



## Editorial | Frailty and Fickleness

Despite our preferred impression that we are strong, resolute individuals who think things out for ourselves, act logically, don't follow the crowd... the reality is that we are but human, and there is a strong tendency within human nature to be fickle and follow the crowd. Isaiah 53:6 describes our sinfulness like this: "*We each like sheep have gone astray [sheep go astray because of their visible tendency to follow the flock they are in]; we have turned every one to his own way*". We each sin in our own unique and personal ways; but we do so because we follow the flock and the context of Isaiah 53 is that the crucifixion of the Lord was necessary exactly because of this. He was the ultimate strong man psychologically, who went the Father's way when no other human ever did.

Biblical history is full of examples of people following the crowd and thereby ending up doing sinful things which their better judgment would tell them not to do. At least two of Joseph's brothers were against throwing him into the pit and their comments to each other when they later meet him in Egypt suggest that hardly any of them really wanted to do what they did. But the power of groupthink was greater than that of their individual conscience; a whole group ended up doing something unthinkable, when the majority knew it was wrong.

And so it is that whole groups of people - even God's people - can be very fickle. The history of David's final years shows this. "The people" were totally loyal to David; then to Absalom; then back to David; then to Adonijah and other pretenders to the throne; then back to David. "The crowd" were initially loyal to John the Baptist and then to Jesus - "*the world has gone after him*", was the Jewish leadership's frustrated comment. But the same crowd who cried "*Hosanna!*" were soon screaming "*Crucify Him!*" just days later. The same "crowd" were just two months later deeply moved by Peter's preaching, so that the Jewish authorities were again frustrated by the widespread support for the Jesus movement.

Searching our own lives and reflecting upon the lives of those known to us reveals the same tendency - heights of devotion one day compared to miserable failure the next. Those who once sacrificed all for the sake of the Truth - now indifferent, or even atheist or agnostic. People who would die for each other in love and care, cooling off over months and years into apathy. Brethren who once seemed so strong in faith suddenly come out on internet forums admitting they no longer really believe in God nor even desire to be in His Kingdom. Human beings are fickle and psychologically weak and frail. The frailty or weakness of humanity is a major Bible theme; and the weakness in view is not so much physical as moral and mental. A hard word or email, a rejection... may do deep damage to another person, although that damage may not be immediately apparent. Recognizing the frailty of others will bring us to a sensitivity towards them which requires constant self-control and self-analysis of our words and unspoken messages. To live sensitively in this increasingly desensitized world is not only very hard, it is part of picking up the cross of our Lord and following Him to the same painful death.



### **Focus Upon The Cross**

The Bible abounds with images of stability. God is presented as a rock, and we are to build our house upon the rock of obedience to His word. We are to have the unwavering faith which is not *“like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed”* (James 1:6). The image of being blown around is also used in Eph. 4:14: *“Henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine [teaching]”*. There are those who read something on the internet, hear an idea compellingly presented by a teacher somewhere, and they are shaken by it, *“carried about of winds”* (Jude 12; Heb. 13:9). In those passages, the same Greek word for “carried about” is used; and the only other time Paul uses it is in speaking of how he *“always carried about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus”* (2 Cor. 4:10). Here we begin to see one antidote for such instability: a conscious, daily commitment to share in something of the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus, in hope and even present experience of His resurrection life breaking forth into our personal experience. We are asked to pick up His cross, to make His death our own. A firm commitment to this will enable us to stand firm against the various ‘winds’ which buffet us - especially in this internet generation, where information which we’re unable (if we’re honest) to really process assails us from all sides. How does that suggested teaching, that possible way of living and being, square with my solid, once-for-all commitment to follow my Lord to His cross and beyond? This is the difference which the Bible makes in human life. An acceptance that finally, in that volume, we have the expressed will of God for us, gives us a basis upon which to firmly decide our principles and positions “For the Bible tells me so”. This is a feature of the seed sown on good ground - that it has a “root” (Mt. 13:6). But the interpretation of the sower parable adds the significant detail that he who withers away *“has not root in himself”* (Mt. 13:21). Our root is in God’s word and in the things of the crucified Christ, the smitten rock, and yet it is ‘in ourselves’ in the sense that God’s word and the things of Christ are deep within us. This, then, is the intention of regular, daily, habitual reading and meditation upon God’s word, both as it is in the Bible and as it is in the character and personality of the Lord Jesus, who should likewise be our daily meditation. It is *“the root of the trees”* which will be judged (Lk. 3:9; Mk. 11:20); it is who we are and what we have deep within us which is so crucial, and which withstands every wind. There is a colossal emptiness within the hearts of so many, an emptiness willingly filled with the meaningless words of popular music, entertainment and a life focused upon the cosmetic rather than the essential. We have so much more to fill our minds with - let us do so. Carry a pocket Bible with you, or have the Bible on your phone. Dip into it in the course of the day. *“Gird up the loins of your mind”*, Peter says - gather together our thoughts instead of letting them flow and drift everywhere, thus hampering our movement. Focus them upon the Lord Jesus. Have Him as Lord and Master of your heart. Be spiritually minded. And as we inevitably reflect that all this is so much easier read than done - pray that the rock of Israel and the smitten rock of His Son, shall fill our minds with their spirit, so that really it shall be possible for us.

## **Sensitivity**

Recognizing that we are all so frail should make us more sensitive. We live in a world which is becoming desensitized and almost dehumanized. From the hard looks of chic young women to the indifference of an old man dropping a candy wrapper on the street, this world is hard and getting harder. We who have the spirit of Jesus, the mind of Christ, are not to live as the world, who sin because they are “past feeling”, a-pathetic, without pathos, without sensitivity (Eph. 4:19), with a blind mind (another figure for insensitivity), with a vain heart, and who have therefore given themselves over to the life of selfish greediness and petty materialism. The lack of true emotion, pathos and passion in our postmodern world is all a reflection of this chronic insensitivity. Paul’s comment is that “*you have not so learned Christ*” (Eph. 4:20). To have His mind, His spirit, is to be sensitive both to God and man; and to thereby live with feeling and passion. Like Paul we will rejoice with those who rejoice, and feel so connected with our brethren that if one of them stumbles, we as it were ourselves feel the fire of their future condemnation spreading over us right now (2 Cor. 11:29). Our inspiration to live soft in this hard world comes from the spirit, the way of being, the pattern, the essence, of the Father and His Son. The way the Lord healed people reflects His sensitivity - He commanded food to be brought for a girl who had been dead and was therefore hungry (Lk. 8:55). On an even higher level, He is given the title “The Spirit” because His spirit / mind is at one with both God and us; hence, Romans 8 explains, He is such a matchless mediator. He is simply so sensitive to our thinking as well as God’s.

## **The Sensitive Lord**

The sensitivity of both God and the Bible writers is indicated by the way in which the inspired writers often sense the likely response to what they have just written, and engage with that response ahead of time. Thus after having written of the resurrection, Paul foresees the response, and goes on: “*But someone will say, How are the dead raised up?*” (1 Cor. 15:35). Your homework can be to look for other examples of this kind of thing, especially in Romans. What we are to learn in practice is that we should anticipate the likely response of others to our words, actions and positions - rather than bluntly present “truth” (as we perceive it) without any care for their response to it. For we aren’t simply ‘witnessing truth’ to people in an in-your-face manner; but seeking to win them for Christ, to walk at one with them in the same steps and same spirit.

The way the Lord speaks with Peter in Jn. 21:15-17 is an essay in His sensitivity and having thought about how Peter would be feeling, the assurances he would need, the questions he was likely asking himself, the challenge he would be facing, the encouragement he would need on the path to salvation. We need to engage with others in this same way. Jesus had already met Peter twice since His resurrection, but hadn’t raised the obvious issue of Peter’s denials and now He does it only after He has first eaten with Peter. We must bear in mind that to eat together, especially to take bread and give it to others, implied acceptance and religious fellowship (Jn. 21:13 - reminiscent of the breaking of bread, the same words for ‘bread’, ‘take’ and ‘give’ are found in Mt. 26:26). The Lord firstly fellowshiped with Peter and only then moved on to probe the issue of his disloyalty, after having first affirmed His abiding love for Peter. He had tried to arrange circumstance to provoke Peter to himself engage with the issue - for the triple questioning, the triple invitation to work for Him, all took place by a fire of coals - just as Peter’s triple denials had. We see clearly portrayed here the gentle, seeking spirit of the Lord.

*"You know that I love you"* was met by the Lord with the comment that Peter must feed His sheep. This wasn't so much a commandment / commission, as the Lord explaining that Peter's love for Him personally would be reflected in the degree to which Peter loved the Lord's sheep. John grasped this clearly, when he underlines throughout his letters that we cannot have love for God without loving our brethren. The Father and Son are to be identified with their people. *"Lovest thou me?"* was a question for Peter's benefit, not in order to give the Lord information which He didn't then have. His great sensitivity to Peter led Him to foresee the obvious question in Peter's mind: 'Has He forgiven me?'. And the Lord is saying that Peter knows the answer insofar as Peter knows how much he loves Jesus, on the principle that whoever loves much has been forgiven much (Lk. 7:47). The allusion back to that incident in Luke 7 is confirmed by the way that the phrase 'to love more' occurs elsewhere only there, in Lk. 7:42: *"Which of them will love him [Jesus] most?"* [s.w. "more"]. Jesus had already forgiven Peter; the answer to Peter's concern about whether he had been forgiven was really 'Yes you have, if you believe it; and if you believe it, you will love me, and according to how much you love me, you will know how much forgiveness you have received'. In all this, we see the careful sensitivity of the Lord Jesus to His people, foreseeing and feeling our doubts and fears, our questions; and responding to them in a profound way.

The Lord Jesus is the same today as He was yesterday. The Gospel records are the history of only what He began to do and teach people (Acts 1:1). He didn't interact with a few people for 33 years and then speed off to Heaven, to get on with other things until He returns to earth. No. He is as active in your life and mine as He was in that of Peter.

### **In Practice**

The command not to murder has its basis in the fact that human life is not for us to use as we will (Ex. 20:13; Lev. 17:11; Gen. 9:6). It is God's life within those other people around us. Others, therefore, are not for us to use as we will. Gentleness and sensitivity to the life of others, in family life, the workplace, on the road... is therefore an outcome of our belief that the 'other' person likewise has been created by God and has life from Him. To drive in an unkind way, to act in a thoughtless way to others' detriment, is therefore the same basic error as taking human life in murder. When it comes to our brethren, we have in them a unique, God-arranged opportunity to express His sensitivity to us, and our love for Him, through our sensitivity to them. How will they feel if I write this, what are their needs, concerns, fears, questions, insecurities... how will my action, my words, help them towards God's Kingdom? It all seems too great a challenge, for life passes too quickly for us to be able to work out a sensitive response to every situation we enter, every phone call we take. But this is where the concept of the spirit / mind / disposition of Jesus comes so powerfully into play. If we make Him our daily study and meditation, then we can have the mind / spirit of Christ, and somehow we will naturally respond as He would. For "the knowledge of Him" gives us the spirit of wisdom, that we may know how to respond to every man (Eph. 1:17; Col. 4:6).

*Duncan Heaster*

## News from Africa

### NEWS FROM CONGO



#### KINSHASA



**Kinshasa Sunday School, Congo | Having a lesson on King Solomon**



**Kinshasa Sunday School, pictured above and below left**

### NEWS FROM KENYA



#### ELDORET | Bro Nasongi Harron

I have developed a good foundation of the Bible from studying *'Introduction to Bible Basics'* and want to move further forward.

Initially I picked up the book from a street vendor and found it was not like any other Christian book. When I first reached Study 4 on Death, I realised I was empty of hope as I had no Bible knowledge on true Christianity.

Brothers, it takes heart to do such a good work, to lead people to the right decision – to take the direction which leads to the Kingdom of God, that will be set up in this world with our Lord Jesus Christ as our King.

We are grateful for the gospel material that you have been sending to us. Please, brothers, continue sending to us, for not only is this material helping us, but it is also helping the friends who are with us.

#### SINDO | Bro John Owalo Onani

Jesus Christ never wrote the New Testament, but he empowered the apostles by the power of the holy spirit to write it and to lay down first century Christianity based upon the prophets, apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone (Ephesians 2:20).

Today, I would like to talk about God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis chapters 12 to 50). Yahweh, God of Israel, through the promises to the heroes of faith, revealed the key to understand the Bible based upon understanding the knowledge of the Father and His son Jesus Christ. The root cause originated in the book of Genesis chapter 3 when Adam listened to and obeyed the voice of his wife Eve, instead of listening to and obeying the voice of Yahweh God of Israel. In Genesis 11, people decided to build a tower to heaven and God turned away the thoughts in their minds to misunderstand, and brought on confusion and their plan was stopped. Then God made His covenant with Abraham.

In Genesis 22:1, Abraham was tested but God was pleased because Abraham obeyed his voice: Abraham became a friend of God (Isaiah 41:8; 2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23). *"God said 'I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse him who curses you. All the families of the earth will be blessed in you. Your descendants will be in Egypt 430 years.'" (Genesis 12:2; 15:15; Ezekiel 12:40-41).*

*"For I say that Christ has been made a minister of the circumcision for the faith of God that he might confirm the promises given to the fathers" (Romans 15:8). "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, raised Jesus from the grave" (Acts 3:13). "The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus whom you delivered up and rejected before the presence of Pilate when he had determined to release him" (Acts 5:13). God is the one who raised up Jesus from the grave: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you slew, hanging him on a tree."*

How can we, the Gentiles, join Israel to share the promise of salvation in the Kingdom of God on earth? By belief, baptism and obedience, accept the gospel message: *"the things of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ"* (Acts 8:12). The Kingdom of God was the kingdom of Israel which was on earth and was destroyed to be given to Jesus of Nazareth (Ezekiel 21:25-27). *"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has set under His own authority'" (Acts 1:6-7).*

## WEBUYE



**Bro Francis Wanjala sends us this photo of the orphanage where he works. Alas throughout Africa there are lots of such orphanages in need of all kind of support.**

NEWS FROM MALAWI



DZALEKA REFUGEE CAMP | Bro John Abwe



### **The Ecclesia at Dzaleka Refugee Camp**

I am very happy to write to you and tell you about the continuation of the Ecclesia of Dzaleka. We all greet you in the name of Jesus Christ.

It is my sincere hope that you still remember that when Brother Ikola Bernard was still here in Dzaleka Refugee Camp we were two distinct groups under the same church. But when brother Bernard was resettled to the United States of America, I and the other group met, prayed to God and reached a very important step of forgiving each other and forgetting what had happened in the past. Therefore, we are united and we are very happy. For assurance from your side, we have enclosed two photos for you, of members standing in front of the Ecclesia of Dzaleka brothers, sisters and the children of the Sunday School.



When we were united, we had new church members, among whom some brothers and sisters went to the extent of becoming baptised. Those who accepted the gospel of good news were six in total, and we took them to Salima in Lake Malawi for baptism, after getting an assistance of 50 USD from Brother Bernard, and this, with an added 60 USD for trip expenditures (hiring a car and food) helped to make the trip successful. The trip and baptisms took place, by the grace of our Almighty God, on 20th July 2016, and we have enclosed a photo showing the new baptised church members for your assurance (pictured below). At this point, seven more people are taking baptism lessons and this makes us feel very happy for the prospect of having new born again members in Jesus Christ.

The Ecclesia of Dzaleka has made their request to you to help us with Bibles, books of songs and Misingi ya Biblia in Swahili versions. Here in Dzaleka, Bibles are sold at 12000 Malawi Kwacha, which is around 20 USD. These Bibles originated from Tanzania.

I am pleased to say our church is making good progress, without any problems. We number 67 in total. There are 31 adults, among whom 24 are baptised and seven are following baptism sessions. The number of children is 36. But we have the problem to face of the food crisis. It is now 3 months since we received any food, and we have no hope of getting any within these few coming days. Children and pregnant women are suffering a lot due to lack of food, hence your help is of great importance to us.

**KASUNGU | Bro Harmony**

Thank you very much for passing on to me your student who is at the baptism stage in my area. I have contacted him and after further instruction am arranging for his baptism at Mzima, God willing. The 180 booklets you sent on “*When Will Jesus Return to the Earth?*” has encouraged and strengthened Brethren and Sisters. Others are shocked at the message which is not taught in the churches, but are reluctant to resign from their churches and join us.



**In the centre is Peter who is about to be baptised with Bro Harmony on his left**

## NEWS FROM NIGERIA



### ENUGA | Bro Goddy Nwasu

Many people from different Ecclesias came to the CYC Meeting at Asaba-Delto State, with their own activities. There was very heavy rain for the first day when we began, yet people defied the heavy downpour, coming from all directions of the country to unite with their beloved Brethren and Sisters whom they longed to see.

There were also at the time despairing crises in Nigeria, together with an economic recession, yet our Brethren did not regard them. They attended the gathering with happiness, in order to worship together with others. The topic was “Walk Together.” In fact it was a joyful gathering: seven people were baptised from different Ecclesias. The names of the newly baptised are *Igwodala Glory; Oubiebo Meshah,; Itak Udoh; Grace Owoseni; Chigozie Chisom; Godswill Uche Ndukwe; and Owuo Gba-Prosper Adaeze.*

I use this media to thank our overseas brethren for their immense support of the gathering, especially Bro Daffyd Jenkins and Bro Philip Orah who were with us for the full time. We also thank the hosting Ecclesia.

Bro Emma Ndukwe received his *Bible Basics*. Could you please send some of these magazines to Bro Clement Ugwu and Bro David UD. The distribution of “*When will Jesus return to the earth?*” is a booklet of the moment as people here are worrying about our country’s troubles everyday, they are of course a fulfilment of the signs of the times. Many are unable to have more than one meal a day.

### MBAISE | Bro Blessing Nwigwe

We are certainly living in the last days, waiting and praying for the return of our Lord Jesus back to the earth.

Many of the people in my ecclesia wish to thank you for the “*Gospel News*”, which helps them to know more of the gospel message and understand the Word of God. I would like to receive more books from you for my reading, and for sharing during public preaching.

#### **OHAFIA | Bro Gaius Egwu**

Nigeria is now in the grip of a terrible economic crisis; that is a sign of the Lord’s coming. Garri, which is our common food, was sold at 12 cups for 100 (Naira) up to 2015, and is now today sold at one cup for 100 Naira. In addition, many of the workers are owed six to nine months’ salary – everything is in turmoil.

The picture I enclose was taken during the wedding of our Sister and Brother Aloy, from Olokoro Kwuano Ecclesia, to Sister Janet Kalu of Ohafia Ecclesia. Dressed in the white suit is the husband, Bro Aloy, standing to the left is Bro Ibeka Thoms and Bro Joseph, both of Aba Ecclesia, whilst on the right, after a brother, is myself with my beloved Sister wife, Ngozi Gaius.

I still require more copies of “*When will Jesus Return to the Earth?*” with other materials, God willing, as well as, if possible, three Bibles, even already used ones would be appreciated.



#### **NEWS FROM RWANDA**



##### **| Omar B Ndamutsa**

I am writing to thank you for *Gospel News* material that I have been receiving since I had contact with Christadelphians. These booklets help in witnessing to friends and relatives.

Today I am more than happy to be holding in my hands “*When Will Jesus Return to the Earth?*” I have well read the booklet and have found it a real eye-opener. I am going to study it so that I will be equipped enough to witness.

#### **NEWS FROM TANZANIA**



##### **MUSOMA**



**Bro Joseph and Sis Monica have been actively studying together the new NEV Bibles. Sis Monica proudly holding up her treasured copy.**

### **MWANZA | Bro Moses Komanya**

I am now 72 years old and the last 27 years have been spent in Christ. My eyes are now troubling me and I have difficulty reading the Bible and am in need of a second-hand or new pair of glasses. I wondered if someone could help me with these?

The photo enclosed are of two Bible reading Sisters – on the right, Sis Shikalile Komanya, and on the left, Sis Dotto Kalilyaya of Kidodi Ecclesia (pictured above).

I wish to let you know of my plans in these last days because my strength for working very hard at cultivating with hand hoe means that I can't manage it.



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Conscience is God's built-in warning system. Be very happy when it hurts you. Be very worried when it doesn't.

*"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men."*

Acts 24:16

## **NEWS FROM ZAMBIA**



### **KAFUE | Bro Emerson Ntebelma**

Bro Emerson Ntebelma wishes to thank everyone who writes to him, sending literature and encouragement. He has taken some photos of other places he has visited, and has sent us some nice pictures.



**Group of Sunday meeting at Kalomo.**



**At Mazabuka: left Joice, then Ruth and Esther, with Isaac sitting down.**



**Ted Musaka and James Zulu, with their Bibles at Choma.**



**Bro Simon Milimo who daily reads his Bible which increases his faith in God, which encourages him to follow Jesus. Alas, like all of us he fails at times, but thanks Jesus for opening the path so that our failings can be forgiven.**



Ema Zulu goes to the meetings every Sunday and is glad they read the three portions of the Bible at the meetings. She is taking the 40 lesson course.

#### **KAPIRIMPOSHI | Bro Austen Mwaka**

I am in Lusaka District, but away from the town, where I am trying to spread the Good News to the needy. Kindly send me a copy of *Wrested Scriptures*: I had one copy, but someone borrowed it and failed to return it.

Some have left our group to either form their own churches, or join other religious groups. But the Truth will remain the Truth. I would rather remain alone than follow false churches who believe in Satan as a supernatural human being – something that is not Biblical.

#### **NDOLA | Bro James Mwanza**

Jesus tells us that He will come like a thief at night – that means He will come at any time. We should expect Him to come soon. The Bible tells us that faith in God is cardinal; without faith we can't please God.

With this in mind, let us work very hard to read the Bible every day, let us also learn to share with others the Word of God – it is very important in our lives. Jesus Christ gave us a very good example by sending out the twelve disciples to preach the Gospel. “*Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*” We thank God for what He has done for us. Thank you for the spiritual food in *Gospel News*.

#### **PEMBA | Bro Joseph Mulawo**

In our area I have a good number now of Bible students who have shown keen interest in our Bible Correspondence Course. I should thank Bro Kelly Simayumbulwa who is assisting these students with lessons accordingly.

I should also let you know that I must praise and thank our Almighty God for giving us good rains this season. If this continues like this to the end of the season, then we hope to have a good harvest.

Publishing and distributing Bibles and other Bible reading materials is a very important work, for it widens the knowledge about the good news of the Kingdom of God, especially here in Africa, where only a few people are able to afford to buy a Bible.

In our country, Zambia, we mostly use English as our official language. As such, English Bibles, *Bible Basics* and other reading materials can indeed help. We are grateful for all that is done to help with preaching the gospel by this means.



**Bro Joseph Mulawo**

## NEWS FROM ZIMBABWE



### **CHIPINGE | Bro Farai Makandeni**

Preaching here is going very well, as we had ten students doing Shona lessons, of whom six are from Ratelshoeck and the other four in various areas within Chipinge district. We also have seven students taking English lessons, four of whom are also from this Estate.

The Word of God must be spread to all corners of the world because the Bible brings the good news of the Kingdom of God which will be set up on the earth, and speaks of the forgiveness of sins through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The message is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Gen. 22:17,18, Daniel 2:44, also Matt.4:23, 6:12-18, 24:14. Study of the Bible is the only way to learn about God. It tells us all we need to know about Him and what He requires of us. God is the true author of the Bible. We need to read it every day.

Bible prophecy is being fulfilled, and there are many signs today to show that the coming of Jesus is near. People are experiencing many problems in the world today.

### **MAYUNJE | Bro Misheck Hondoma**

Now I can write again to you and the Advancement Trust for book supplies as the bone in my right arm is healed. Without CAT we would not have the books and literature you send us. We need more as we need to improve our knowledge of the Bible. This year we have two new members: one brother and one sister. We need copies of English Bibles as without them we cannot go preaching from door to door. In our area, the Jehovah's Witnesses are like ants. We write and write to other people but nothing ever comes, but we know that you send us books.

### **NKULUMANE | Bro Mesheck Shoko**

We must remember that God created us with a purpose, to become a special part of His creation. Naturally sometimes through weakness we fail to live the lives we would like to, but by repentance we can obtain forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ, and our failings blotted out before him.

We want to always please God, as He has called us to be saints and wants us to finally enter into the rest of the Kingdom. Humanly it is impossible to live perfect lives, but by the mercy and grace of God the naturally impossible is possible. So let us press on trying to do our best for He wants us, indeed has promised those who try to serve Him a place in the Kingdom.

## **TONGOGORA | Bro Shukuru Isa**

On behalf of Tongogora Ecclesia, we all say, “God bless you” for sending *Gospel News* and many other mailing items. As an ecclesia, we find that important, and we hope these will be of interest to us, together with our Bible lessons.

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Be more concerned with what God thinks about you than what people think about you.

*“But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.”*

*Matthew 6:33 NKJV*

## **News from the Americas**

### **NEWS FROM Trinidad**



#### **| Bro George Constantine**

Thank you so much for the beautiful book *“When Will Jesus Return to the Earth?”* it was really a very stimulating and encouraging book.

The Privy Council have had their meeting regarding those sentenced to LIFE in jail. I was able to read a copy of the proceedings. The Lawyer representing those sentenced to life imprisonment presented a really good case of behalf of the inmates. We are not certain what the decisions will be on the two main issues.

The first is that a life sentence should not be as it is here now, it can only end if pardoned by the President, which rarely happens. The sentence should be for a specific length of time. The other issue is that each inmate should have been individually assessed before being sentenced, because some may deserve lesser sentences. I was given life sentence together with 50 others.

It is all in God’s hand and I will keep my faith in Him. The judges will take some time to give their decision, so I will continue to be patient. Thanks to all my brethren and Sisters for your prayers.

## **News from Oceania**

### **NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA**



#### **| Sis Joy Little**

Greetings, I will order some more *“When Will Jesus Return to the Earth?”* later and some of the larger size that you sent to Connie.

My family has been very blessed. I have five children (all baptised) and thirteen grandchildren that we are working on, two have already been baptised. My Great grandfather, Henry Hardinge, came from England in 1860s and was an early evangelist particularly in the gold mining areas. He was secretary for the first Australian conference in Melbourne on New Year’s day 1883, so I realise the importance of personally spreading the gospel word.

I keenly follow the work that is being done by CAT and the many brothers and sisters at this time, and look forward to our Masters return. How wonderful that there are still people who heed God’s call.

### **Rejoice in The Lord**

*“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food, though the flock may be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* (Habakkuk 3:17)

A modern day Habakkuk might say, *“Although our crops are failing for lack of rain; inflation has made feed so expensive we can’t feed the flock; union wages are so high we can’t afford to hire reapers; higher interest rates are making it impossible to borrow money – and even if we could harvest our crops we can’t get enough for them to cover our expenses – yet I will rejoice in the Lord.”*

Most modern day Habakkuks would say all but the last part. We don’t find many people rejoicing in the Lord nowadays. We do find people complaining about the stock market, the high cost of sugar, the shortage of gasoline, the sluggishness of business and the high unemployment, but we do not find them expressing their joy in the God of their salvation. Surely the lesson Habakkuk would have us learn is that we are to rejoice in the Lord in spite of the troubles we may be facing. Most people simply moan and groan about their troubles, but forget to find joy in the God of their salvation. How about us? Are we so full of the love of God that it shines through, even when we are sick or out of work? Do we recognise that the Lord gives and the Lord takes away – *“blessed be the Name of the Lord.”* How do we stand up to the troubles that come our way? Whatever trouble comes to us is allowed by God, else we would not have it. Do we honestly believe that *“there has no temptation taken us but such as is common to man and God is faithful and will not allow us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear”*? But will the temptation also make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it? By studying the lives of the faithful of other ages, we can get an insight into how we should act when we are faced with trials. We know that we are going to be tried, for *“whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”* Nehemiah had enemies within and without, yet the work he was doing was blessed by God. God could have struck all Nehemiah’s enemies dead so that the wall could be built without being hindered, but this is not the way God prepares us for that future temple of which we all hope to be part.

Jesus promises us that *“he who overcomes and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations”*. It is impossible to overcome unless there is something to

overcome and challenge us. Even in this life there is joy in doing the difficult tasks. A game of tennis is no fun unless we have an opponent who can challenge us and return our serve.

Let us face life confidently, knowing that *“all things are working together for good for those who love the Lord, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* We know that *“if God be for us”* there is nothing, or no-one who can be against us. So we can cry out with Paul, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

We do not know what the year 2017 will bring to us. We do know that Daniel told us of a time of trouble that is coming and it isn't here yet. So let us take courage, knowing that *“they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”* These comforting words of Elisha relieved the anxiety of his servant when he saw that they were surrounded by Syrian soldiers. The angels that were present then to help Elisha are still alive, and are able to deliver us if that be the Lord's will. It is easy to be frightened when we are in trouble, but instead, let us take courage like Joshua did, when he was afraid. God told him, *“Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed.”* Believing this, we will *“rejoice in the Lord, we will joy in the God of our salvation.”*

***“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” Psalm 34:7***



**Bro Moses Komanya and Sister Wife of Bro Mwanzogolo in Mikumi Ecclesia**

*Bro Moses Komanya (Mwaanza, Tanzania)*

### **“We are Unprofitable Servants”**

*“When ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: We have done that which was OUR DUTY to do.”*

The law of Christ goes contrary to modern sentiment on many points. Here is another instance. The modern temper attaches little weight to the consideration of “duty.” It inclines men to take great credit to themselves for well doing, and in its more generous form, to recognise it in others. No sooner does a man do anything fairly decent in this line, than his friends get up a testimonial or a complimentary dinner, or some other way of *“doing honour one to another.”*

Jesus discourages this tendency; and in this he is in accordance with the highest form of reason of which man is capable. Man, as a created being, owes it to God to obey His commandments. God has associated our highest well-being with it. God's approval of the performances of our obligation, and the recompense He purposes, are all of His favour.

There is no claim on our part. We do our duty: we do not profit God in this. We cannot. *“We are unprofitable servants,”* in this sense. The profit is all on our side. Boastful sentiment is barbarous. Even complacency is offensive. Only the attitude of humility is reasonable.

If those who had *“done ALL those things that are commanded”* are acceptable only when they say, *“We are unprofitable servants,”* what is the position of those who do NOT *“the things that are commanded?”* This is the most pointed bearing of Christ’s injunction in this case. He illustrates it by the case of servants who do their duty. They are acceptable, but are not regarded as specially meritorious. But if they do not their duty, they are worse than useless. This is the position of the bulk of those who say they are “Christians”.

*Bro Robert Roberts (“Nazareth Revisited”)*

### **Sayings of Jesus on the Cross**

The first saying of Jesus while on the cross was for those who crucified him, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”* (Luke 23:34). Here we find that Jesus in His final sufferings often mentions the Fatherhood of God – that God is our Father and He is a comforter in our times of trial.

Here we see that the pain and difficulty of speech during crucifixion was such that it was apparent that the Lord meant us to hear and meditate upon the words that He (Jesus) uttered from the cross. It would have been easier for Him to have prayed those words to himself, within his own thoughts, but instead he made the effort to speak them out loud, in order to inspire a similar effort in us to communicate with others when we feel like retreating into ourselves – to comfort them with our forgiveness, and to pray for our enemies.

They divided his clothes by casting lots: to divide his garments among themselves was such petty materialism in the presence of the cross of Jesus Christ that it was, and is, pathetic.

The second saying of Jesus on the cross was *“Truly, I say to you today, (right now) – that you will indeed be with me in Paradise.”* Jesus said these words after he had heard from the thief on his cross who asked, *“Jesus, remember me when you come in your Kingdom.”* (Luke 23:42).

The thief asked Jesus to remember him for good when Jesus returned to establish his Kingdom, because the thief was not ignorant of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God which Jesus had been preaching. He knew that there would be judgement day at the establishment of that Kingdom. That is why he asked Jesus to remember him, as he knew Jesus would rise from the dead to eventually be the Judge of that day – to remember him for good. The thief was certainly not ignorant, he recognised that salvation in the day of resurrection and judgement would be pronounced by Jesus Christ. Jesus replied that the thief *“would be with him in paradise.”* This word ‘Paradise’ in Greek simply refers to the garden of Eden, which will be seen in the future Kingdom of God on the earth. Christ and the thief did not go to the Kingdom that day – Jesus went to the grave, but as we know, being free from sin, His Father raised him from death. The thief was aware that he was responsible and sinful, and would appear at the judgement. But Jesus gave him the reassurance, and said: *“I can tell you now” (right away - that you don’t have to wait until then to find out my verdict upon you) – “you will be with me in the Kingdom.”*

*Bro Joseph Mulawo (Pemba, Zambia)*

## **The LORD's Hand is Not Shortened**

God has made clear that no matter how our lives may work out, He is not very far off to save us, and He will be there at any time whenever we call upon His name wholeheartedly.

The passage below from the book of Isaiah chapter 59 is clearly showing us how God cares for our every need here on earth.

*“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice’ eggs, and weave the spider’s web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.*

*Therefore, is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.*

*Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and forever.”*

This short article will help us to understand how much God loves us. When we consider some of the historical aspects of the children of Israel, we will notice that God did not forsake them nor abandoned them during those hard times they endured, especially during those wars which took place in the land of Israel.

Finally, brothers and sisters, let us hold fast our hope though we may not be loved by our neighbours, nor even by our brothers and sisters for one reason or the other.

*Bro Stephen Siamabi (Mazabuka, Zambia)*

### **A Stronghold**

The Lord is good, good in Himself essentially and independently, eternally and unchangeably. He is good to His own people. Let us praise Him as good in the most emphatic and unlimited sense: *“There is none good but One, that is, God”* (Matt. 19:17). He is a *“stronghold in a day of trouble”* - the day of trouble when the trial is special, and the day of trouble which is temporary but yet long enough to last through our life unless the Lord prevent it, the day of trouble when within, without, around, there seem to be only care and fear and want and grief. Even in the midst of chaos *“God is good”*.

In our troubled day it is comforting to be able to rely on One who never changes. We place our trust in Him, and can do no better; we find no firmer stronghold, no stronger foundation.

*Bro Claud Lamb*

### **The Event of the Ages?**

The general population of the world today is about to experience ‘The Event of the Ages’ – the second coming of the Lord from heaven: first, to His elect of all ages, and then to the secular nations of the earth. His purpose then shall be the subjection of all rule and authority of the Kingdoms of men, making them to bow to His righteous reign, and to enjoy the peace which they have always claimed to have desired, but have never attained. What assurance do believers have of these facts?

There are many Biblical ones, they are the only valid assurances.

Although accounted as nothing by most nations, and as insignificant by world bodies, such as the United Nations, Israel’s establishment in the end time was the signal event which marked the beginning of the countdown to the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus’ words recorded in Luke’s 21st chapter, prominently mention the end of *“The Times of the Gentiles.”*

***“... Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.” Ezekiel 11:17***



**Bro Austin Mwaka standing with Bro David Nicholls and his wife, Sis Linda, (UK) pictured long back**

*Bro Austin Mwaka (Kapiri-Mposhi, Zambia)*

### **Atomic Power**

Against the background of nature, atomic weapons are small. An average local thunderstorm releases as much energy as a plutonium bomb; a hurricane or an earthquake, a million times as much. Nevertheless, they are frightful weapons, capable of inflicting terrible destruction and wholesale death.



*‘Nature’ March 13, 1954*

### **Following Jesus**

To those who would follow Him, Jesus commanded, *“if any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, wife and children, and brethren and sisters and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”* (Luke 14:26). There have been people who have heard this passage of scripture read in meetings and have immediately relinquished their profession of following Christ.

Are we actually to hate our own family and brother? Jesus most certainly did not mean we were to have malice and malignity in our hearts towards our family, but that it is not to be above normal affection. When such affection for our families becomes worship, then that affection has become idolatry, for family affection has stolen what belongs to God. In that respect, we are to love our families less than we love God. The command of Jesus was no license for anyone to neglect his family, or his rightful duties, under the guise of serving God. Anyone truly serving God

is very diligent about the welfare of his family, both in their physical and spiritual needs. God's commands are righteous and just. There is nothing that has precedence over the will of God.

Peter was once very bold in his claim that he would follow Jesus to death if necessary. It was but a few hours later that Peter denied his Lord three times. This denial caused Peter so much sorrow and such searching of his own heart that he repented and renewed his vows to God and made such a consecration to serve God that he never failed again. Peter became a great man of faith and served the Lord faithfully to the end of his life. So we have a price to pay, and pay it we must if we are to obtain all God has in store for us. If we pay it, great will be our reward on earth.

*Bro Gift Lungu (Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe)*

### **The Good Shepherd**

Jesus came to earth to be the Good Shepherd, to lead His sheep into the right path. The Israelites were God's chosen people, the *"sheep of his pasture"* but they had sinned so terribly that God had permitted them to be scattered into all the world. Many of the kings and priests, their shepherds in early days, had been wicked men and had led the Israelites away or astray. Now Jesus had come to gather the wretched wanderers into a safe fold again. It was said of Jesus when He was preaching to a great multitude at one time: *"He was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."* (Matt. 9:36)



However, there were not many of those "sheep" who wanted to be saved. *"Jesus came to His own, but His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become the sons of God."* (John 1:12). Those who received him were just a little flock, but how they loved the Lord! They followed Him wherever He went. Once when the crowds had forsaken Jesus, He asked his faithful few if they would go also? Peter answered, *"To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."* (John 6:68).

When the Jews refused to listen to Jesus, He turned to the Gentiles. He told the people, *"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."* The Jews and Gentiles alike must come through Jesus as the Chief Shepherd. So let us follow the Good Shepherd with the assurance that we will not drift towards the outer edge of the flock.

*Bro Gift Lungu (Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe)*

### **God is Faithful**

This brought tears into my eyes.

In the country of Armenia, in 1988, Samuel and Danielle sent their son off to school. Samuel squatted before his son and looked at him in the eye, *“Have a good day in school and remember, no matter what, I’ll always be there for you”*. They hugged and the boy ran off to school.

Hours later, a powerful earthquake rocked the area. In the midst of the pandemonium, Samuel and Danielle agonised over what might have happened to their son, but they could not get any information. The radio announced that there were thousands of casualties. Samuel then grabbed his coat and headed to the school yard. When he reached the area, what he saw brought tears to his eyes, Armand’s school was a pile of debris. Other parents were standing and crying.

Samuel found the place where Armand’s class used to be and began pulling a broken beam off the pile of rubble. He then grabbed a rock and put it to the side and then grabbed another one. One of the parents looking on asked, *“What are you doing?”*. *“Digging for my son”*, Samuel answered. The man then said, *“You’re just going to make matters worse. The building is unstable”* and tried to pull Samuel away from his work. Samuel just kept on working. As the time wore on, one by one, the other parents left. Then a worker tried to pull Samuel away from the rubble. Samuel looked at him and said, *“Won’t you help me?”*. The worker left and Samuel kept on digging.

All through the night and into the next day, Samuel continued digging. Parents placed flowers and pictures of their children on the ruins, but Samuel kept on working. He picked up a beam and pushed it out of the way when he heard a faint cry, *“Help! Help!”* Samuel listened, but didn’t hear anything again. Then he heard a muffled voice, *“Papa!”*

Samuel began to dig furiously, he could see his son. *“Come out son”*, he said with relief.

*“No”*, Armand said, *“Let the other kids come out first because I know you’ll get me”*. Child after child emerged until finally, little Armand slid out. Samuel took him up into his arms and Armand said, *“I told the other kids not to worry because you told me that you’ll always be there for me!”*

Fourteen children were saved that day because one parent was faithful. How much more is our God Almighty? Whether trapped by fallen debris or ensnared by life’s hardships and struggles, we are never cut off from God’s faithfulness. He is true to His character. He is reliable and trustworthy and can always be counted on. As Christians, let us keep trusting God to the end.

*Bro Isaiah Odiwuor Awino (S Nyanza, Kenya)*

### **Talk About It**

So far as the preaching of the gospel goes, we are back in the days of Noah, this for sure. Even if, in the past fifteen years or so, we have not gone flat-out in gospel proclamation, it is still true that from time to time some stalwart efforts have been made. Yet as the coming of Christ comes nearer, bigger and nobler efforts seem only to produce small results and discouragement.

Without doubt, so we assure each other, it is because these are just the days of Noah that so many of our well-intentioned efforts flounder, so we comfort ourselves over the meagre success that follows. Thus, alas, we perhaps excuse ourselves from further effort. 'Lord, we tried, You know we tried. But we might as well give up. These are the days of Noah. Please send the Deluge, quick.'

However, until the Deluge comes, we have no warrant to give up. Until the Lord Himself shuts the door, we must hold it wide open, and shout to everyone: "*Come in, there's a little room left*".

*Witness Committee*

## **Love**

When we love and want to be loved, it must not be as the world loves. We must, as Christ did, learn to know the meaning of 'Agape' – that is the love which God has shown us. "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" (John 3:16).

The Son was hung on the cross because of love, for it is the love God has for us that caused Him to allow the Jews to kill Jesus. (Romans 5:8). So you cannot say 'I love someone', if he or she hurt you and you never forgave or forgot the hurt.

We are going to look at seven points which are contrary to love:-

- 1| *Corrupt words:*** when we allow our tongue to rule our body (Eph. 4:29).
- 2| *Grieving the Lord:*** when you see someone who might wrong you, and immediately your heart is hardened against them.
- 3| *Bitterness:*** when you hear something good happens to someone other than yourself, and you feel hatred. (Eph. 4:31).
- 4| *Wrath:*** A woman once told me that she discovered her husband going with another woman, and she decided to go out with other men until he changed his behaviour. When you cannot forget the past, that means you are also sinning. (Eph. 4:31).
- 5| *Anger:*** being easily provoked, annoyed and lacking in self-control. (See 2 Tim. 3:3 and Eph. 4:31).
- 6| *Clamour:*** whenever you wish to speak to your husband or wife, children or others, you shout – a state of causing confusion both in the Ecclesia and in the home.
- 7| *Malice:*** a desire to harm someone because you feel they have offended you and you must hurt them in return.

In Matthew 5:44 it is recorded that Jesus says, "*Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.*"

Let us see how God loves: He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. A man or woman who needs shade can go under a tree for shelter, but the tree never rejects the bad ones: that is the love of God. He gave us His Son Jesus Christ who always loves us and died for the forgiveness of our sins.

We read in 1 Corinthians 13 the true meaning of love:

*“Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become like sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil. Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail, whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. (verse 13) And now abide faith, hope, love – these three, but the greatest of these is love.”*

*Bro Gaius Egwu (Ohaflia, Nigeria)*

### **Burundi and Congo Adventure**

Bro Benoit Mukendi of the West Toronto Canadian Ecclesia made an extensive visit to some ecclesias supported by a team of brethren, John Epembwe, Joseph Lwitela, Swedi M’Mende, Denis Mpawenayo, as well as other local members. Sometimes they divided into smaller groups and visited in all ten ecclesias, exhorting, and encouraging them, resulting in twenty two baptisms in five different ecclesias.

It is not generally appreciated the extent to which the work has expanded in these areas and the numerous photos give a favourable impression of the lively community of brethren and sisters there.

Several languages are spoken but many understand French and the CAT translation of the French NEV New Testaments, together with a mini commentary on every page and the summary of *Bible Basics* at the back, make it an important preaching tool wherever French is understood.



**Bujumbura Ecclesia the 9th July 2017**



**Newly baptized from Gasorwe Ecclesia**



**From left: Bro Benoit Mukendi; Bro Samuel Hacimana; Bro Denis Mpawenayo; Bro Joseph Lwitela; Bro John Epembwe and Bro Swedi M'Mende**



**Newly baptized from Kalundja and Baraka Ecclesias**



**Sister Divine from Buganda Ecclesia**



**Some sisters from Buganda Ecclesia**



**Bro Denis Mpawenayo**



**Newly baptized from Kalundja and Baraka Ecclesias**

*Bro Denis Mpawenayo (Bujumbura Ecclesia, Burundi)*

### **Paul's Letter to the Romans | Chapter 8 Verse 1**

Verses taken out of context can cause considerable discussion and to try to understand the verse in isolation can open up pathways to mis-interpretation. Verse one of Romans chapter eight is such a verse. Bro John Carter acknowledges this in his book 'The Letter to the Romans': *"In coming to this chapter, we come to a variety of difficulties. 'There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'"*

Do we understand, then, that those in Christ are no longer condemned? Those in Christ are those who have been baptized into his saving Name. So have these people been relieved of the condemnation given to Adam because of his sin and are free from the sentence of death which was imposed on Adam which we have all inherited? Such thoughts should set alarm bells ringing in the minds of Bible students who claim to have the Truth. Why? Because those who desire to be "IN CHRIST" do so to separate themselves from the sinful nature of Adam and become related to Jesus in baptism and the hope that is extended to us by such action.

What is that hope? It is a place in the Kingdom of God and to live there in the strength of immortality. But if the reason for being in Christ is to have this hope, then we cannot have immortality now, otherwise we could not hope for it. *"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works"* (Matthew 16:27). *"And, behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his works shall be"* (Revelation 22:12). Immediately we see how difficulties can arise when a verse is taken out of context.

Looking again at the verse, Romans 8:1, the word "therefore" suggests that Paul is continuing his thoughts from chapter 7. What has he been saying there? He is dealing with the law of sin and death. We are all mortal sinful creatures, descendants from Adam, inheriting the sentence of death. Adam was given the choice of obeying God, but he was disobedient and he received the sentence: *"As in Adam all die"*. Bro John Carter writes on page 92 of his book: *"That is the truth of the matter. Assured prospect of eternal life, not a possession through being in Christ"*.

An assured prospect! We apply for a job, but it is up to us if we get it. If we can present ourselves in the right way, it is an Assured Prospect, but it may not materialize. So it is with baptism into Jesus. The fact is that he is our mediator: we can receive forgiveness of our sins if they are confessed through Jesus. The fact that we are baptized into Jesus gives us an assured prospect of eternal life if we remain faithful and do our best. Being in Christ, with the result of our sins being forgiven, there is acquittal. Man is reckoned not guilty. There is no condemnation. Bro Carter says *"We create difficulties when we try to read into the words of scripture the particular meaning which the same words may have acquired through religious controversy."*

So what does Paul mean when he says there is now for us in Christ no condemnation? There is a present freedom, certainly, but not from the death inherited from Adam, which will certainly send us to the grave. The freedom that we have is freedom from our sins as obstacles to a future life. One commentary puts it like this: *"We believe that in baptism there is a transition from a state of alienation in Adam to a citizenship in Christ and through it we shall ultimately be free from Adam's sin, mortality. We are not personally responsible for Adam's sin, but we are all under the result of that sin and are baptized to remove the condemnation which came thereby and to place us in Christ, reconciled to God."*

The apostle Paul in Romans chapter seven struggles with the fact that while he makes every effort to do that which is right, he still does those things that are wrong, *"For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do"* (verse 19). This is because of mortality. Paul is fighting the law of sin: *"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin"* (verse 24-25). Paul, although in Christ, was well aware that he was mortal, thus his struggle. But he looked forward to the time that he had preached about for so long, when his Lord would return to change his body from mortal to immortal. That was to come!

Adamic condemnation brings a physical disability inherited from Adam. We are freed from this condemnation and reconciled to God at baptism. But, we are not freed from the physical disability until the change of the body. Who are in Christ? Being 'in Christ' means much more than being dependent upon Christ or being a follower of Christ. We should be 'in Christ'. Salvation is not assured. It is conditional. Ellicott's commentary says this: *"A result is thus attained which the Law of Moses could not accomplish, but which is accomplished in the Gospel. The Christian is entirely freed from the law of sin and death and from the condemnation it entails. But he is so upon the condition that this freedom is for him a reality, that it really proceeds from the indwelling spirit of Christ"*.

We pray that our Lord will soon return to establish his Father's Kingdom and, in His mercy, allow us to worship Him in the strength of immortality.

*Bro Roy Soffe (Portsmouth, UK)*

### **"I Have Kept the Faith"**

The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to Timothy summed up the meaning of "Christian pilgrimage" in words that are well known to Bible readers everywhere: *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"* (2 Tim. 4.7). What a wealth of meaning there is in these

words: he had waged a continual Christian warfare as a good soldier of Christ, always on service, zealous, uncomplaining, vigilant and patient.

He also saw his pilgrimage as a long course to be travelled. He found it arduous at times, but in spite of the ups and downs, the distresses and the frustrations, he trod the path to the end, esteeming it a joy for the things he believed.

The great thing was that Paul kept the faith. He remained true to the things he had espoused, even the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was a living example of the faith, carrying the light of Christ wherever he went, not sparing himself.

In the fullness of faith he was able to say: *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philipp. 3.14). This indeed typified his whole life; there was the forward march in the things of God, the reaching out to the Lord Jesus Christ, who only can offer salvation through his own name.

These things must have meaning for the brethren and sisters today, if we are to be among that great company who shall stand approved at the last day.

The Apostle to the Gentiles has shown us the way in which we ought to walk. There can be no standing still in the Truth, and we must individually and collectively go forward in unity and love, to the salvation that can be ours by the grace of God. We have no righteousness of our own for we continually fall short of our vocation in Jesus, and yet God is able to justify us by faith and grant us a place in His Kingdom.

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My job is to take care of the possible and trust God with the impossible.

*"And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."*

*Psalm 9:10*

*D.M.E.*

### **Triumphant in Suffering**

What a strange thought! Is that not being too optimistic? Can any good thing come out of trouble?

*"And we know that to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose, all things work together for good."* (Romans 8:28). One thing is certain; being human, we are bound to experience trouble, *"for man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."* (Job 5:7).

Troubles do not fly away the moment one becomes a Christian. The Lord warned, *"In the world ye shall have tribulation"* (John 16:33).

Coping with trouble becomes, therefore, an inescapable aspect of life; handling it wisely is one of life's biggest challenges. The word of God speaks further, *"Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down. He also flees like a shadow, and doesn't continue."* (Job 14:1-2).

Suffering is an inescapable part of life. Trying to run away from it, or wishing for a troublefree life is futile. Murmuring and complaining bring no solutions. God kindly gives us the solution in His Word. In suffering, learn how to find blessing, joy, opportunity and a means of bringing glory to God. God turns losses into gain. Through suffering we learn how to minister to others. Opportunities to witness are opened to the saints as they suffer and respond according to the will of God.

Yes, we have noted that suffering can play a role in the making of a person. At the same time, it also has a way of bringing to light what that person is presently made of. The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay. We have to understand God and His words, and it will help us to rightly face things. *“See now that I, even I, am He. There are no gods with me. I kill and make alive. I wound and I heal.”* (Deuteronomy 32:29). This observation helps us understand why human response to the trials of life can vary so widely. Some people, when overtaken by trouble, go to pieces.

Others come to their senses. Possibly you have heard of the men described in the couplet that follows:

- *Two men looked out from prison bars: one saw mud, the other, stars.*
- *A commonly heard opinion declares that life is 10 percent what you make it and 90 percent how you take it.*

Although not found in the Bible, those words express an idea that is compatible with Bible truth. Jesus, for example, pronounces a blessing upon those who rejoice even in the midst of persecution! Let’s recall the words of David: *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”* (Psalm 119:71). Why could he say that? Evidently God had taught him how to get the most out of his troubles. I hope we are all eager to learn this lesson because it is so essential.

### **Some negatives to avoid**

- **Do not set your heart on a trouble-free life to begin with** - don’t waste your time, wishing for a trouble-free life.
- **Do not seek selfish benefits** – do not try to get the wrong thing out of your trouble – with very little effort, a person can make this mistake.

### **Some positive guidelines**

- **View trouble as a teacher** – some prefer bitter medicine over sweet – is not beneficial. Although it hurts, they like to put iodine into their wounds: it hurts good.
- **View trouble as a challenge** – the second guideline is to view trouble, not as a hardship to escape, but as a challenge to meet.
- **Face trouble one day at a time** – meet troubles one day at a time. One saint, in looking back over her life, made this acknowledgement *“I have had a lot of trouble, most of which never happened.”* Borrowing trouble from tomorrow is an all too common habit, but it is a bad habit, because it unfits one for dealing wisely with today’s trouble. An anxious patient asked his doctor, *“How long shall I have to lie here and suffer?”* Kindly and wisely the doctor replied, *“Just one day at a time.”* That is more than merely human counsel, it is also our mandate from heaven. In essence, it corresponds with Matthew 6:34, *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the*

*evil (trouble) thereof.*” This is our Lord’s way of telling us to leave the future to Him and be prepared for the present.

• **View trouble as God’s school** - view trouble as a school in which God wants to train His children. It has been observed that whenever God has needed some choice human instrument for a particularly difficult role, He nearly always puts him through some school of hardship. It appears as though God has lessons to teach that can be learned nowhere but in the school of suffering. He wants to build into our character qualities that evidently can be acquired nowhere else. Justification for this view of suffering and these claims is found in 1 Peter 5:10: *“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, comfort and settle you.”* In the light of this revelation, it might even be permissible to liken suffering to God’s post-graduate training school, where those who have attended His other schools are further perfected.

Through His servant the Psalmist, God warns us, *“Be ye not as the horse, or the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle”* (Psalm 32:9). The typical young, unbroken horse is stubborn and uncooperative. Consequently, it suffers a great deal with little gain – a waste of pain. The point of the passage is that with us it ought to be different. Possessing God-given understanding, we ought to be co-operative so that God, by various means, including trouble, can break us, make us, and conform us to the image of His Son. While attending this school, you will receive further training in the best ways to respond to hardship. On the negative side, you will be taught, *“Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him.”* (Hebrews 12:5).



**King Saul attempts to kill David with his javelin**

*Bro Gaius Egwu (Ohafia, Nigeria)*

### **Fearless Evangelists**

To the thoughtful mind the greatest argument for the resurrection of Christ must always be the fact that Christianity rose with its founder.

Nothing but Resurrection can explain the transformation of the men we saw running in panic from Gethsemane into the fearless evangelists of the Acts of the Apostles. These cowed, despondent men stood forth in the city they dreaded and faced rulers and people alike, indicting them for slaying their Lord, announcing his resurrection, and baptizing thousands of repentant Jews who trembled at their words. Before they had been in mortal fear of arrest; now

they were to go forth boldly facing imprisonment, persecution and death, and they were to go forth gloriously, counting it joy to suffer for his sake.

*Bro Melva Purkis, from his book 'A Life of Jesus'*

## **The Sounds in the World**

The sounds in the world indicate that the time is nearly up: our Lord Jesus is nearer to coming. Many things are happening, like commotions, floods in many places, financial crises, wars, threats against Israel, children away from parents. Brothers and Sisters, are we really aware of what the Bible says about the rule of Jesus? Are we aware of what Romans says in 7:7-25? Beware of sinning and make sure that your Christian knowledge helps to overcome temptations. So often we do what we don't like and leave the better way of God.

So many worldly things in this life are very difficult to cope with. Even basic things like the cost of living affect not only our domestic lives but are causing some ecclesias to break down. Whatever happens, remember our salvation. It is God who is the owner of the earth, so we should always respect His word (Exodus 19:4-6). We have the chance to be given everlasting life: God knows everything we think and do. We need to respect His holiness. We are told to be aware of the false prophets who claim to be doing miracles, such as healing blind people, but at the same time they are teaching wrong doctrine and leading people astray (Mark 7:6-9).

***"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8***

Our purpose is to live a good life in this age. How can we get that life? By following in the footsteps of Christ. Remember how God taught the Israelites: *"I shall bless you. I am your God"* (see Deuteronomy 28, especially 6-10). But they went on to forget God in spite of all the good things He did for them and ended up punished. Now, others of us can find God. We have benefitted from God's grace and also become His servants. He has taken darkness from our face and eyes, and selected us out from darkness to pass into the light. We shall be in Christ until the end.

We will never know the time or the day of his coming (1 Peter 2:9-10). Let us keep watch and spread the word everywhere and for everyone, doing and preaching the true gospel of fellowship, and giving to widows and orphans. We are examples of Jesus, to indicate the light, not darkness or corrupters (Romans 5:1-11).

Bro John Thomas was one of those disciples who suffered hardships (as Paul had in the extreme). He suffered a shipwreck and devoted 15 years to Bible study to find much faith in God's word. Why? Because God had saved his life when he was about to die. So John Thomas took measures to publish the salvation of God by spreading the gospel to everyone around him. With the help of the spirit of God, the gospel spread to the United Kingdom and Bro Robert Roberts. The word then spread worldwide, saying 'God is here, the son of God is here'. Jesus said 'Come all, the Father has everything you need. Come and take, bless you all'. So it is our duty now in the same way to spread the gospel, not benefitting personally. Let our aim be to serve the Lord so that our names stay written in the book of life.

Spreading out from Chishumba ecclesia, it is so good to see more ecclesias opening in Mozambique. This mainly because of one faithful brother who, in his turn, suffered difficulties but is a good example for us all. Like through Bre John Thomas and Robert Roberts, we have come to a knowledge of the true gospel. As Hebrews 5:11-14 says, a Christian develops by reading the Bible daily. We can be encouraged by the signs of the times but we need to pay attention to the Bible and the examples of faith described in it. Throughout scripture there are those who turned away from God even in the early church. But we should be of those who receive understanding and be fruitful. We need to be spiritually enlightened so that our ministry is always good.

*Bro Misheck Hondoma (Magunje, Zimbabwe)*

### **Proof of the Genuineness of The Scriptures**

The manuscripts (MSS) of scripture are innumerable. They belong to all ages and some are very ancient. They have been kept for centuries in distant parts of the world, under the custody of opposing sects and in circumstances that made extensive or important alterations impossible.

The possessors of the MSS deemed them of the highest value, and professed to live under the influence of the truths contained in them. Copyists preserved them with the utmost reverence, counting every letter of every book and registering every tittle of the law. How remarkable, how decisive as an evidence of Divine care that while all the libraries of Europe and the World containing copies of the Sacred Scriptures have been examined, all ancient versions compared, the MSS of all countries from the 3rd to the 16th century collated, the commentaries of the Fathers again and again investigated, nothing has been discovered, not even a single general reading, which can set aside an important passage hitherto received as genuine.

This positive conclusion, that our Bible does not essentially differ from the Bible of the Primitive Church, is indeed ample recompense for all the labour and time which has been devoted to these pursuits.

*Anon*

### **What a Friend we have in Jesus**



Real friendship is based on three things, like-mindedness and constancy. Proverbs has a lot of wise things to say about it, among which is the perceptive statement, *“As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man”*. This is likemindedness. We tend to reflect the mental image of our closest companions, and unless there is this affinity of the heart the friendship cannot flourish. Men may become “drinking companions” but not true friends. So if we want to be friends of Jesus, we must have this kind of affinity with all that he stands for. We must try to reflect his image, sharing his interests and his views on life, to enjoy his friendship. **David and Jonathan**

Second ingredient is unselfishness in which the Lord himself, as always, sets the example. For he sacrificed everything for us, and we must surely be prepared to sacrifice something for him. We must not be just “fair-weather friends” of Jesus; in it for what we get out of it; promoting self-interest in the guise of friendship, like a man seeking to make friends with the manager in order to get favours. The kind of friendship I am considering is a meeting of minds; a self giving companionship, likened by the apostle to the relationship of a husband and wife in the ideal marriage (Eph 5). It is a love which forgets self interest, and “gives till it hurts”. Thirdly, we think of constancy as an ingredient of friendship. *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* is the dictum of Proverbs. And it is true of Jesus. He will never let us down. But if we consistently and thoughtlessly let him down, can we still claim to his friends? *“You are my friends if you do whatever I command you”* he said. He has shown himself to be the real friend of mankind, but men must respond to his love, or eventually lose it. *“He that hath friends must show himself friendly”* is true of both human and divine associations.

*Bro Moses Dhlakama (Chipinge Zimbabwe)*

## Carelinks | Canada



Bro Jim and Sis Anne Barton of the Kingston, Ontario ecclesia are the representatives of Carelinks in Canada and we're much encouraged by their report as follows:

*“Sunday morning, May 21st, Anne and I led a 45 minute Gospel Sing-A-Long at the Eastern Ontario Bluegrass Music Festival. It featured 8 popular Gospel songs with three short Bible talks in between them to explain the covenant of Baptism and the need to “repent and be baptized”*

*for their salvation. We also stressed the value of reading the Bible to allow the Lord to speak, guide and instruct them along the way.*

*We had about 60-70 people in attendance and we concluded by offering to meet with members of the audience after our set to share free Bible materials. The reception was terrific. We distributed 14 NEV Bibles with reading schedules, 7 Bible Basics Books, 6 Introducing Bible Basics booklets, 1 Children's Bible book and numerous leaflets. We had many good contacts and conversations. On top of all that, the festival organizers were delighted with our show and immediately requested that we come back next year to do another. They were quite happy to provide us with a table at the back of the hall to meet with people and discuss the Bible. So it was truly a blessed day in the vineyard. It helps sometimes to think outside the box. This preaching effort didn't cost us anything except for the cost of materials distributed. Thanks to all who have donated money to Carelinks and helped provide these valuable materials to help advance the Gospel in the hearts of many. Love in our shared hope, Anne and Jim Barton, Carelinks Canada."*

## Carelinks | Italy



It was eight years ago that we baptized brother Festus in Naples. He is a long term resident of Italy. He and his wife, like brother Joseph in Cesena, are deeply grieved at the appearance of so many desperate African migrants on the streets of Naples.

All we can do is to offer the hope of the Gospel and do what we can to alleviate the obvious material needs. We are really inspired to do this by these African women who are throwing themselves upon the Lord. Festus and Rosa have been teaching some women the Gospel, and it was a pleasure to help them to baptize sisters **Mary, Endurance, Perpetua, Maria, Rosemary, Dolly** and brother **Bright**. As with similar women in Sicily, we helped them to have white clothes for the baptisms and to do all we can to give some sense of occasion to this wonderful moment when they entered the bride of Christ.

You can imagine what it's like for the few women who attempt the journey. We baptized **Blessing**, who was first contacted through street distribution of the NEV New Testaments. She very much wanted to share her story publicly, we didn't ask her to do this, she wanted to. She described how her husband had multiple other women in their home and she had to leave, having to leave their child with him. She returned to her parental home, and there her uncle, her father's brother, pressured her to marry him [he already had several wives] or at least have children with him. Her father pressured her to agree, and so she ran away and joined the exodus to Italy. She was kidnapped at gunpoint in Libya by the traffickers, and kept for 2 months as a sex slave and raped most days. Like brother Tony, she was pressured to call her family and ask them to send money for her release, but she had been thrown out of her family and they wouldn't, so eventually the traffickers released her as she was not going to be a source of income for them. She then got to Sicily, having witnessed some of her group drowning on the way. Right is a still from the video she wished to make about her experiences, which you can watch at: <http://tinyurl.com/carelinks-blessing>



Like us all, she had to be brought down and to total loneliness with God to find Jesus in spirit and truth. She speaks of how she has forgiven these people, because we too are all terrible sinners before God; and of how God's grace is so great that she sees Him as a kind and loving God, despite what she went through. She speaks quietly and from the heart, with sweat

breaking out on her, and only once wiping tears away; she has absolute credibility. This is a profound message absolutely worth listening to, a real inspiration to focus on the positive, to believe God is the God of love despite the existence of evil in our lives; to not get bitter, and achieve forgiveness of our abusers. Do watch it. Blessing doesn't do email and is very restricted where she is in the woman's camp. She has a simple phone and any sister interested in giving her a call can contact us for her number. We hope to provide clothing and more support to her and other such women over the Summer.

For women who have been sex workers and / or rape victims, there are huge long term psychological issues. But we believe that the Lord is able to repair broken souls, for this is the clear good news of the most basic teaching of Jesus in the sermon on the mount, and it is to such that the Gospel is so attractive. Again, thank you all for your prayers and donations in various ways which enable all this good work to happen.

### **Carelinks | Latvia**

Duncan, Cindy and family returned to Riga for a while and report a good turn out to breaking of bread and feeding scheme, and also the baptism of **Alina** at English church, where they had some great African folks present as well, including brother Charles from Nigeria who was baptized eight years ago and now mainly lives in Sweden. All is good at the hall, although all are ageing; sister Larisa is now blind but remembers more or less where to hold her bowl for soup when she lines up.

We also happened to catch on camera the moment when the blender finally jammed up; this is one of very many ongoing expenses which we have in running the Bible Centre and we are totally dependent on your ongoing donations [we have a new blender now!]. Really a great work goes on there which the Lord is clearly working through.



## Carelinks | Pacific Islands



Brother Rex from Australia has been doing ground breaking work, taking the true Gospel, NEV Bibles and *Bible Basics* to those who have not heard in “the isles of the Gentiles”. After all, who of us has heard of “Goodenough Island” in the Pacific? The spread of the Gospel of the Kingdom into literally all the earth is required before “the end shall come”, and we are seeing in his work a true sign of the Lord’s soon return. He reports:

*“In May I went to Goodenough Island off the eastern tip of Papua New Guinea to be with some of the students doing the Bible course. I am now in Alotau, on the PNG mainland. On my visit to Goodenough Island I think they’d really benefit from Bible Basics. A guy from Goodenough Island attended the seminars in Alotau and signed up for the Bible course. He has been reading our leaflets and also our Bible course material and he has told me (and his pastor confirmed it)*

*that the pastor is happy with our doctrine. The big plus factor is that he believes in the literal return of Christ and His reign on earth, so when he gave me opportunities to speak to his church during their services, I kept emphasising this and also our human nature being the devil we must fight. He has invited us to come back at the beginning of August and said we could have three days to speak to his church. There could be about 100 people attending this week, so a lot of people will be exposed to true Bible teaching. I have had the opportunity to talk to some of them and been through the question of what the devil and satan is and the purpose of God with mankind and this earth, and they responded with joy. They don't seem to be wedded to the idea that there has to be an evil spirit around, even though they come from a culture that believes in such things.*



*I feel your NEV and Bible Basics would be really helpful for these interested people. He doesn't collect his mail often because of the expense of travelling from the island to the mainland. It would be cheaper to take all the books with us as extra baggage. Even here in Alotau, internet access is intermittent, so if I don't reply speedily to your emails, it is because of this difficulty.*

*Travel to and from the island (about 200km from Alotau) is by dinghies or by small cargo boats that take passengers who sit on the deck or on whatever they can find to perch on. The dinghies take from about three to six hours depending on engine size and departure point, and the cargo boats up to 25 hours depending on the cargo and the weather. The voyage is not particularly comfortable. Getting about on the island is by foot or by asking someone with access to a truck to take you. Some of the villages are accessible only by foot or dinghy.*



*To go from Bolubolu, where the government guest house is, to Mt Horeb where Benjamin lives is a two-hour walk. Hiring a vehicle to take you there costs about \$25 each way. It's much the same to our student Steve's village, except that only 4x4s can get there, so walking at least part of the way up the steep and rugged sections is necessary. Cellphone coverage is sometimes available by climbing about an hour up the ridge behind Bolubolu or by taking a dinghy out to sea, which is expensive. However, reception at these places is not guaranteed, so effectively you cannot contact people on the island except by mail. There is no electricity, no internet service and no phone signal unless you climb the mountain, so the people there are pretty isolated.*

*What is encouraging is that the word was heard gladly. The people are eager for true Bible teaching and their eyes light up when Scripture is presented to them. In the context of discussing human nature and temptation, one of the pastors said to the effect that it is really "good to know who our enemy is".*

*The difficulty, of course, is communication. Many do understand English but have difficulty in following a native English speaker. They find it easier if they are spoken to in the way they themselves speak English – simple words in simple sentences that are not necessarily grammatically correct. Those who have no knowledge of English have to rely on others to pass on the teaching.”*

Brother Rex plans to return in August so we do pray for blessing on his trip and also for his personal safety on the dinghies and other insecure means of transport.

## **Carelinks | Sicily**

There are believed to be up to one million migrants in Libya and North Africa, trying to reach the shores of Italy by boat. Many of these come to Sicily- up to 8000 / day. We have had contacts in Sicily since 2009, including some Africans who emigrated there legally in the past and have been many years in Italy. The situation in Sicily for all the new arrivals is utterly hopeless- there is no way Italy can cope with such huge numbers arriving each day. The most they can do is to try to ensure that minors and women are accommodated. But this leaves huge numbers of young men unable to get from Sicily to mainland Italy, and often without documents. Sicily is just full of them. It's a very hot, dry climate and water is at a premium, and relatively expensive. Public fountains and water sources have been turned off as there are just thousands of litres of water being taken from them each day; even those lucky enough to be in camps are only given one litre of water / day, despite the boiling temperatures. Public opinion in Sicily is running at high levels against the migrants. Racism is absolutely rampant.

As a white guy, you get abuse and many hard looks walking down a street with black folks. And indeed, Sicily cannot cope. But the boats keep arriving. It's all very well to say "Well, they should've stayed in Africa". But even if that is thought to be legitimate, even if one digs a hole for oneself and falls into it, you're still in the hole and need help. It is basic humanity to assist, let alone the spirit of Christ. All these migrants had no idea that this was going to be the reality of life in fortress Europe. Sicily is in any case quite poor. There are tens of thousands of them just roaming the place, hungry and thirsty. Crime is their only recourse, as begging will not get any sympathy from the local Sicilians. With many thousands of desperately poor young men roaming around, the area has become a honeypot for all manner of homosexual abuse and sex tourism. It's a tragic situation.

This is a forgotten or ignored crisis, the media are almost silent about it. The tourists in their resorts and tourist beaches are totally ignorant of what is going on. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that it is no mere stereotype that much of Sicily, especially the interior of the island, is in the hands of the Mafia. They are exploiting the situation; sexual exploitation and slave labour in the fields and factories is rife, often forcing them to do dangerous work for a pittance.

Corruption is endemic in Sicily; many of the new camps have been built in the interior, right in the heart of Mafia controlled territory, and the residents are used by them. Many of the migrants were conservative young Africans who find themselves alone in a frightening and lonely situation where immoral behaviour seems the only way to survive. It's all very well saying "Well go home then" but they typically have no documents and cannot be deported, because international law forbids sending people to any country if they have no documents. Many

borrowed money to make the journey and some have genuine fears of the situations they fled from.



There are very few aid organizations operating in Sicily; that is not in the interests of the Mafia. And with each boatload of arrivals, the situation gets worse. Many arrive traumatized by the awful journey; we baptized one migrant, **Tony** (pictured above), who got to Sicily and managed to get to mainland Italy. His story is terrifying; you can see his testimony at: <http://tinyurl.com/carelinks-anthony>

### Prayer Request | Protection

**A week after his baptism, Tony was brutally attacked by a man with an iron bar in a racially motivated attack and had to go to hospital. Anthony is a true convert to Christ and a gentle, non confrontational person. Please pray for him and all our other African brethren and sisters at risk from this kind of thing.**



The beaches of Sicily and Lampedusa have bodies washed up on them regularly. Probably 20% of those who attempt the journey don't make it.



We baptized a young man called **Justice** on the beach in eastern Sicily. Watch it at: <http://tinyurl.com/carelinks-justice>

He was quite terrified of going back into the water, and you may be able to hear his terror in the recording. He's not a standard migrant, as he came to Sicily two years ago, although also by the sea route, as a minor. He was put in a young person's hostel and went to the local school. But as soon as he turned 18, Italy are free of their legal obligations to him. He was turned out of the hostel and school on his 18th birthday and had to live on the street. He took us to see the disused convent where he and many other Africans had slept on the stone floors. But he was different, although without parental influence and any sense of family, he earnestly wanted to serve God and go God's way. One evening on a borrowed computer he came across a video of a

Carelinks conference in Croydon where we were packing up Bibles to mail out. He wondered if he could get one, and so began our contact. He has in turn distributed our NEV Bibles to other young Africans he knows. He laments that many have left their Christian faith in practice.

We discussed the Biblical promises, that God will not let us be tested more than we're able to bear, but will make a way to escape; and that the Lord will not suffer the rod of the wicked to fall so heavily on the righteous that they are driven to sin. But in his situation, it takes some faith to believe this. His only real possession is an old cell phone, which he uses where there are free WIFI hotspots to read our material and watch our videos. He has the Bible on his phone. But nobody wants to mentor a young man like that, the Catholics are about the only church doing much for the migrants, and there are few Protestants in Sicily. He really feels he has found a family with us, although he is isolated. Please pray for him, that his faith will not fail, and the Biblical promises of preservation from sin come true for him. He has already interested other people, some of who we met.



Pictured above is a photo of him having a cold drink after his baptism, with his phone which serves as his Bible and source of contact with us. He gets only clothing he finds or which some organizations offer. He has just a couple of T-shirts and one pair of trousers. It's tragic to see so many such young people going morally astray and being rudderless in the cruel world of migrant Sicily.

It's a common sight to see African migrants walking around with their packs of belongings, rather like our elderly brethren and sisters in Riga, Latvia; but Sicily is over 40 degrees C in Summer, and some can only find winter clothing, and they wear this even in the heat as it's all they can get.



Inevitably in such a situation, folks will be interested in the good news of the Kingdom. Our remit is to preach the Gospel, but it's clear that we also have a duty to assist as we can. We obviously try to ensure that the welfare component doesn't distort the message of the Gospel in itself. But only God is the judge of human motivations, and such motivations do change over time. With all these problems, we tried to do what we could. We contacted a long term contact, who got a copy of *Bible Basics* from us in 2009. We've remained in contact on and off. He shares our view on many things but hasn't seen the need for re-baptism. He is an African migrant from previous years with a stable job, from when Africans could immigrate legally to Sicily. He has a group of other Africans he tries to teach, pray and sing with and he tries to help the newer migrants as

best he can. We assisted him in renting a room which can be used as a base for them. It's a disused shop in a very run down area of Syracuse, the port once visited by Paul.

We provided lots of water, rice and pasta. The original group he has built up are also settled migrants, but they are all working on minimum wage and limited as to how much they can assist the flood of new migrants. We felt they were very sincere and set them up to study *Bible Basics* as a group and to distribute the food and water provided. On the food and some of the bottles we placed our labels.

We also left them plenty of *Bible Basics* and NEV Bibles. On a subsequent visit we found that they have studied them, and we're so thrilled that they have indeed become a refuge for some and that four women studied the material and wanted to be baptized: **Queen, Joanna, Patience** and **Sonia**.



**Left: water, rice and pasta being taken to the rented room and above: a very tired mother feeds her child on out of date 'Tuc' biscuits, sitting outside their new shelter**



### **The Group singing and thanking God**

Most of the migrants are young males and many of them have terrible stories of torture in Libya where they were held under ransom and tortured. The women of course are raped and kept as sex slaves, often only released if they get pregnant. If they don't drown on the way, these people then arrive in Sicily. They have a whole range of health issues, and the women are often pregnant and malnourished. The humble room rented provides shelter for only a very few. One woman was grateful just for a chair and water. She sat on one of the chairs outside the hired room on the street feeding her child from out of date 'Tuc' cracker biscuits from a supermarket, with water in a bottle from the room, with her wearing a child's Mickey Mouse T-shirt. They are indeed vulnerable people, very easily abused by the Mafia-controlled gangs who operate in Sicily with impunity.

Another woman was pregnant from her rapes experienced in Libya. The child appeared to be upside down in the womb, requiring Caesarian section. But with no documents or money, the crowded hospitals are not inclined to take in migrants. We did get her into a hospital where she delivered the child safely. We were able to give her an NEV New Testament and *Introducing Bible Basics* and pray with her. She was so excited to have these to read and study. There was graffiti

on the walls of the ward, crucifixes and statues of Mary everywhere, and the nurses generally didn't speak English.



What happens to these children? Some of the women we baptized were caring for babies of African women they had taken pity upon, as often they are just dumped under the bushes after birth. All this is in the EU... with tourists flying back on Easyjet talking about the great time they had on vacation, without a clue as to what is really going on.

Some of the women had been living in an unfinished, derelict garage near a beach. After Bible study at the hired room, we went there to change and have a final prayer and a few words before the immersions. As you can see, in the above photo, all they had was a discarded piece of plaster board for privacy; no water, toilet or electricity. They carry babies on their backs African style.

Despite their total poverty, we were able to provide white clothes and some hair styling for their baptisms. We emphasized that despite what they had been through, they were the spotless bride of the Lord Jesus and were giving themselves to the One who so loves them.

We went from there to the beach, where a group of about 15 sunbathing white Italians gathered around us as we did the baptisms. Usually such local folks have been abusive and racist, feeling their country is being overrun by the migrants, but these folks were utterly fascinated and respected our sincerity. They took videos of us and clapped after each immersion.



Despite the noise of screaming babies you can see the spirit of Christ was there, and the extreme, desperate sincerity of those women, now our sisters, expressed in their body language. As you can see, one of the sisters is heavily pregnant but was all the same so eager for baptism. Please pray for her delivery and for whatever will happen to the child.

The need and potential is huge, and the need is the call, as we have often said. In Western medicine these women would all need post traumatic stress counselling, but they hardly have water, food and a chair to sit on. We really appreciate your generosity which has enabled us to assist so far as we have.

These sisters are devoted to God's word and His Son. The most prized possession of one of them was a tattered King James Version Bible she had brought from Nigeria, her only possession to survive her traumatic journey. She had highlighted her favourite verses, so relevant to those who crossed the Sahara to be raped and imprisoned in Libya before nearly drowning on the sea crossing to Sicily:

*"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." ... "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God, and save me from bloody men." ... "They answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and withersoever thou sendest us, we will go. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God".*

## Carelinks | Spain

**We're pleased to report the baptism of *Valentin* in Spain. Valentin has been studying the Truth for seven years, and has been through all kinds of groups before becoming convicted of the Truth. He runs various Facebook groups where he uses *Bible Basics* and other material to grab the attention of the 1200 or so members he has built up. Valentin travelled overnight from Valencia to meet us in Madrid, where he spent two days with us. He was baptized in a spot near Alcala de Henares which Valentin remembered, or thought he did, from many years ago. We had to walk nearly an hour through the bush to get to a point where we could enter the river. It was very muddy, with soft mud down to about one meter's depth. We performed the baptisms, not without difficulty, but very much with the Lord's presence.**

We also made a brief video in Spanish of how to simply break bread: <http://tinyurl.com/carelinks-breakingbread>

Valentin said that breaking bread was one of the things he had so dreamed of doing once baptized.

He is a very zealous preacher. We spent a day together in Alcala distributing Spanish *Introducing Bible Basics* on the streets. Preaching in small town Spain is not very encouraging- time and again we were told "I'm Catholic, no!" when we offered literature to folk. But Valentin is very tenacious and outgoing in his witness. He engaged various folks in fairly long conversations in the Cervantes Plaza, including a blind man, with the church bells tolling in the background.

Would there were more willing to get out there on the streets with the Gospel. So if you're in Spain for holiday or business... why not take a day or so to meet with these wonderfully enthusiastic Spanish brothers. Let us know if you can, and do pray for them.



**Valentin preaching to a blind man in Alcala**



**Giving out Spanish copies of *Introducing Bible Basics***

### **Carelinks | Turkey**

Brother Andy Taylor from the Windermere UK ecclesia reports on his recent visit to Iranian refugees in southern Turkey:

*“My recent brief stay in Turkey was amazing as always and included a visit to Colossae, which was worth seeing not least for the beautiful wild flowers and plentiful free fruit.*

*Seven women and eighteen men were baptized into the Lord Jesus on Sunday May 14th. This took place in the Pamukkale area so well known for its healing waters as probably alluded to in Rev 3:18. The session before the baptisms was lively and the questions asked and the discussions indicated a strong thirst for saving truth. One of those bro Afshin and I baptised also did the Farsi to English and English to Farsi translations. He is now Bro Amir, being baptised along with Sis Narges his wife, pictured right. Amir will bring much experience to the growing ecclesia, he is very well-travelled including many years in which he was resident in South Korea.*

*All those joining us have their own stories and hopes and dreams; some have a particularly difficult time. These include a new sister whose Muslim husband has returned to Iran and is making life difficult for her and her two young daughters.”*





**The baptism of Amir and his wife Narges**

***“All these brothers and sisters need our prayers and would welcome visits from others of us to give more Bible teaching and to supplement the help that they can receive today from the internet. Upon reflection we all acknowledge the benefits of human contact over merely interacting with a screen.”***

#### **Carelinks | UK**



**Bro Mike replaces the NEV New Testament in the Tiny Library - one copy having already been taken**

Bro Mike and Sis Betty Flaherty from Australia write:

*“Whilst cycling through Europe we received the sad news of the passing of sister Gwladys and so headed over to London to be with the family. As preparations were being made for the funeral we had the opportunity to accompany Duncan to engage people on the street with the offer of a free New Testament, then later visit a refugee centre. On the streets of Crystal Palace we were able to distribute quite a bit of literature, including to motorists waiting at traffic lights on the busy high street. They were often willing to wind down their window and take a New Testament. The “Free Bibles” visibility vests would have already been spotted by them. One guy honked Betty from the other side of the street and asked for two New Testaments through his window. We also put a NEV Bible and Introducing Bible Basics in a “tiny library” on a street corner, where people put books they don’t want and people can take them to read, either keeping or returning them to the box.*

*The refugee centre surprised me. Not really knowing what to expect, I discovered that there was no stereotype refugee/asylum seeker. An older man from Afghanistan who had lost both legs, apparently to a landmine, and who had such a positive spirit, eagerly wheeling himself around in his wheelchair to clean the tables in the canteen, mop the floor, and from his wheelchair playing with the various refugee children running around the place; Albanian sex workers now pregnant, rescued from human trafficking; an Afghani family who once assisted the west in humanitarian projects, and other religious minorities fleeing Muslim extremism in their countries.*



*What do you say? How do you begin a conversation with people you have little in common with? I mean, after all, you only have a small window of opportunity before they are shipped off to another location. I had forgotten that it is not me that does the conversion but the spirit of God working through me. So, despite my own inadequacies, Duncan quickly showed me that a direct question, "Would you like to know Jesus and become a Christian?" mostly resulted in the nod of a head, a yes and a willingness to receive a Bible and a Bible Basics book in their native language. With Duncan's contact details in the books, they were encouraged to read them through and phone him for more information or instruction to baptism. Some returned a short time later to get more NEV Bibles or Bible Basics for their friends or family. No theological debates just an interest in what we had to offer, a way to have a relationship with Jesus and his Father, free of religion and complex dogma. The people we met are not prisoners but are in a secure place where they have a lot of time on their hands during the day. We witnessed them reading the books we gave for quite a while afterwards.*

*There were four important things I took away from the visits: 1. Asking people if they would like to know Jesus, isn't "rocket science". Jesus didn't ask us to be able to convert people, he just said, "Go out and preach" Don't fear being rejected by others, we saw many who were eager for hope. 2. Take a leaf out of Jesus' book and have conversations with the poor and outcast. Sure, it may not be comfortable to talk to people outside our social circle, but I am reminded that Jesus saw similar and "he had compassion on them." They may be the most receptive to talking about the hope we share. Have compassion. 3. I have no power to convince anyone to accept the Salvation of God. Even when I flounder about not knowing the right thing to say, God can use me in all my inadequacy, insecurity and weakness. Pray. Pray for our Father's help and blessing on our efforts. Don't forget - PRAY! Pray for His will to be done, that he open the way to those seeking Him.*

*God provides angels to go before us. Supernatural, yes, but I have also witnessed human angels provided to make our paths straight and open doors that are normally locked, raised up for a specific purpose. God bless them for their courage. If you believe that you can muster up enough courage to go out into your own community and ask, "Would you like to know Jesus and become a Christian?" then Carelinks have resources to help you. The New Testament with Introducing Bible Basics in the back is an excellent way of giving a valuable gift to people who show interest".*

There's a video of Bro Mike distributing the New Testaments and engaging people on the streets and traffic lights at: <http://tinyurl.com/carelinks-uk-preaching>



***Travelling on holiday or business? Do what Mike and Betty are doing, put an NEV Bible or Bible Basics (or any statement of the Gospel) in these tiny libraries springing up all over the place. Who knows who will get to read this French NEV New Testament... the seed is sown in northern France. More info ...***

<https://littlefreelibrary.org/>

<https://boite-a-lire.com/>

*Bro Mike and Sis Betty Flaherty*

### **Ghastly, Gruesome Worship**

In one of the refugee camps where we have many Brethren and Sisters the Police caught some Burundian and Rwandese refugees that had entered their camp, having the heads of dead people in their bags and wanting to go to Uganda to sell them where there is a profitable market for such things.

Headless bodies were also found in the camp. It seems they are used for some black magic types of religious ritual. The Ugandan authorities have also prohibited the sale of human flesh meat.

I recall a few years ago large Geese were illegally caught in a London Park and their heads cut off and the rest of the bird just left. We were told they would be wanted for some kind of religious rite. There are also other weird religious rites being performed these days.

Life is mighty precarious at best in some of the Refugee Camps, with frequent visits from barbarous armed robbers, apart from the considerable shortage of food. Our prayers and, where possible, practical help are needed.

*M.H.*