work still to be done.

In Luke's account of the ascension Jesus didn't ask them; he didn't command them, rather he just stated it as a fact. **You will be my witnesses** going out from Jerusalem into the surrounding territories and eventually all over the world. And when the Holy Spirit did come, he enabled them to understand everything that Jesus had done for them through his sacrificial death on the cross. He gave them all a great boldness and a strong desire to share that Good News. It was such powerful stuff that they would preach it and gossip it wherever they went for the rest of their lives.

They never let up on this task. The Apostles, and many others in the early church became masters of communicating the Good News, travelling all over the known world, and taking many risks to tell their story – what Jesus had done for them. They would tell of God's love, and that how trusting in Jesus can change lives – mine included.

We live in the age of communication. As I found out for myself saying farewell to my family so many times, we can travel the world freely and get to most places within a couple of days. And of course, we have the internet and social media enabling instant communication across the planet. So, I wonder, how can we use these things to share our experience of Jesus' love in our lives?

Jesus said to the assembled group “You **will** be my witnesses” and that phrase often haunts me. He wasn’t asking them, he wasn’t commanding them, he simply stated a fact – **you will be witnesses!**

I guess every experience that we have in life shapes us in one way or another. So, if we have been touched by the love of Jesus that will shape our character. We have a story to tell, however insignificant it might feel for us. We carry that story with us in all our relationships. Of course, we may choose not to share this story with others, and sadly in our UK culture where people don’t like talking about faith, it’s all too easy to stay quiet and let even small opportunities slip away.

But people around are watching. Generally, the people we interact with know who we are and that we are Christians. And as such, we are witnesses to Jesus whether we like it or not. We can be **good witnesses**, or we can be **bad witnesses**, but always we are witnesses.

My prayer is that we too will know the power of the Holy Spirit; that we won’t let opportunities slip away but rather that we will be good witnesses for Jesus.

Trevor Durston - General Director from 1993-2006. Now retired and working as a volunteer speaker for TLM.



Ascension Day

Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

Acts 1, 1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with^(a) water, but in a few days you will be baptized with^(b) the Holy Spirit.”

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”



Change altitude!

Ps. 121 "I look up at the mountains; Where will help come from? Help comes to me from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

In a moment of trial, David takes some distance and space to find peace in God and confidence in his certainties.

Bertrand Piccard, known for being the first to circumnavigate the world in a balloon, had an experience that changed his outlook on life. I learned too much, he said, to stay the same. In a balloon, there is no point in fighting the wind. It gives you the direction. When you are in the middle of the sea, there is no way to turn around. He testified: we started by being destabilized by totally unforeseen situations and by the lack of reference. We spent the first day trying to resist, and then we started to see another way to operate.

Uncertainty and curiosity allowed us to open up to the present moment, to question fundamentally. Existence regularly puts in our path moments when we lose control, but we do everything to avoid them, as they often present the appearance of crises or dramas. In short, these storms that sometimes blow on our tranquility, as painful as they are, may not all be destined to engulf us. They force us to learn a certain detachment, a reordering of our sense of values. In a balloon, if you want to maintain a direction that you have set for yourself, you have to change altitude. To achieve this, you must let go of the ballast. If we want to change direction in the winds of life, we must learn to let go. This can be our security, habits, certainties, landmarks, comfort zones... What affects us in this world is as unpredictable and elusive as the winds. On an individual level, too, health, illness, accidents, bereavement, crises, failures often occur unexpectedly, without us having been able to prepare for them, and like the winds, drag us into the unknown.

Managing a new situation by changing altitude will allow us to move in the right direction. It is also true that it will require us to offload certain things. It is not always easy to throw overboard what has accompanied us for a lifetime. Altering height is the only way for us to regain our serenity.

In our life path, let us dare to change altitude to let ourselves be carried away by the winds that will lead us to our final destination in trust and peace.

Eric Chollet - I'm retired. 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.

Changer d'altitude !

Ps. 121 « Je lève les yeux vers les montagnes ; d'où me viendra le secours ? Le secours me vient de l'Éternel, qui a fait le ciel et la terre.

Dans un moment d'épreuve, David prend de la distance pour mieux retrouver la paix en Dieu et se confier dans ses certitudes.

Bertrand Piccard, connu pour avoir été le premier à faire le tour du monde en ballon, a fait une expérience qui a changé sa vision de la vie. J'ai appris, dit-il, trop de choses pour rester le même. En ballon, rien ne sert de lutter contre le vent. C'est lui qui vous donne la direction. Lorsque vous êtes au milieu de la mer, il n'y a plus moyen de faire demi-tour. Nous avons commencé par être déstabilisés par les situations totalement imprévues, témoigne-t-il, par l'absence de repère. Nous avons passé la première journée à tenter de résister, puis nous avons commencé à entrevoir une autre façon de fonctionner. L'incertitude, curieusement, nous permettait une ouverture à l'instant présent, une remise en question fondamentale. L'existence met régulièrement sur notre chemin des moments où nous perdons le contrôle, mais nous faisons tout pour les éviter, tant ils présentent souvent l'allure de crises ou de drames. En somme, ces tempêtes qui soufflent parfois sur notre tranquillité, aussi pénibles qu'elles soient, ne sont peut-être pas toutes destinées à nous engloutir. Elles nous obligent à apprendre un certain détachement, une remise en ordre de notre sens des valeurs.

En ballon, si vous voulez maintenir une direction que vous vous êtes fixée, vous devez changer d'altitude. Pour y parvenir, nous devons lâcher du lest. Si nous voulons changer de direction dans les vents de la vie, nous devons apprendre à lâcher du lest. Ceci peut être nos sécurités, habitudes, certitudes, repères, zones de confort... Ce qui nous atteint, dans ce monde, est aussi imprévisible et insaisissable que les vents. Sur le plan individuel, également, la santé, les maladies, les accidents, les deuils, les crises, les échecs surviennent souvent à l'improviste, sans que nous ayons pu nous y préparer, et comme les vents, nous entraîne vers l'inconnu.

Gérer une situation nouvelle en changeant d'altitude va nous permettre de garder le cap. C'est aussi vrai que cela va nécessiter de notre part de nous délester de certaines choses. Ce n'est pas toujours évident de jeter par-dessus bord ce qui nous a accompagné pendant une vie. Prendre de la hauteur est le seul moyen pour nous de retrouver notre sérénité.

Dans notre chemin de vie, osons changer d'altitude pour nous laisser emporter par les vents qui vont nous conduire à notre destination finale dans la confiance et la paix.



Psalm 141

A psalm of David.

- ¹ I call to you, LORD, come quickly to me;
hear me when I call to you.
- ² May my prayer be set before you like incense;
may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.
- ³ Set a guard over my mouth, LORD;
keep watch over the door of my lips.
- ⁴ Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil
so that I take part in wicked deeds
along with those who are evildoers;
do not let me eat their delicacies.
- ⁵ Let a righteous man strike me—that is a kindness;
let him rebuke me—that is oil on my head.
My head will not refuse it,
for my prayer will still be against the deeds of evildoers.
- ⁶ Their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs,
and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken.
- ⁷ They will say, “As one plows and breaks up the earth,
so our bones have been scattered at the mouth of the grave.”
- ⁸ But my eyes are fixed on you, Sovereign LORD;
in you I take refuge—do not give me over to death.
- ⁹ Keep me safe from the traps set by evildoers,
from the snares they have laid for me.
- ¹⁰ Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
while I pass by in safety.



Psalm 142

A maskil of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer.

¹ I cry aloud to the LORD;
I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy.

² I pour out before him my complaint;
before him I tell my trouble.

³ When my spirit grows faint within me,
it is you who watch over my way.

In the path where I walk
people have hidden a snare for me.

⁴ Look and see, there is no one at my right hand;
no one is concerned for me.

I have no refuge;
no one cares for my life.

⁵ I cry to you, LORD;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."

⁶ Listen to my cry,
for I am in desperate need;
rescue me from those who pursue me,
for they are too strong for me.

⁷ Set me free from my prison,
that I may praise your name.

Then the righteous will gather about me
because of your goodness to me.



Gemstones of the Mission

James Hudson Taylor



Hudson Taylor (1832 – 1905) was the most widely used missionary in China's history. During his 51 years of service there, his China Inland Mission established 20 mission stations, brought 849 missionaries to the field (968 by 1911), trained some 700 Chinese workers, raised four million dollars by faith (following Mueller's example), and developed a witnessing Chinese church of 125,000. It has been said at least 35,000 were his own converts and that he baptized some 50,000. His gift for inspiring people to give themselves and their possessions to Christ was amazing.

Taylor was born into a Christian home. His father was a chemist and a local Methodist preacher who himself was fascinated by China in his youth. Once at age 4, Hudson piped up, "When I am a man I mean to be a missionary and go to China." Father's faith and mother's prayers meant much. Before he was born they had prayed about him going to China someday. However, soon young Taylor became a skeptical and worldly young man. He decided to live for this life only. At 15 he entered a local bank and worked as a junior clerk where, being well adjusted and happy, he was a popular teen. Worldly friends helped him scoff and swear. The gaslight and the murk of this winter left his eyes weak the rest of his life. He left the bank in 1848 to work in his father's shop.

His conversion is an amazing story. When he was 17 years of age he went into his father's library one afternoon in June, 1849 in search of a book to read. This was in a barn or warehouse adjacent to the house. Finally he picked up a gospel tract entitled, "It is Finished," and decided to read the story on the front. He came upon the expression, "The Finished work of Christ," Remembering the words, "It is Finished," he raised the question — "What was finished?" The answers seemed to fall in place and he received Christ as his Saviour.

The same afternoon and time, his mother was visiting some 75 miles away. Experiencing an intense yearning for the conversion of her son, she turned the key in the door and resolved not to leave the spot until her prayers were answered. Hours later she left with assurance. She returned 10 days later and was met at the door by her son who said he had good news for her. She said, "I know, my boy. I have been rejoicing for a fortnight in the glad tidings you have to tell me."

Mother Taylor had learned of the incident from no human source, but God had assured her.

Philippians 4,6-7



Not seen but believe

John 20:29 (NIV)

Yet Jesus said there is a greater blessing for those who believe when they cannot see. When life is confusing, yet you believe, you are blessed. When tears soak your pillow, yet you believe, you are blessed. When your hopes are crushed, yet you believe, you are blessed.

I studied at IOB (Instituto of Business), at that time I met lecturer Expeditu Ximenes. He taught us Portuguese and he is a smart person and low profile but he is not a Christian nor a believer. At every opportunity he always tried to criticize the priest or the church.

One day he criticized the offering to the church, he said it's just a church business to feed the priest he would rather put his money into games or invest in a soccer player than to make an offering. So, I asked him why does it sound like you hate the church so much? You are Timorese and have you not been baptized already? He replied, I don't believe in God, the priest only do things for their own benefit, I have never seen God! there is no God! I was annoyed and I told him You want to see God? That will only happen when you are dead. We finished the class and I did not see him for few years, until one day I got a text from my friend telling me that he had passed away, he fell down in his bathroom, just like that.

I was delegated to lead the group in prayer for our lecturer and it shocked me when we arrived at his house. The family had decorated the room and coffin as for someone who is Catholic, they have a cross with Jesus hanging on it and a candle. I recalled our last conversation and had mix feelings – I did not know whether to be sad or to laugh as when I knew him during his life he never believed in God. I just murmured near to his body, have you seen God? But I ended up praying for his soul to rest in peace and asked God to forgive his sin. Even now when I remember him, I still pray for him.



Focusing on that which is needful - story of Mary and Martha and Error of King Ahab

At the Home of Martha and Mary Luke 10: 38-42

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" ⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one.¹ Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

A Prophet Condemns Ahab 1st King 20:35-43

³⁵ By the word of the Lord one of the company of the prophets said to his companion, "Strike me with your weapon," but he refused. ³⁶ So the prophet said, "Because you have not obeyed the Lord, as soon as you leave me a lion will kill you." And after the man went away, a lion found him and killed him. ³⁷ The prophet found another man and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him and wounded him. ³⁸ Then the prophet went and stood by the road waiting for the king. He disguised himself with his headband down over his eyes. ³⁹ As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, "Your servant went into the thick of the battle, and someone came to me with a captive and said, 'Guard this man. If he is missing, it will be your life for his life, or you must pay a talent of silver.' ⁴⁰ While your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared." "That is your sentence," the king of Israel said. "You have pronounced it yourself." ⁴¹ Then the prophet quickly removed the headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. ⁴² He said to the king, "This is what the Lord says: 'You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people.'" ⁴³ Sullen and angry, the king of Israel went to his palace in Samaria.

Keeping to what is essential is a big challenge in our world today. Because the word has become a global village and there is a deluge of information pouring into our space no matter how we try to filter them. We are in danger of been carried away doing what may not hold eternity value.

- How do we keep to the essential
 - ✓ Let us always remember what brought us to The Leprosy Mission
 - ✓ Deliberately and consistently chose what is better, like Jesus testify concerning Mary
 - ✓ Avoid distraction and do not get busy here and there like the man in the story above who lost what he supposes to guard.
 - ✓ Count the cost and consequences; 'does it worth it' 'does the end justify the means'

- ✓ Make choice matrix as guide for setting priority based on urgent and based on Importance of activities

Choice Matrix

<p>Urgent and important Do it now! Especially when time is of essence (e.g., Mary sat at the feet of Jesus),</p>	<p>Urgent but not important Develop self-control to allocate less or no time to do it. e.g watching a live football or your favourite live TV show or sport</p>
<p>Important but not urgent Plan, allocate time to do it or delegate someone to do it so that you can spend time on urgent matters. Examples: Bible study, church fellowship, spiritual retreat, Project development, annual report, elective surgery, daily exercise or aerobic, cleaning your garage.</p>	<p>Not urgent and not important Do only as a reward at your pleasure. Ask yourself what am I rewarding myself by doing this! E.g watching favourite TV program, YouTube and other social media, bird watching or hunting bush rabbit, or fishing.</p>

Paul encouraged Timothy to guard with greatest care and keep unchanged, the treasure, the precious truth (gospel) which has been entrusted to him with the help of the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 1:14

In order to keep focus and not get distracted in doing what has been committed to us, we need the help of the Holy Spirit. I therefore pray that the Lord will help us in this difficult period to keep our focus, hold on to the essential and lived a fulfilled life in Christ.

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



"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature"

II Corinthians 5:17

As a normal five year old, he thrived on attention and found it hard to amuse himself on his own for any length of time (television and video games had not yet reached Africa).

I was working on a sermon that morning when the wife cheerfully informed me that she was going to a meeting and it would be greatly appreciated if I could "keep one eye on him". Having thus been "volunteered", I had to assume my fatherly duty with a cheerful and resigned heart.

I proposed that he go and play in his room so that I could get on with my preparation. My fears soon became reality as every few minutes he found a pretext to come into my study to ask or show something.

As I desperately looked for a solution, my eye was caught by a newspaper on the floor. There was a full page map of the world. Inspired by the potential, I tore the "world" into dozens of pieces, informed him it was a puzzle, gave him some cellotape and told him not to come back until he had put the world together. Knowing that he had no idea of where Jordan fitted in in relation to Japan, Norway to Nepal ... I inwardly congratulated myself on my astuteness and settled down to what I thought would be a long time of uninterrupted work.

About 20 minutes later he rushed in and with a smile of delight announced "I have finished dad, come and see". Surprised, unbelievably and a bit frustrated I followed him to his room. Sure enough, there was the map of the world properly stuck together. "Well done, congratulations, but how did you manage to get it right so quickly?"

"I did not know where or how to start, but then I noticed that the other side of the paper was a man wearing a suit. I put the man together and when the man was right, the world was right too."

Have we ever felt that we would like to "put the world right" but we don't know where and how to start? The best place to begin with is ourselves. God, through Christ Jesus can make us new creatures and transform our lives. We, in turn, can then be carriers of Him to others.

*Father, so control my thoughts, words and actions that my life may glorify you
in the society in which you have placed me.*

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.



Aspire to gain a crown in heaven!

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus' finished work on the Cross (Eph 2:8-10).

Daily we make it our aim to please God in all things (2 Cor 5:9-11).

One day, believers will have to give a personal account of themselves at the Judgement Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:13+14).

The Bible encourages us to aspire to an array of Heavenly Crowns –

1) THE CROWN OF LIFE (James 1:12) – Are you truly saved by the blood of Jesus Christ to receive this one?

2) THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (2 Tim 4:7+8) – Are you pursuing a life of holiness? Do you hate what God hates and love what He loves?

3) THE INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN (1 Cor 9:24-27) – Are you serving God faithfully with all your time, talents and treasures? Good + faithful servant!?

4) THE CROWN OF GLORY (1 Pet 5:1-4) – Are you a humble Christian leader or a despot of sorts? The great apostle Paul saw himself as a slave to all!

5) THE CROWN OF LIFE (Nr 2) (Rev 2:10) – This is the martyrs' crown, but such need not fear the second death!

6) THE CROWN OF REJOICING (1 Thes 2:18-20) – Are you endeavouring to witness for Jesus effectively at all times? Gathering souls for Jesus in Heaven?

7) THE CROWNS OF GOLD (Rev 4:4,10,11) – Given only to the 24 elders before God's Throne – spontaneously they cast their crowns before Him!

CONCLUSION: All these crowns are made available to God's aspiring children, because of Jesus' CROWN OF THORNS (Matth 27:27 ff)!.....

Weary of self, and laden with my sin, I look at Heaven, and long to enter in; but there no evil thing may find a home, and yet I hear a voice that bids me "come!"

So vile I am, how dare I hope to stand in the pure glory of that Holy Land? Before the whiteness of that Throne appear? Yet there are hands stretched out to me.

It is the voice of Jesus that I hear, His are the hands stretched out to me, and His the blood that can for all atone, and set me faultless there before the Throne.

Yea, Thou wilt answer for me righteous Lord: Thine all the merits, mine the great reward; Thine the sharp thorns, and mine the golden crown; mine the life won,

And Thine the life laid down.

Samuel John Stone (1839 – 1900)



Psalm 143

A psalm of David.

¹ LORD, hear my prayer,
listen to my cry for mercy;
in your faithfulness and righteousness
come to my relief.

² Do not bring your servant into judgment,
for no one living is righteous before you.

³ The enemy pursues me,
he crushes me to the ground;
he makes me dwell in the darkness
like those long dead.

⁴ So my spirit grows faint within me;
my heart within me is dismayed.

⁵ I remember the days of long ago;
I meditate on all your works
and consider what your hands have done.

⁶ I spread out my hands to you;
I thirst for you like a parched land.

⁷ Answer me quickly, LORD;
my spirit fails.

Do not hide your face from me
or I will be like those who go down to the pit.

⁸ Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.

Show me the way I should go,
for to you I entrust my life.

⁹ Rescue me from my enemies, LORD,
for I hide myself in you.

¹⁰ Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God;
may your good Spirit
lead me on level ground.

¹¹ For your name's sake, LORD, preserve my life;
in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble.

¹² In your unfailing love, silence my enemies;
destroy all my foes,
for I am your servant.



Pentecost I

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

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

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,[Ⓜ] ¹⁰ Phrygia 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!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

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

Peter Addresses the Crowd

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.



Pentecost II

For silent meditation and prayer

Acts 2

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴² They *devoted* themselves

to the apostles' teaching and

to fellowship,

to the breaking of bread and

to prayer.

⁴³ Everyone was *filled with awe* at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

⁴⁴ All the believers *were together* and *had everything in common*.

⁴⁵ They *sold property* and possessions to *give to anyone* who had need.

⁴⁶ Every day *they continued to meet together* in the temple courts.

They *broke bread* in their homes and *ate together* with glad and sincere hearts,

⁴⁷ *praising God* and

enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



Faith in Action

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. 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. 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. Hebrews 11.1-3

I recently made a statement: *"The Church, Christian ministry is dying by degrees. We've become too clever, we have too many ideas, we know too much to use faith"; it's so easy to explain away the supernatural and apply our own understanding. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6*

The Church should live by faith: *"The just shall live by faith..." Hebrews 11.6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

So what are we facing in this world today?

- Is this day & age any different to the past?
- Has this situation ever been encountered before?
- Economic meltdown
- Wars, unrest...
- Strained generosity
- Reduction in giving...
- Can we say yes?
- Remember Jesus Christ is still *"the same yesterday, today, & forever!" Luke 18:8 "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"*

The work of the Lord is above all these things

- If we've trusted our ways, the ways of mankind, the instruction of man, our abilities to work it out... we will encounter difficulties & challenges

- We will find ourselves as those who know no God

You see *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.*

- When we believe in evolution faith has just flown out of the window
- When we doubt the Word of God and replace Bible teaching with well planned reasoning, faith has just flown out of the window
- But when we use faith we'll be surprised what we can do! *Psalm 60:12 KJV Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.*

A short list of people who used their faith in God from Hebrews chapter 11

By faith – Abel worshiped God

By faith – Enoch walked into heaven

By faith – Noah built an ark

By faith – Abraham received his inheritance

By faith – Abraham & Sarah had Isaac

By faith – Israel passed through the Red Sea

By faith – TLM will accomplish God's call to this mission! Hebrews 11:32

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak...

And what more shall I say?

By faith – the staff of all the TLM offices around the world

- Will do mighty exploits
- Will see God as the answer to the challenge
- Trust the Lord

Trust our Heavenly Father for Holy Spirit motivated inspired ways of reaching the people of this world to complete the calling Our Heavenly Father has placed on TLM! When you see the invisible by faith, you can do the impossible, it's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see!

Where to now?

- Back to faith
- Repent of lack of faith & trust in God & using own ways
- Ask for forgiveness
- Accept forgiveness
- Get into God's programme for TLM!
- You may not be doing things wrong, but give God a chance to bring about change for the good in any negative situation
- Shake off the dust, pray, trust, hope and see the hand of God move Matthew 19:26 *Jesus looked at them (and He is looking at you today) and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

And what more shall I say?

By faith – TLM will trust their God to do good works!

Dan Izzett - Zimbabwe. Retired pastor. I was diagnosed with lepromatous leprosy in 1972. Served on TLM board for eight years and on the Zimbabwe board for 15 years. I now serve on the ALM board and do advocacy for ALM and TLM. We have relocated to the UK to live with our children.



From 20th May 2018, for refreshment

“The Holy Spirit: The Great Transformer”

Romans 12 v1-2. (Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.... **Transformation** is a word hardly ever found in the Bible (this is one of only two instances identified by my concordance), but it is an idea found throughout OT and NT. It was chosen a few years ago by TLMEW as the theme of their Southwark Cathedral flower festival, and was a good concept to expound different aspects of TLM’s work. We are in the business of **transforming** leprosy from a feared and misunderstood affliction into a mild infection, from an inevitably progressive disability to a manageable disease, from an almost worldwide epidemic to a low level endemic illness affecting only a few people each year....

Transforming people from a state of hopelessness and helplessness into a position of confidence in their ability to deal with their disorder, from a state of loneliness to a position where mutual support from similarly affected people sustains them, from a state of spiritual despair to a position where they know they are valued members of the human race created by God and equal in His eyes, from a state of exclusion from social affairs to a position where they can exercise their civil rights, from a state of being passive recipients of reluctant almsgiving to a position of proudly making their own contribution to the society in which they live.

The key to this sort of **transformation** is knowledge: knowing the Truth about leprosy which is a matter of science but also the Truth about mankind which is a matter of theology. The Truth which makes men free. The Truth which is found in Jesus. If we are going to be able to bring **transformation** to others, we all (staff & supporters) need to be **transformed** ‘til we see ourselves as citizens of Kingdom of God, as Servants of The Most High, as Brethren made in image of God, as Sons of the Lord Almighty as Spirit-filled Ambassadors.....

What can **transform** us is only the Spirit of God, when He dwells in us and we allow Him to take over our lives. But I want to suggest that there is another sense in which the Holy Spirit can be described as **The Transformer!**

When I worked in Nepal at a hospital in a distant location away from other residential areas, there was a tall pylon at the end of our road from which high power cables brought electricity into the compound. We could not use it directly, we had to have a **transformer**, which somehow changed the high voltage electric current into a level of voltage safe for our appliances in hospital and staff quarters. So, we could access the national electricity supply. And in 1991 only the hospital had such power. At night, with its electric lighting, it shone like a beacon amongst hillsides where scattered homesteads had candles or kerosene lamps. Because we had the power supply we could also run medical equipment such as an anaesthetic machine & cautery, laboratory analysers, a nebuliser for patients with asthma, and so on. The electricity enabled us to serve the community much better than we could otherwise have done. One day when our transformer broke we were without electricity. The national supply was still running. It was nearby but we could not safely access that power without the **Transformer** in between it and us. I think the Holy Spirit is like a **transformer** acting as a safe conduit between us & heaven to bring God’s enormous high voltage power into our lives

(which can only cope with low voltage power)! The administrative superintendent found out that to replace our unrepairable transformer would entail buying (at great expense) a new one from Thailand, having it shipped to Kolkata, then brought overland by truck into Nepal and finally (with difficulty) up our unmade road into the compound. So, we had a delay of a week or two (relying on the small amount of power produced by our own generator), before normal service could be resumed in our compound (and afterwards we appreciated having a transformer, more than we had ever done before!)

Fortunately, The Holy Spirit does not break down or fail or need replacing after a period of service. He is eternal and does not sleep nor go off duty, but is ever there for us, to link us safely to the unlimited power of God, to bring us power for the service we undertake in Jesus' name. Jesus called Him the Counsellor or -in some translations- the Mediator (John 14, v 25-26), and the disciples could not have well understood His nature & role before He came into their lives (Acts 2, v 1-4) bringing a rush of power, represented as flames and wind and extra-ordinary linguistic abilities (which they needed at that time to tell out the good news of their Lord). In a way, the Holy Spirit was making available to the disciples the power of God which had always been there but not been able to flow into their lives until they were safely "plugged in" to heaven through Him.

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".

Authors in ABC Order**Country****Textuaries in Canonical Order**

<i>Allan Ekstedt</i>	<i>15 May</i>	<i>Sweden</i>		Psalm 86,12	<i>11 May</i>
<i>Bunmi Oluloto</i>	<i>24 May</i>	<i>Niger</i>		Psalm 96,12-13	<i>2 May</i>
<i>Dan Izzett</i>	<i>30 May</i>	<i>Zimbabwe/UK</i>		Psalm 121	<i>19 May</i>
<i>David king of Israel</i>	<i>7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 May</i>	<i>Israel</i>		Psalm 127	<i>1 May</i>
<i>+ Eddie Askew</i>	<i>2 May</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalm 137	<i>6 May</i>
<i>Eric Chollet</i>	<i>19 May</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Psalm 138	<i>7 May</i>
<i>Élie Fofolo</i>	<i>4 May</i>	<i>DR Congo</i>		Psalm 139	<i>13 May</i>
<i>Johan Velema Dr</i>	<i>8 May</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>		Psalm 140	<i>14 May</i>
<i>John Twynam-Perkins</i>	<i>9 May</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalm 141	<i>20 May</i>
<i>Luke, evangelist</i>	<i>18, 28, 29 May</i>	<i>Israel</i>		Psalm 142	<i>21 May</i>
<i>Martina Soares</i>	<i>23 May</i>	<i>Timor Leste</i>		Psalm 143	<i>27 May</i>
<i>Otto Kingsley</i>	<i>5, 26 May</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Ecclesiastes 11,6	<i>12 May</i>
<i>Peter Laubscher</i>	<i>12 May</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Matthew 25	<i>3 May</i>
<i>Pradeep and Sarah Failbus</i>	<i>16 May</i>	<i>India</i>		Mark 5, 27	<i>9 May</i>
<i>Raju PLN Dr</i>	<i>11 May</i>	<i>India</i>		Mark 5, 41-42	<i>9 May</i>
<i>Ruth Butlin Dr</i>	<i>31 May</i>	<i>UK</i>		Mark 15, 42-47	<i>16 May</i>
<i>Silvano Perotti</i>	<i>25 May</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Luke 10,38-42	<i>24 May</i>
<i>Trevor Durston</i>	<i>17 May</i>	<i>UK</i>		John 19,38-42	<i>16 May</i>
				John 20, 29	<i>23 May</i>
				Acts 1,1-10	<i>17 May</i>
				Acts 1,1-5	<i>18 May</i>
				Acts 2	<i>28, 29 May</i>
				Romans 5,3	<i>4 May</i>
				Romans 12, 1-2	<i>31 May</i>
				2 Cor 4,7	<i>8 May</i>
				2 Cor 5,17	<i>25 May</i>

				Ephesians 4,3	15 May
				Philippians 4,6-7	22 May
				Hebrews 11,1-3	30 May

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