

# The Prayer of Solomon

This article is based on 1 Kings 3:3-15. Please make sure that you read this passage before reading this article.

## Introduction

When we read this passage, there are two things about Solomon that become clear. In the first place it is quite clear that prayer is founded on a relationship of love. The Bible tells us that the Lord loved Solomon (2 Sam. 12:24), and that Solomon loved the Lord (1 Kings 3:3). It was this love relationship that was at the foundation of Solomon's prayer life. In the second place, it is quite clear that Solomon was a man of prayer. We are told in this passage that when the Lord appeared to Solomon, Solomon knew who it was that had appeared to him. He was not like Jacob who met the Lord but was not aware of it (Gen. 28:16) or Samuel who heard the voice of the Lord when he was a child but did not know who was speaking (1 Sam. ch. 3). Solomon knew it was the Lord who had appeared to him because he was in the habit of meeting with the Lord in prayer.

There are three important matters in the prayer of Solomon that we need to learn.

### 1. Solomon prayed as David had prayed

In the last issue of this magazine we studied the prayer of David in 2 Samuel 7:18-29 and we saw three things in David's prayer. Those three things are also found in this prayer of Solomon's.

(i) Solomon prays with adoration and praise. We read that God said to Solomon, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you" (v. 5). We would have imagined that Solomon would begin to pray for a long list of things that he wanted. But he does not do this. Instead, we read in v. 6 that he begins with adoration and focuses on God's kindness and love and on God's faithfulness to His covenant.

(ii) Solomon prays with humility. Solomon says in his prayer, "I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties" (v. 7). He is not full of pride even though he has been made king of a great nation; he is humble.

(iii) Solomon prays in accordance with God's will. He is aware that he has been appointed king to lead and govern God's people (v. 8), and so he prays, "Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong" (v. 9). He does not pray for personal possessions, but for wisdom to lead the people of God because this is God's will for him.

### 2. God is pleased to answer an honourable prayer.

We read, "The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, 'Since you have asked for this and not for long life and wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked'" (vs. 11-12).

God took pleasure in Solomon's prayer because it was a prayer according to His will. He wanted Solomon to be a wise and fair ruler of His people and Solomon prayed for wisdom that he might do this. And so God answered Solomon's prayer: he gave him wisdom to be a fair and just king in Israel.

In addition, because God was pleased with Solomon's prayer, He gave Solomon more than what he had asked for. God said to him, "Moreover I will give you what you have not asked for – both riches and honour- so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings" (v. 13).

### 3. We are to be good stewards of the outcome of our prayers

Notice in this passage that God's answer to Solomon came upon a certain condition: "And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life" (v. 14). God was gracious to Solomon and gave Solomon great gifts. Solomon was given wisdom and guidance in his work as the king of God's people. Solomon was also promised riches and honour and a long life, even though he did not ask for these things. However, these great gifts of God come with a condition: Solomon must walk in the ways of the Lord and obey His statutes and commands just as his father David had done.

There is a very important lesson for us here: the gifts of God are free and gracious, but God expects us to be good stewards of the gifts that He gives to us. More than that, God expects us to walk with Him all our lives so that we may use the gifts He has given to us effectively. The gifts that Solomon was given of wisdom to govern the people of God could only be properly and effectively used if Solomon continued to walk with the Lord and to obey His commands and statutes. If Solomon fell into great sin and went away from the Lord then he would not be in a position to use the gifts that God gave him to rule His people.

God answers our prayers graciously, but He expects us to use the gifts He gives to us wisely and faithfully for His kingdom.

## How to Deal with Trials in a Biblical Way

The Christian life is a life of trials and difficulties. God has never said to us that we will have a problem free life here on earth. Those who are saved therefore need to learn how deal with their trials in a Biblical way. There are three important things we need to remember that will help us to do this.

### 1. Remember that your trials have come from the gracious hand of God Himself

In the book of Ruth when Naomi lost her husband and her two sons she said, “The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me” (Ruth 1:21). No trial will come upon us unless the Lord Himself allows it to come. When Job lost his whole family and all his property he did not say, “The Lord gave, and the devil took away.” Instead, he said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21). Regardless of the way in which trials come upon us, it is God who sends them.

### 2. Remember that your trials have come for your own eternal good

David wrote, “It was good for me to be afflicted” (Ps. 119:71). This is how God's people need to view their trials. They need to remember that their trials have come because God intends to bring good out of them. The Bible is full of examples of how trials have benefitted the people of God.

Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit and afterwards sold him into slavery. But all this worked for his good: he became second only to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt and was the means by which God's people survived a severe famine. This is why at the end of his life he was able to say to his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen. 50:20). King Manasseh was bound with chains and taken to Babylon by his enemies. But all this worked for his good: in Babylon he humbled himself and sought the Lord and was saved. Then he returned to Jerusalem and began to worship the Lord rather than idols. Paul was struck blind on the road to Damascus, but God used that blindness to show him the light of His grace in salvation (Acts 9:6).

### 3. Remember that your trials will teach you some very important spiritual lessons

The prophet Micah said to the people of Israel, “Heed the rod and the One who appointed it” (Micah 6:9). By this he meant that the trials the people faced were intended to teach them very important spiritual lessons.

Firstly, our trials teach us what sin is. We often hear preaching about how terrible a thing sin is, but it is only when we experience the bitter fruit of sin in our lives that we understand fully how serious a thing sin is. A person may read a book about a certain

disease, but he will never fully understand that disease until he himself is afflicted with it. In the same way we never fully understand the depth of sin until we experience its bitter fruit in our lives.

Secondly, our trials teach us about ourselves. We never fully know our own hearts when things are going well for us. It is only when we face trials that we realise what our hearts are really like. It is during the time of trials that we see the sin that is hidden in our hearts. It is during the time of trials that we see the pride and selfishness and love of the world that is there hidden in us.

### Some of the benefits that our trials will bring to us

As we have seen in this article, our trials have been sent by God for our own eternal good. What benefits will our trials bring to us?

Firstly, trials are the means of making the heart more holy and godly. When things are going well for us, our heart can begin to love the things of this world and to seek after such things. But when we face trials we will immediately run to God and throw ourselves upon Him and seek Him whole-heartedly.

Secondly, trials are a means by which sin is removed from within us. Trials are like bitter medicine. The patient does not like to take the medicine because it tastes horrible and makes him feel bad, but it is good for him because it is fighting an illness in his body. Our trials may be bitter to us but they are a means that God uses to draw us away from us and to Himself.

Thirdly, trials are a means by which we are made more like Christ. The Lord Jesus was “a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). It was by this means that He served God and fulfilled the eternal purposes of God. His trials were the means of our salvation. Our trials cannot bring us salvation, but they can enable us to be more like Christ and to serve God with greater purpose.

Fourthly, trials are a means by which love for the things of the world is removed from our hearts. When God takes away our earthly comforts, we are made to think about heaven, our eternal home. When we lose our health and have serious illness we are made to realise that we are not on this earth forever and that we must prepare our hearts for heaven, because that is our eternal home.

Finally, our trials will bring us joy because they will bring us nearer to God. The Bible says, “Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty” (Job 5:17). Our trials prove that we are the children of God because God only disciplines those who are His children. They are the means that God uses to teach us His ways, and when we follow His ways, we have eternal joy.

# A Renewed Zeal for the Work of God

*This article is an exposition of Haggai 1:12-15. Please make sure you have read that passage before reading this article.*

## Background

The people of Judah had been in exile in Babylon 70 years because of their sin against God. At the end of 70 years they came back to Jerusalem. The temple that Solomon had built had been destroyed by the Babylonians when they took the people of Judah into exile. The people therefore began the task of rebuilding the temple. A short while after they started, the enemies of God stood against them, and building work on the temple stopped for 16 years. During this time, the people built for themselves nice houses but neglected the temple of God (see Hag. 1:1-11). God then raised the prophet Haggai to challenge them and to encourage them to resume work on the temple which was only half finished. In this passage we read of how the work of rebuilding the temple started again after Haggai preached to the people.

### 1. How God moved His people to give themselves to the work of the temple

The work of building the temple in the Old Testament is like the work of building the kingdom of God here on earth today. It is a work that God's people need to do whole-heartedly. In this passage we read of two things that God did to move His people to resume the work of building the temple.

(i) God spoke to His people. The book of Haggai contains four sermons that Haggai preached to the people to encourage them to work for the kingdom of God. Haggai was "the Lord's messenger" (v. 13), the words he spoke were the words of God. This is why this passage says that the people "obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai" (v. 12). The message of Haggai was the message of God, it was God speaking to them.

When the servants of God preach the word of God faithfully and diligently then the people of God will be moved to give themselves whole-heartedly to the work of God. Preaching is the means that God uses to enlighten His people and to encourage them and awaken them when they become spiritually lazy. Whenever we read of a great work of God being done, it is always through the preaching of His word: His word is the instrument He uses to do His work here on earth.

(ii) God stirred up the spirits of His people. We are told in v. 14, "So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of

Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people" (v. 14). This is what happens when the word of God is preached with power: God's people are stirred up to do the work of the kingdom. The people of God had lost their vision for the kingdom of God and it was through the preaching of His word that God awoke them from this state and encouraged them to begin the work once again.

The work of building the kingdom of God is the work of God, it is God who takes the initiative and it is God who equips, encourages and enables His people to do the work. Without the work of God in our hearts through His word we will never have a heart for His kingdom.

### 2. How the people responded to the preaching of God's word

When Haggai came to the people of God with the word of God, the people of God responded in three ways.

(i) "The people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God" (v. 12). The first and most important response to the word of God is obedience. There is no benefit to anyone if a person hears preaching from the word of God every day of the week unless he actually obeys what he is hearing. Hearing the word by itself will save no-one. It is only when we give ourselves to obeying the commands of God that we show that we are saved people.

(ii) "The people feared the Lord" (v. 12). The word "fear" in this passage means they honoured God and respected Him and obeyed Him with reverence. This is a most important response to the word of God: we are to honour God above all others and to respect Him and to worship Him and obey Him. To fear God means to give ourselves to Him and to His service whole-heartedly.

(iii) The people "began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty" (v. 14). For 16 years no work had been done on the temple. It was half finished and had been neglected. But once the people began to obey the word of God, they returned to the building site and began to work. This is the mark of the people of God: they actually labour for the kingdom of God. It is not enough to hear the word of God, it is not enough to say that we believe the word of God, it is not enough to say that we will obey the Lord. It is even not enough to say that one day we will give ourselves to the work of the kingdom. These are just words. The true mark of a believer is that he is actually involved in building the kingdom of God; it is that he actually uses his gifts and his skills and gives himself whole-heartedly to the work of the kingdom. That is what the people of God did in the time of Haggai.

## **Six Things an Unsaved Person sees for the First Time when he enters Hell**

*“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire'” (Luke 16:22-24).*

In this passage, the Lord Jesus tells us what happened to the rich man when he entered hell. When he was on earth, he never sought the Lord and never prayed for the forgiveness of his sins. Consequently, he died in his sins and went into hell where he remained for eternity. In this passage, the Lord Jesus tells us that when he entered hell, there were certain things that he saw for the first time, things he never saw while he was on earth.

### **1. The rich man saw poverty for the first time when he entered hell.**

We are told in this passage, “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day” (Luke 16:19). He was rich in the things of this world and did not see a day's poverty while he was here on earth. But when he entered hell, he did not have even a drop of water and had to beg Abraham for it. The Bible tells us, “We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1 Tim. 6:7).

Why is it that the rich man did not have even a drop of water when he was in hell? It is because everything that we receive here on earth we receive by the grace of God. Jesus said that God, “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45). We receive rain and sunshine here on earth purely because of the grace of God and for no other reason; these are the gracious gifts from a gracious God. Here on earth, even the unsaved receive these things because they are given graciously. But in hell there is no grace of God. Those who enter hell do so because they have refused the grace of God here on earth and so they live in eternity in hell without the grace of God. This is the reason why the rich man had no water in hell, it is because in hell there is no grace of God.

### **2. The rich man saw difficulties for the first time when he entered hell.**

We read in this passage, “In hell, where he was in torment” (Luke 16:23). It would seem that here on earth, this man had very few difficulties because he was a rich man. But once he entered hell, he had enormous trials and cried out in anguish. Why is it that hell is a place of suffering? Why is it that those who enter hell have many sufferings? The answer is that hell has been designed by God Himself as a place of judgement and punishment.

The Bible teaches us that God is holy and just. It teaches us that the one who lives a life of sin and rebellion and disobedience will be judged. It tells us clearly that the one who is in rebellion against God will not escape judgement. When the rich man was here on earth, he probably thought that he had escaped the judgement of God because he had a good life here on earth despite the fact that he was not a saved man. But in eternity no-one escapes the judgement of God. God sees everything that we do and He judges all sin.

There is only one way to escape the judgement of God and this is through faith in Christ Jesus. When Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary, He paid the penalty for the sins of His people. Therefore, the only way to escape from the judgement of God is to pray to Christ for the forgiveness of our sins; it is to ask Him to pay the penalty for our sins. If Christ clears our debt with God then we can be forgiven our sins and enter heaven. This is the only way to enter heaven: it is to trust Christ alone for forgiveness and salvation.

### **3. The rich man saw the kingdom of God for the first time when he entered hell.**

The Lord Jesus said, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3). The kingdom of God is here on earth in our midst. Jesus said to His disciples, “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). But those who are not saved cannot see the kingdom of God because they have been blinded by Satan.

The unsaved are like Saul of Tarsus was before he was saved. Saul persecuted the people of God and tried to destroy them because he did not understand that these people of God are the kingdom of God. But when he was on his way to Damascus Christ met with him and opened his eyes so that he realised he was actually persecuting the people of God. The kingdom of God was here but he could not see it because he was not born again. Once he was born again, he saw the kingdom of God and began to serve God in that kingdom.

There are two types of people who see the kingdom of God: those who are born again and those who are in hell. When these two types of people see the kingdom of God both desire to enter that kingdom. The person who is here on earth, when the Holy Spirit opens his eyes and enables him to see the kingdom of God, he will not be satisfied until he enters in. He will be like the businessman who heard about the pearl of great price and searched for it until he found it. And when he found it, he sold everything in order to buy that pearl (Matthew 13:45-46).

Equally, when a person dies in his sins and enters hell, he sees the kingdom of God and he begins to realise what he has missed. He then desires to enter that kingdom because of the sufferings of hell. Also, like the rich man, he begins to desire that his family who are still on earth should enter the kingdom of heaven. There is, however, a big difference between the people who are still on earth and the ones who are in hell. The one who is here on earth still has the opportunity to enter the kingdom of heaven; the one who is in hell has no such opportunity. Abraham said to the rich man, “Between us and you a great chasm has been

fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us” (Luke 16:26).

Reader, if you are not saved, it is because you have not seen the kingdom of God. You have been blinded by the devil and you think that life here on earth can satisfy you. But one day you will see the kingdom of God and on that day you will have a great desire to enter in. Perhaps, in the grace and mercy of God, you will see the kingdom of God while you are still here on earth; or perhaps you will not see it until you enter into hell. What you need to do is to pray to God that He would open your eyes so that you can see the kingdom of God while you are still here on earth. When you see the kingdom of God you will be ready to give up everything in order to enter it.

#### **4. The rich man saw that hell is a real place when he entered there.**

People here on earth are frequently reminded that there is a place called hell, but they refuse to believe it and after a while they forget all about it. For example, a person attends a funeral and is reminded that we will all one day die, and that there is life after death. Perhaps during the funeral he hears preaching from God's word about death and judgement and heaven and hell. For a few hours or for a few days after that funeral he will think much about these things, but after a few days you will find that he has forgotten everything and continues to live his life without God.

Or think of a person who becomes seriously sick and is therefore reminded that there is such a thing as death and life after death. During the time of his sickness he is ready to hear the word of God and he asks a pastor to pray for him, even though usually he never attends church and has no interest in the things of God. Then, after a while, by the mercy of God, he recovers from his illness and he returns to the kind of life he lived before the sickness. After a few weeks you will find that he no longer has any interest at all in the things of God and in salvation.

But when an unsaved person dies he will enter into hell and for the first time in his life he will realise that hell is a real place. He will realise for the first time in his life that hell is a place of suffering and judgement. This is the reason why the rich man wanted Lazarus to go and warn his five brothers.

Reader, you know that there a place called hell and you know that all who die in their sins and are not saved will go there for eternity. You know that God is holy and will never allow anyone who has not been forgiven his sins to enter into heaven. If you are not saved, then while you are on earth you are able to forget these things and to carry on with your life of sin and worldliness. But if you remain without getting saved then one day you will find yourself in hell and you will not be able to forget the Bible's teaching about hell.

Today the Lord Jesus is inviting you to Himself so that you may be saved from your sins. Do not ignore His invitation. Come to Him today that you may be saved from your sins.

This is the only way you can avoid hell, it is to come to Christ and trust in Him alone for the salvation of your soul.

#### **5. The rich man saw for the first time the value of salvation.**

Perhaps when he was here on earth he knew some people who were saved, and perhaps he despised them and avoided them. Perhaps he knew that the beggar who sat outside his house was a saved man, and perhaps he despised him. But when he entered hell, he saw that there is only one thing that is of true value here on earth and that is salvation. This is why he begged Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers, so that they may hear the message of salvation.

If you are not saved, it is because you have not realised the true value of salvation. Perhaps you know of people who are saved and you have despised them and avoided them. But if you continue to live without getting saved, one day you will realise the true value of salvation and it will be too late. Do not wait for that day. Come to Christ today and pray to Him for salvation.

#### **6. The rich man saw for the first time how great his sins were when he entered hell.**

Perhaps when he was here on earth, he was a religious man and perhaps he lived what he thought was a decent, moral life. We do not read in this passage that the rich man was a drunkard or an adulterer or anything like that. Perhaps while he was here on earth, he thought that he was not a great sinner and he thought that when he dies he will enter heaven because he tried to live a good, decent, moral life and because he was a religious man. But when he entered hell, he realised that the person who is not saved is a sinner in the sight of God. He realised that even the person who is very religious and lives what he thinks is a good, decent, moral life is in actual fact a great sinner in the sight of God. He realised for the first time that the way of salvation is not by our own works and our own efforts, but it is by faith alone in Christ alone.

These are the six things that the rich man saw for the first time when he entered hell. These were things that he could have understood while he was here on earth, but he had no interest in them. The kingdom of God, the forgiveness of sins, the life of holiness, these things did not interest him at all while he was here on earth. The things that interested him here on earth were the pleasures and possessions of this world. These are the things that occupied all his time and attention while he was on earth. It is only when he entered hell that he realised that the only thing worth having is salvation and the kingdom of God. But it was too late then. Reader, I urge you to learn from this man's experience. Do not be like him. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33).

# The Godly Husband

The Bible has instructions on how we are to conduct ourselves in a home as a married couple. There are instructions for wives and there are instructions for husbands. We will study Ephesians 5: 25-33 so that we may learn what the Bible teaches husbands about their conduct in a home towards their wives.

*“Husbands, love your wives, just Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves himself loves his wife after all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church for we are members of His body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh”(Ephesians 5:25-31).*

**1. A command to husbands to love their wives:** “Husbands, love your wives.”

Loving our wives is not optional, we must love them. It is a command from the Lord. We must love them willingly and with a joyful heart because God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). If we do not love our wives cheerfully and willingly, we will be disobeying God and our prayers will be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

**2. How husbands are supposed to love their wives:** “Just as Christ loved the Church.”

How did Christ love the church?

(i) Christ loves the church sacrificially. He died for the sins of His people: “gave Himself up for her to make her holy.” When Christ died on the cross at Calvary for His church, he did it willingly and sacrificially. The Bible says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Husbands ought to willingly and sacrificially love their wives. We should sacrifice our comforts for the sake of our wives.

(ii) Christ loves the church spiritually. After Christ has saved His people, He starts in them the work of sanctifying them by “cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” Christ through His word guides us in all truth, His goal being to make us like Him. He takes care of all our spiritual needs. By the power of His Spirit He helps us to read and understand the Bible and be able to apply it in our lives. By the power of His Spirit he helps us to pray accordingly (Romans 8:26).

Husbands ought to have the spiritual needs of their wives as first priority. We must create an environment in our homes for our wives to enjoy spiritual benefits. By doing this we

must:

- Read the Scriptures together with our wives daily.
- Teach our wives the Scriptures.
- Pray with them and also pray for them.
- Attend fellowship with her and also encourage her to attend women’s fellowships.

Also, make sure you do not leave your wife at home on Sundays if there is no major reason for doing so.

Note: Do not force your wife to do these things, encourage her to do them by being an example to her in speech and in deeds.

(iii) Christ has a specific love for His Church. “Just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy.....to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” When Christ came from heaven, He came to die for the sins of His church and not for the sins of everybody. He came with a specific mission, which was to die for the people God the Father had chosen to be saved in Him: “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall loose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day” (John 6:38-39).

Christ came to save the chosen children of God only. Husbands you have a God given-duty to love and cherish your wife alone. Your wife should be the number one person in your life, not your parents or your relatives or your friends. Whatever you do you and whatever decision you make in your life, must make sure that your wife is the first person you consider.

(iv) Christ Jesus takes care of His Church and provides it with physical needs.

He who loves himself loves his wife after all, no-one ever hated his own body, but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the Church for we are members of his body.”

**3. Why should a husband love His wife?:** “the two will become one flesh.”

It is because both the wife and the husband are one body: “In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves himself loves his wife after all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it.”

## Calvary

You probably know that Calvary was a hill near Jerusalem, where the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified. We know nothing else about Calvary apart from this. I call this tract "Calvary," because I am going to speak to you about the *sufferings and crucifixion of Christ*.

There is much ignorance today among people on the subject of Jesus Christ's sufferings. Many people see nothing special about the crucifixion of Christ. They do not see much profit in the story of Christ's death and sufferings.

Now I believe that these people are completely wrong. I cannot agree with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually thinking about the crucifixion of Christ. I believe that it is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men, how they condemned Him unjustly, how they spit on Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns, how they led Him as a lamb to the slaughter, how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and crucified Him on Calvary between two thieves, how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His suffering, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding till He died. It is good for us to be reminded of all these things. This is the reason the crucifixion of Christ is described four times in the New Testament. There are very few things that all four writers of the Gospel describe: generally speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it; but there is one thing that all four write about fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is an important fact, and should not be overlooked.

1. Firstly, let us remember that Christ's sufferings at Calvary were *prepared beforehand by God Himself*. They did not come on Him by chance or accident: they were all planned and determined from all eternity. The cross was planned by the everlasting Trinity for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was planned from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross: infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified by the plan and foreknowledge of God.

2. Secondly, let us remember that Christ's sufferings at Calvary were *necessary for man's salvation*. He had to take our sins upon Himself because that is the only way we can be forgiven. He had to suffer because it is by His stripes alone that we can be healed from sin. This was the only payment for our debts that God would accept; this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depends. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our place, the just for the unjust, there would have been no hope for us at all; there would have

been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed. The cross was necessary, in order that there might be an atonement for sin.

3. Thirdly, let us remember that *Christ suffered of His own free will*. He was not forced by anyone: of His own choice He laid down His life: of His own choice He went to Calvary to finish the work He came to do. He could have easily called an army of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod, and all their armies, like chaff before the wind; but He was a willing sufferer: His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness, by shedding His own blood.

Reader, when I think of all this, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind, the more fulness I see in it; the more I think about the crucifixion, the more I am satisfied that we can learn a great deal at Calvary.

If I want to know how deep is the love of God the Father towards a sinful world where shall I look? I look at the cross of Christ. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son, gave Him to suffer and die that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son.

If I want to know how sinful and hateful sin is, where should I look? It is true that the Bible teaches us about sin when we read the story of Noah and the flood. It is true that in a story like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah we learn about the seriousness of sin. It is true that when we look at why the Israelites were sent into exile we learn how terrible sin is. But if we want to know how bad sin really is, we need to look at Calvary. There we see that sin is so terrible that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away; there we see that sin has separated us from God and nothing could reconcile us to God except the death of Christ.

If I want to know the greatness of the salvation God has provided for sinners where shall I look? The Bible speaks about the grace of God and the mercy of God in many places, but it is when we look at the crucifixion at Calvary that we see the real depth of God's love and mercy. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts. The curse of the law which I have broken, has come down on Christ when He suffered in my place; the demands of the law are all satisfied: payment has been made for me.

If I want encouragement to live a holy life, where shall I look? The Ten Commandments by themselves cannot give me encouragement to live a holy life. The examples given in the Bible of God's holy people are not by themselves enough encouragement to live a holy life. Even thinking about heaven does not encourage us sufficiently to live a holy life. We

need to look at Calvary and the crucifixion. There we see the love of Christ encouraging us to live not for ourselves but for Him. It is at Calvary that we see that we have been bought with a price and that we now belong to God Himself. It is at Calvary that we understand that we are to bring glory to the Lord Jesus in our bodies and in our spirits.

It is at Calvary that we see that Jesus gave Himself for us, not just to redeem us from sin, but also to purify us, and to make us His people, zealous for good works. He took our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness.

If I want to learn how to be content and how to rejoice when I have trials in life, where shall I look? I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. I feel that He who spared not His only begotten Son but delivered Him up to die for me, will surely with Him give me all things that I really need: He that endured that pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me anything that is really good: He that has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He that gave His own blood to purchase me a home, will unquestionably supply me with all that is really profitable for me by the way.

If I want to know that my salvation is eternal and that I will never lose it, where shall I look? I cannot look at my faith or my works or my zeal or prayer life. We as Christians are weak. On some days we are full of faith and zeal, on other days we are weak in our faith and lazy. If we want to know that our salvation is eternal and that we will never lose it, then we need to look at Calvary and the crucifixion. Remember that Christ suffered and died for us that we might be saved eternally. Remember that when we get saved we put all our hope of entering heaven upon Him, we trust Him for the salvation of our souls. Is it possible that he will leave us to fall away and lose our salvation? Such a thing cannot be!

Reader, there are millions in the world today who never think about the cross. They see nothing of value in the cross of Calvary. This shows us how blind the unsaved are. It shows us how powerful sin is that it has blinded them completely so that they cannot see the value of the cross of Calvary. This is why millions go to church each Sunday and hear about the cross but remain unmoved. Their hearts are hearts of stone, their minds are darkened, their eyes are blinded, they are dead in sins and trespasses. They hear about the cross of Christ week after week and yet remain in their sins.

Reader, if you have never thought about the cross of Calvary then I urge you to think much about it today. Ask yourself why the Son of God was willing to die such a death. Ask yourself why those who are saved rejoice in the cross. Remember, the cross of Calvary is the only way by which sinners may be saved.

## Testimony of Beatrice Achieng

*Beatrice Achieng was converted to Christ earlier this year and was baptised in July. This is her testimony.*

I was born in 1991. My name is Beatrice Achieng. From childhood I loved going to church, I had a weakness of changing churches ending being baptized without knowing the meaning of baptism.

Since I joined Injili Bible Church I have been taught the Bible and I have come to understand much about the teachings of the Bible.

One day the pastor was preaching to us about how God saved Abraham. He was preaching from the book of Genesis 12:1-10, how Abraham used to worship idols. Through that preaching I realized that my sins too can be forgiven by God. After service I went home and the first thing I did was to kneel down and pray to God to forgive my sins. I believed that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins and after three days He rose from the dead and is now in heaven with our dear God. I believe and I know that from the time I prayed to Him, He has forgiven me my sins and I know that if the world would end now, I will go to heaven because I strongly believe that am saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. I thank the Lord for saving me and also thank the pastors of Injili Bible Church and the other teachers for bringing me this good news through the preaching and teaching of God's word.

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## News from Injili Bible Church, Kawangware

We are holding Bible Teaching Seminars at Injili Bible Church, Kawangware on October 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>. These are Bible studies for all Christians. During this time, we will have teaching on three topics: Major Doctrines in the book of Romans; The Second Coming of Christ and How to Worship God in the Local Church. We welcome everyone to come and join us. The seminars start at 10am each day and finish at 3pm.

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From November 28<sup>th</sup> until December 2<sup>nd</sup> we are holding a Youth Retreat at Injili Bible Church, Kawangware. During this week there will be teaching three topics: Lessons from the Book of Exodus; What is The Kingdom of God; and How to Live the Christian Life Practically. We invite everyone to attend this Youth Retreat, it is open to everyone to attend.



# Matters Regarding Suffering, Life and Death

*This article is an exposition of Philippians 1:12-26. Please read this passage before you read this article.*

In this passage Paul deals with three things which all Christians face in their lives. We will learn in this passage how a Christian should face sufferings that come to him because of his faith. In Mathew 5:11-12 Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me, rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." This is what Paul did when he was in prison. He obeyed what the Lord taught and so he rejoiced, and in this passage he gives two reasons for his rejoicing.

## 1. Paul rejoiced because the gospel was being preached.

He says in verse 12, "I want you to know, brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." We see here that Paul is not complaining about bad treatment in prison. He is heavenly minded and his thoughts are always about the kingdom of God and about how to spread the gospel, so he rejoices when the word of God is being preached by him even in prison. We should always remember that the challenges, problems and troubles we face in our lives as Christians are designed by God to draw us more to Christ and that we may bring others to Christ and encourage them in Him. But you may say that your problems are too many and that you wonder how they will make you come near to Christ or draw others to Him. You must remember that God will not allow temptations or hardships which are above what you can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). Our God is always good in all that He does, and if He allows hardships to come your way, it is because He has prepared you for them and has provided for you all that you need to go through them. Paul had a plan to go to Rome but God took him there in a special way; he was imprisoned in Rome and in prison he had an opportunity to preach to the palace guards (v 13). The guards heard the gospel when they were on duty, in their different shifts, one after another he taught them the Scriptures and when they went back to the palace they influenced others.

As a result of his preaching while in prison, other Christians were encouraged and became strong in their preaching and stopped fearing (v. 14). The work of preaching the gospel is a team work. When one is absent the work should not stop, others should take it up and continue in the Lord's service. Paul is not worried about those who are preaching the gospel with other motives like envy, strife and selfishness. He does not say they should be stopped, rather he says in verse 18, "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached."

We must rejoice when Christ is preached. We should not be angry with those who are preaching the truth about Christ or fight them, instead we must support them. There are those who will truly preach accurately about Christ even though we may not agree with them in some areas. However, as long as they are preaching the gospel of Christ we should not be against them. In Mark 9:38-40, John told Jesus that the disciples saw a man driving

out demons in the name of Jesus and they stopped him because the man was not one of their group. But Jesus told them not to stop him. We do not know what motives this man had in casting out demons but we know he was doing it through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 2. Paul rejoiced because he knew whatever happened would be for his deliverance.

This is what he says in verse 19-20. "For I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." Paul's prayer here is that he may have a clear conscience so that he would in no way hinder the preaching of the gospel even when he was in difficulties.

## 3. How Paul viewed life and death (1:21-26).

In this passage Paul speaks of two things; life and death.

**(i) Life.** He says life here on earth is only important in terms of usefulness in the gospel work. In verse 21 he says, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." He explains what this means in verse 22 that, "If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me." Again in verse 24 he says "But it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." So we can see from these verses that Paul sees life in terms of how he is to be used in God's work. In vs. 25 and 26 Paul says he is confident that the Lord wishes him to remain on earth: "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith." We can see here Paul's plan is not just for living and enjoying life on earth but his great aim in life is for the progress of the gospel, once that is finished then he sees no other point in him continuing to live.

Remember, worldly people do not think like this. They think about living for their property and wealth. Others live for pleasure, and still others for fame, with an aim of making a name so that they may be remembered. What are you living for? The only way to rejoice in life, to be happy about life and to be full of joy is to be in Christ. This should be the thinking of every Christian. If you say you are a Christian and the issues about living for Christ's work are not in your mind then you are not thinking properly.

**(ii) Death.** Paul says he desires to die. He is actually looking forward to it. In verse 21 he says "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Why does Paul say to die is gain? Death was a gain to Paul because it would free him from all sins of this world and all temptations. It would remove him from his enemies and the enemies of the gospel. Again death is the entrance to glory where he would rejoice eternally with the Lord Jesus physically. This is why in verse 23 he says "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far." Paul's thoughts about heaven were very clear. He looked forward for the day he will be in heaven, his eternal home. This subject about heaven was a major part of his teachings. He reminded the Thessalonians about it (1 Thess. 1:10, 2 Thess. 2:1-5). He saw heaven as his real home and he really looked forward to going there. His life on earth was temporal and he did not want to cling to it just for the sake of staying. This should be the thinking of all godly people, all Christians.

