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Buddhist Gangster Turned Evangelist

KAMPONG THOM, Cambodia - On its 30th anniversary, the *Asian Center for Missions*, CBN's missionary training centre in the Philippines, celebrated with its missionaries and the disciples they have made in the 77 nations they have reached so far.

One of them is Pastor Khon Khan. Born to a poor Buddhist family in Cambodia, Khan sought to become a monk in order to get a free education.

That dream was shattered when his parents' business went bankrupt. Then, due to severe depression, his mother committed suicide. He shared, "After my mom passed away, I have no hope, I have no money, my dad remarried. My life became worse and worse."

With ten siblings, Khan had to find ways to survive. In order to continue his studies, he lived in a Buddhist temple and served the monks. But after a few years, he left the monastery, disappointed at how the older monks treated him.

Khan told CBN News, "They always say bad words and revile

all the children. Then I decide not to stay in the Buddhist temple anymore. From that time, I did not want to be a Buddhist monk anymore. I became a gangster, gambling and want to fight. I felt hopeless, no money, no food to eat. I really want to kill myself.

"While I was thinking like that, a voice come to tell me, 'If you want to have hope in your life, you want to have a good future, you should know how to speak English because your country need someone to translate for foreigners.'

"I asked my gangster friend, 'Friend, do you know a foreign teacher who teach English free of charge?' He said, 'Oh yes I know teacher who teach English free of charge. But one thing, the problem, it's a Christian church.'"

Desperate to learn English, Khan decided to join the evangelistic English classes led by Filipino missionaries trained by the *Asian Center for Missions, ACM*. Here, the students were required to tell people about Jesus.

"My pastor said every student should preach the gospel and tell people: 'Jesus loves you, He died for you. If you don't understand,



come to church.' I just do that and after 5 months, finally, I realise Jesus is the Saviour. Then I accepted the Lord. From that time I commit myself to serve God with my whole life," Khan said.

Today Pastor Khan pastors a church in his province in Kampong Thom. He has helped plant 200 churches across the 24 provinces of Cambodia and disciples pastors. On Sundays, he conducts feeding programmes in 25 villages around Kampong Thom. Not all of these children belong to very poor families, but according to Pastor Khon Khan, the most important thing is for these children to be fed not only nutritious food, but the Word of God.

After living the difficult life of an orphan, Pastor Khan also started a children's home to take care of poor children who have nowhere to go.

God has expanded the pastor's territory leading to his being named Undersecretary of Cult and Religion in Cambodia. This position allows Pastor Khan to protect Christian churches, especially in remote villages where they are often persecuted. As a

result, they can now freely spread the gospel.

Pastor Khan believes with God by his side, nothing can stop him from winning more tribes and villages for Jesus, a legacy that's been passed on to him by ACM.

He said, "Without ACM, I might have been killed because I was a gangster, or in prison. But by the grace of God, through the ACM, God called me out of the dark world. I used to be the boy who was hopeless and helpless, but now God is using me to bless the whole Cambodia."

- Lucille Talusan, Asia Correspondent for CBN News, <https://cbn.com>

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9 NIV).



Die Vader van Ontferminge

Ek het vir die Here gevra om Sy liefde aan my te openbaar. Dit voel vir my so 'n abstrakte begrip om in 'n God te glo wat buite die dimensie van tyd bestaan. Iemand daar ver wat ek nie letterlik in my alledaagse bestaan beleef nie. En toe begin Hy om in my te werk oor etlike jare heen. Ek gaan deur donker dieptes van beproewinge, hartseer en pyn en smarte en swaarkry. Nie net een keer nie, maar voortdurend. Leeggetap van myself, sodat Hy my kan vul met Homself. Met Sy liefde wat my deurdrenk, met die indompeling in Sy Heilige Gees. Namate ek groei in Hom word ek minder en minder en word Hy meer en meer in my lewensbestaan. Ek is self nog ver van die finale produk af. In my daaglikse lewenswandel lei Hy my soos 'n blinde gelei word en afhanklik is van die een wat hom lei. En nou, onlangs, sê Hy vir my in 'n hoorbare Stem: "Romeine 12". In hierdie skrywe wil ek die "Ontferminge van God" ontleed. God se liefde en daarmee voortvloeiend, Sy ontferming.

In Romeine 12:1 volg ons die pad: "...ek vermaan julle, broeders, by die ontferminge van God..." Die Griekse woord vir "ontferminge" is oiktirmos enkelvoud, of meervoud oiktirmoi. Dit beteken letterlik innige deernis, medelye of barmhartigheid wat gegrond is op God se liefde. 'n Begrip onvertaalbaar in Afrikaans en ook in Engels, want dit bring ons op die plek waar ons God beleef deur geloofservaring. Die Hebreeus se woord is rachamim.

1. WAAR BEGIN DIE

ONTFERMINGE VAN GOD?

God stap in die Tuin van Eden en roep: "Adam, waar is jy?" Die vreesbevange antwoord: "Ons is kaal." Dit was die gevolg van die Sondeval. Die straf? "Jou eie boosheid sal jou tugtig. Weet dan dan dit vir jou bitter is dat jy die HERE jou God verlaat het" (Jer. 2:19). God se ontferming geld egter ook hier, te midde van die Val. God sê vir Eva: "Met smart sal jy kinders baar." Dit is droefheid. Pyn. Straf. Maar bo alles is daar ook uitkoms. Dit is God se ontferminge.

Omdat daar nie 'n direkte, enkele Afrikaanse woord is wat

die fisiese en emosionele aspek van 'n moederskoot of van die Vader se liefde vasvang nie, vertaal Afrikaanse Bybels dit gewoonlik met: ontferminge, barmhartigheid, genade, innige liefde. In die *King James*-vertaling word dit meestal vertaal as: "mercies, compassions," of "bowels of mercies." Daar is die betekenis van 'n intieme Teenwoordigheid van God hier wat vir ons Westerlinge geslote bly. In wese beklemtoon beide terme (Grieks en Hebreeus) nie net 'n koue, regverdige besluit nie, maar God se oombliklike, hartstogtelike en liefdevolle deernis, of al God se positiewe kwaliteite vir Sy mense. Sy liefde is oorkoepelend oor alles, want God is liefde. Dit is 'n uitdrukking van Sy liefde, en voortspruitend Sy genade waarin Hy Sy kinders vashou en met Sy veelomvattende liefde versorg. God reik uit na Sy skepsele, regdeur die eeue, om die Sondeval om te keer en die mens te herstel wat na Sy Beeld en gelykenis geskape is. God is volmaak. Ek is nog gebroke. Al is my sonde alles vergewe by wedergeboorte, groei ek nog op die pad van volmaaktheid - na die bergtop van verheerliking toe. Dan sê die Here vir my: die krag, die innerlike en uiterlike genesing, lê nie in myself nie, maar in die krag en salwing van die Heilige Gees. Hy gebruik gebroke mense wat Hy heelgemaak het, of besig is om heel te maak, om Sy verlossingsdade en genesing te verkondig. En hulle, die gebrokenes, is Sy diensknegte. Net soos eenmaal vir Adam en Eva in die Tuin van Eden bring Hy nou nog herstel en genesing vir ons gebroke lewens.

2. DIE OU TESTAMENTIESE HEILIGES

Ons lees van verskeie Bybelkarakters wat in gevangenis en gevare was. Hulle het in swaarkry en gebrokenheid geleef. Hunkerend, soekend, vervolgd... Kon Jeremia oor die muur spring met "kettings aan sy voete?" Nee, hy is in die modderput gegooi, en vriende en helpers het hom uit die modderput opgetrek. Ons kan verder die hele profesie van die boek van Daniël volg, wat neerkom op opleidingsessie op opleidingsessie, stap vir stap openbaring van God in verdrukking op verdrukking, konfrontasie op konfrontasie,

tot hy keer op keer kom tot oorwinning. Ons lees in Daniël 2:18 dat koning Nebukadnésar van Babel 'n droom gehad het en niemand kon dit uitleë nie. Dan verskyn Daniël op die toneel. Hy vra sy metegeselle dat hulle barmhartigheid (Hebreeus = rachamim) van die God van die hemel moes afsmeek oor hierdie geheim, sodat hulle nie vir Daniël en sy metgeselle saam met die origewyse manne van Babel sou ombring nie. Block skryf, "He famously concludes that their pleas are presented not because of their own righteous deeds, but because of God's great mercies." Daniël bid ook: "Neig U oor, my God, en hoor, open U oë en aanskou ons verwoeste plekke en die stad waar U Naam oor uit-geroep is; want nie op grond van ons geregtigheid werp ons ons smeking voor U aangesig neer nie, maar op grond van U grote barmhartigheid" (rachamim; Dan. 9:18). En so bid Daniël ernstig, na 70 jaar van ballingskap. Daniël bid, "Ons het teen U gerebelleer, maar ons beroep ons op U groot barmhartigheid." So ook Daniël se vriende. Die toue het van hulle hande en voete afgesmelt toe God saam met hulle in die vuuroond was.

En Josef in die put? Hoe hulpeloos en angsbevange was hy nie! Simson? Moses? Josua? Otniël? Gideon? En al die Rigters? Hulle het elkeen hul eie gevaarlike situasies beleef. Die waarheid bly egter vas: God was altyd teenwoordig by elkeen van Sy diensknegte, veral ook ten tyde van hulle verdrukking. Hulle het God beleef in die hierdie verdrukking, waarna Hy elkeen toegerus het met Sy "tender mercies" en Sy Lewende Woord wat hulle moes gaan uitdra. Hulle swaarkry het hulle boodskap geword, omdat die fokus nie val op hulle ontberings nie, maar op God se liefde wat hulle gered het uit al hul node.

3. JESUS, DIE BRUG TUSSEN TESTAMENTE

Dan kom ons by Jesus, die Seun van die Mens. Hy vul die interim periode, tussen die Ou en Nuwe Testament - 'n oorgang na die Nuwe Testament wat Hy met Sy bloed verseël het. Jesus vorm die brug tussen die Ou Testamentiese koningshuis of Verbond en die

Nuwe Testamentiese koms van die Messias as die ewige Koning. Dit is die "ewige genadebewyse van Dawid" wat voortbou op Jes. 53:3: "Hy was verag en deur die mense verlaat, 'n man van smarte en bekend met krankheid; ja, soos een vir wie 'n mens sy gelaat verberg; Hy was verag en ons het Hom nie geag nie." Dit verwys na God se onvoorwaardelike, ewige verbond met Dawid. Dit behels die onwrikbare belofte van 'n nageslag en 'n koninkryk wat nooit sal vergaan nie, wat uiteindelik in Jesus Christus (die Seun van Dawid) sal realiseer. Hierdie gebeure beklemtoon die onvoorwaardelike en ondeurgrondelike liefde van God wat oorkoepelend is oor al God se goeie hoedanighede. Want liefde is die kern, die grondslag van die Wet, die allesoorheersende "tender mercies" van God. Ten spyte van Dawid se menslike swakhede en sondes, het God Sy genade en trou nooit van hom af wegge neem nie. Hierop volg die geestelike vervulling: In Jesaja 55 word hierdie beloftes uitgebrei tot 'n uitnodiging vir alle mense om deel te hê aan die ewige genadebewyse! Dis sluit ons in!

4. JESUS SE VRIENDE

Jesus leer Sy vriende en die dissipels oor die ondeurgrondelike liefde van God deur smarte, deur beproewinge, deur lyding, deur vuuroonde, deur diep kuile en stormwinde heen. Hoe groter die aanslae op ons lewe, hoe groter die belewens van Sy Godlike natuur in liefde, en dus hoe groter die "ontferminge van God." Jesus lei ons om te verstaan wat God se liefde behels: Hy lei ons van bloot vriendskaplike liefde na Goddelike liefde. Van philia na agapē.

In die bekende woorde in Johannes 15:14-15 sê Jesus vir Sy dissipels: "Julle is My vriende." Die oorspronklike Griekse woord wat Hy gebruik is philia, wat bloot vriendskaplike liefde beteken, en binne konteks van hierdie uitspraak beklemtoon Hy die oorgang van 'n dienskneg-Meester-verhouding na 'n intieme, vertroulike vriendskap. In Joh. 15:15 verduidelik Hy Self hierdie verskil: Hy deel Sy Vader se geheimenisse

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met Sy dissipels as deel van Sy afskeidswoorde. 'n Slaaf nie weet wat sy heer doen nie. Maar Jesus lê Sy lewe af vir almal. Dit is die alles-oor-treffende liefde van God wat omskryf word met die begrip agapē. Want God is liefde (agapē) - 'n liefde wat voltooiing vind in die kruis! Hy het naby aan ons gekom deur die kruis, en ook die Vader se hart vol liefde aan ons geopenbaar. Wat 'n Vriend het ons in Jesus!

Eers heelwat later, na die opstanding, sou Petrus ook die betekenis van agapē ontdek, soos ook al die ander dissipels. En Paulus, toe hy 1 Kor. 13 geskryf het oor agapē. Nou beleef ons as gelowiges ook die Woord: "God is liefde." En voorvloeiend hieruit beleef ons die ontferminge van God. Dan hoor ons Jesus se woorde: "Gaan dan heen, en doen net so." Ons moet voortdurend Sy liefde wees, 'n aksie, 'n handeling vir alle ander mense.

5. BELEEF GOD SE ONTFERMINGE

Tot sover was die vertolking bloot intellektueel of selfs

emosioneel ontleed. Ek wil egter God se liefde self beleef! En ek lees - God is die Vader van ontferminge: "Geseënd is die God en Vader van onse Here Jesus Christus, die Vader van ontferminge en die God van alle vertroosting, wat ons troos in al ons verdrukking, sodat ons die wat in allerhande verdrukking is, kan troos deur die vertroosting waarmee ons self deur God getroos word. Want soos die lyde van Christus oorfloedig is in ons, so is ons troos ook oorfloedig deur Christus. Maar of ons verdruk word, dit is julle tot troos en redding; en dit laat Sy werking blyk deurdat julle dieselfde lyding verduur wat ons ook ondergaan; en of ons getroos word, dit is julle tot troos en redding" (2 Kor. 1:3-6).

Inderdaad lees ons in Psalm 103:13, "Soos 'n vader hom ontferm oor sy kinders, so ontferm die HERE Hom oor die wat Hom vrees." Verder lees ons ook, "Kan 'n vrou haar suigling vergeet, dat sy haar nie ontferm oor die seun van haar skoot nie? Ofskoon hulle sou vergeet, nogtans sal Ek jou nie vergeet nie! Kyk, Ek het jou

in die handpalms gegraveer; jou mure is gedurig voor My" (Jes. 49:15-16).

Hierdie Hebreeuse woord vir ontferm is nou verwant aan die woord vir "moederskoot" (rechem). Dit dui op 'n organiese, amper instinktiewe, diep innerlike bewoënhed - soos 'n moeder wat deernis het vir haar kind. So werk God ook met ons: soos 'n moeder wat ons met intense teerheid versorg, al doen ons verkeerd en beseer ons onself. Sy liefde hou nooit op nie. Dit oortref die aardse vader en moeder se liefde!

Hier is hoe die konsepte in Hebreeus en Afrikaans vergelyk: Die Hebreeuse vir moederskoot (rechem) is 'n selfstandige naamwoord. Die Hebreeuse woord racham (enkelvoud) en rachamim (meervoud) en dui op 'n werkwoord.

Die meervoudsvorm word in Hebreeus gebruik om intensiteit aan te dui. As God se rachamim is 'n oorweldigende, meervoudige en onmeetbare deernis wat Hy oor Sy mense

uitstort. Dit is iets wat aktief gedoen word. 'n Daad van liefde. Lees dan in dié verband Jes. 49:1-4.

In die Ou Testament is dit nie net 'n onbetrokke of intellektuele besluit om iemand te vergewe nie, maar 'n instinktiewe, diep moederlike liefde en ontferming vir 'n kind of geliefde. Hierdie begrip van moederliefde kom reeds voor by Eva en haar straf wat God vir haar voorhou in die Tuin van Eden: Nie net 'n straf nie, maar ook 'n diep ontferming wat vir haar (en Adam) uitkoms bied in hulle verdrukking.

SAMEVATTING

God het ons innig lief, meer as wat 'n vader kan liefhê. En God het lief meer as wat 'n moeder kan liefhê, al het ons in sonde verval. Hy is inderdaad die God van ontferminge! Hy gee altyd uitkoms vir diegene wat Hom soek, want dan vind hulle Hom, selfs in hulle diepste nood en lyding en pyn. Want die Vader is jou Vriend! Jesus is jou Vriend! En die Heilige Gees is jou Vriend! Amen.

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BEIBELE E BUA KA ENG?

(What is the Bible all about?)

Batho ba nagana gore Beibele ke buka fela e e tletseng ka dikgang. Ba utlwa fela moruti a rera ka Dafita le Goliath le Go tsalwa le go Bapolwa ga Jesu le ka ga Melao le dibe tsa rona. Ga ba bone setshwantsho le kgang e kgolo. Ga ba bone mola wa gauta le kgang e kgolo e e ralalang mo Beibeleng. Beibele ke Thulaganyo ya Modimo mme e tlhalosa leano la Modimo go tswa kwa Tshimologong go ya kwa Bokhutlong le kwa bophelong jo bo sa khutleng. Beibele ke Lefoko la Modimo go tloga ka Genesi 1:1 go ya go Tshenolo 22:21.

Le fa e kwadilwe ke bakwadi ba ka nna 40 ba ba farologaneng mo dingwageng di ka nna 1500, Beibele e boloka molaetsa o o tlhomameng ka thulaganyo ya Modimo ya thekololo. Kgang e le nngwe. Mmoloki a le mongwe. Leano le le nngwe. Beibele yotlhe e ka ga Modimo le Jesu le Mowa o o Boi-tshupo le batho ba ba dumelang le ba ba sa dumeleng. A re ke re leke go bona dintlha tse di kgolo tse di botlhokwa le mola wa gauta mo Lefokong.

1. MOTSHIMOLOGONG

• Modimo o dirile Atame le Efa ka botsalano le Ene. • Ga ba a ka ba utlwa, mme boleo jwa tsena mo lefatsheng. • Thuto: Boleo bo kgaola botsalano le Modimo. Lefoko: Genesi 1:26-31; Genesi 3:1-7.

2. SEGAKOLO

• Batho ba ne ba itse se se siameng le se se sa siamang mo dipelong tsa bone. • Ba ne ba santse ba tlhopho bosula. • Thuto: Go itse se se siameng ga go a lekana. Lefoko: Genesi 6:5-8.

3. PUSO

• Kwa Babele, batho ba ne ba tsuologa gape. • Melao e kgona go thibela bosula, mme ga e kgone go fetola pelo. • Se re se ithutang: Modimo ke ene fela yo o kgonang go fetola batho. Lefoko: Genesi 11:1-9.

4. TSHOLOFETSO

• Modimo o ne a bitsa Aborahame mme a solofetsa ditšhaba tsotlhe tshogofatso. • Aborahame o ne a dumela Modimo, mme Modimo wa mo tsaya a siame. • Thuto: Modimo o boloka ka tumelo mo tsholo-

fetsong ya gagwe. Lefoko: Genesi 12:1-3; Genesi 15:6.

5. MOLAO

• Molao o ne o bontsha leraele boleo jwa bone. • E ne e tshwana le seipone: e ne e senola leswe, mme e sa kgone go le tlhatswa. • Thuto: Molao o re supetsa kwa go Keresete. Lefoko: Ekesodu 20:1-17; Bagalata 3:10-13.

6. MOHAU

• Jesu o tllile, a tshela a se na boleo, a swela dibe tsa rona, mme a tsoga gape. • Pholoso ke mpho ya Modimo, e e amogelwang ka tumelo. • Thuto: Re pholositse ka tshogofatso ka tumelo. Lefoko: Johane 1:14, 17; Johane 3:16; Baefeso 2:8-9.

7. BOGOSI

• Jesu o tla boa mme a dire dilo tsotlhe disha. • Ga go kitla go tlhola go nna le boleo, loso, botlhoko kgotsa kutlobotlhoko. • Thuto: Kgang ya Modimo e felela ka kgalalelo. Lefoko: Tshenolo 20:1-6; Tshenolo 21:1-4.

8. KONOSETSO

• Modimo o re dirile. • Re e thubile.



Johan Zerwick
Sêlê ke 083 458 3837

• O re pholositse. • O tla re tlisa gae. Badumedi ba tshwanetse go dira eng? Sokologang mme o dumele mo go Jesu Keresete. O swetse dibe tsa gago mme a tsogela pholoso ya gago.

THAPELO

Rara, ke go lebogela leano la gago la poloko. Re lebogela Jesu Keresete.

Re thuse go tshela ka tumelo, go rata Lefoko la Gago, le go leta puso ya Gago e e tlang. Ka leina la ga Jesu. Amen.

GESEËN MET ALLE GEESTELIKE SEËNINGE

Paulus het die brief aan die Efésiërs geskryf vanuit die tronk, naby aan die einde van sy lewe. Hy kyk terug oor sy lewe en bediening. Hy skryf aan broeders en susters in wie se stad hy drie jaar gewoon en geleer het (Hand. 20:31). Dit was 'n teologies-ge sofistikeerde gehoor, en daar het verskeie wonderwerke deur Paulus se bediening plaasgevind in 'n stad gekenmerk deur afgodery en toorkuns. Ons vind ook 'n roerende beskrywing van die afskeid tussen Paulus en die leiers van hierdie gemeente in Hand. 20:13-38. Hierdie brief bied dus ryke stof tot nadenke, soos geïnspireer deur die Heilige Gees. Die woorde spreek vandag nog tot ons!

Die brief begin met 'n besondere aanhef, en die taal herinner aan poësie of 'n geestelike lied. In Ef. 1:3 lees ons die begin van die seëngroet, "Geseënd is die God en Vader van onse Here Jesus Christus wat ons geseën het met alle geestelike seëninge in die hemele in Christus." Watchman Nee het die volgende kommentaar gelewer: "If at the outset we try to do anything, we miss everything. For Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE." Laat ons enkele van hierdie seëninge wat God reeds onverdienslik aan ons gegee het, oordink.

1. ONS UITVERKIESING

Die lang lys van geestelike seëninge begin met die frase, "...soos Hy ons in Hom uitverkies het voor die grondlegging van die wêreld." Asumang wys daarop dat die uitverkiesing eintlik 'n baie positiewe leerstelling is, omdat dit gesien moet word in die lig van God se liefde (v. 4-5), Sy wil (v. 11), Sy en ons heiligheid (v. 4) en Sy heerlijkheid (v. 5). In Sy wysheid, het God ons gekies om naby aan Hom te kom en in Sy geestelike gesin verteenwoordig te word. 'n Bekende teksgedeelte in hierdie verband is Joh. 15:16, "Julle het My nie uitverkies nie, maar Ek het julle uitverkies en julle aangestel om vrug te gaan dra en dat julle vrug kan bly, sodat wat julle die Vader ook al in My Naam vra [wat ook al nodig is om vrug te dra], Hy julle dit kan gee."

Nog een is Rom 8:28-30, "En ons weet dat vir hulle wat God liefhet, alles ten goede meewerk, vir hulle wat na Sy voorneme geroep is. Want die wat Hy vantevore geken het, dié het Hy ook vantevore verordineer om gelykvormig te wees aan die beeld van Sy Seun, sodat Hy die Eersgeborene kan wees onder baie broeders; en die wat Hy vantevore verordineer het, dié het Hy ook geroep; en die wat Hy geroep het, dié het Hy ook geregverdig; en die wat Hy

geregverdig het, dié het Hy ook verheerlik." Baie is al geskryf oor die balans tussen God se vrye keuse (soewereiniteit) en die behoud van menslike vrye wil (die aanvaarding van God se uitnodiging). Liefde kan nie geforseer word nie. Kom ons laat dit in misterie gehul, met die vertroue dat God altyd regverdig is en Sy doel bereik, tot die heerlijkheid van Sy Naam. Laat ons liewer fokus op die wonder van God se liefde wat ons geroep het tot 'n nuwe en verheewe geestelike lewe.

2. HEILIG EN SONDER GEBREK

"...soos Hy ons in Hom uitverkies het voor die grondlegging van die wêreld om heilig en sonder gebrek voor Hom in liefde te wees" (Ef. 1:4). Die Griekse woord vir heilig is *hagios* en dui op 'n skeiding of verskil. Ons lewenswyse en denke moet verskil van die wêreld s'n, al lei dit tot misverstande en selfs vervolging. By wedergeboorte vergewe die Vader ons sonde op grond van Jesus se verdienste aan die kruis. Daarmee verkry ons posisionele heiligheid. Dis 'n regsterm wat verwys na ons vryspraak: ons is skoon en sonder fout in God se oë op grond van die feit dat Hy ons vrygespreek het. As voorbeeld, neem die aanhef tot die brief 1 Korintiërs. Paulus skryf aan "die geroepe heiliges" maar kort daarna bestraf hy sy lesers vir hulle ernstige sondes en tekortkominge. Ons kan dit verstaan in die lig van posisionele heiligheid.

Dan is daar progressiewe heiligheid, of heiligmaking. Dit is die alreeds-maar-nog-nie-beginsel, soos party dit noem. Terwyl ons reeds heilig is in God se oë, help Sy Gees ons in ons geestelike reis om al deur heilig en sonder gebrek te word: "Terwyl ons dan hierdie beloftes het, geliefdes, laat ons ons van alle besoedeling van die vlees en die gees reinig, en laat ons die heiligmaking in die vrees van God volbring" (2 Kor. 7:1).

Laastens is daar ons uiteindelijke heiligmaking, wanneer alles tot volmaaktheid kom: "...en mag die Here julle ryk en oorvloedig maak in liefde vir mekaar en vir almal... sodat Hy julle harte kan versterk om onberispelik te wees in heiligheid voor onse God en Vader by die wederkoms van onse Here Jesus Christus met al Sy heiliges" (1 Thess. 3:12-13).

Barclay skryf dat die Griekse woord vir 'sonder gebrek' *amōmos* is. Dit verwys na iemand (bv. 'n Joodse priester) wat 'n offerdier ondersoek om te sien of dit gepas en gereed is om as offer te dien. Slegs die beste was goed genoeg vir God. Dit kan ook in ons lewe toegepas word: ons moet ons beste vir God gee.

3. IN LIEFDE

"...om heilig en sonder gebrek voor Hom in liefde te wees" (Ef. 1:4b). Die beweegrede vir al die geestelike seëninge waarmee God ons geseën het, is Sy liefde. God is liefde (1 Joh. 4:8). As ons enigins soos Hy wil wees, moet ons in daardie liefde wandel en mekaar vuriglik liefhê. Jesus gee ons 'n opdrag: "n Nuwe gebod gee Ek julle, dat julle mekaar moet liefhê; soos Ek julle liefgehad het, moet julle ook mekaar liefhê" (Joh. 13:34).

God stel die voorbeeld, en ons moet dit navolg. Ons moet soos Hy word en oervloei van liefde na ander. Hoe kosbaar is hierdie fondasie tot die lewe, tot ons verhouding met God en met alle mense! Soos iemand gesê het - baie mense soek hulle hele lewe lank na die doel en betekenis van die lewe. Dit kan in een woord opgesom word - LIEFDE! Liefde vir God, ons naaste, en onself (Matt. 22:37-40). Ons kan die Here net in stille bewondering prys vir die onbegryplike liefde wat Hy aan ons bewys het in die kruisdood van Jesus en die uitstorting van die Heilige Gees en in Sy Teenwoordigheid wat ons dag vir dag dra.

4. ONS AANNEMING TOT KINDERS

"...deurdat Hy ons voorbeskik het om ons as Sy kinders vir Homself aan te neem deur Jesus Christus, na die welbehag van Sy wil" (Ef. 1:5). In Johannes 1 lees ons van die Woord van God, die Lig van die wêreld, wat na Sy eiendom gekom het - Jesus Christus. Nie almal het Hom aangeneem nie. "Maar almal wat Hom aangeneem het, aan hulle het Hy mag gegee om kinders van God te word, aan hulle wat in Sy Naam glo; wat nie uit die bloed of uit die wil van 'n man nie, maar uit God gebore is" (Joh. 1:12-13). Die apostel Johannes gaan voort om die liefde van God te besing in sy eerste sendbrief: "Kyk wat 'n groot liefde die Vader aan ons bewys het, dat ons kinders van God genoem kan word! Om hierdie rede ken die wêreld ons nie, omdat dit Hom nie geken het nie" (1 Joh. 3:1).

Deel van God se wonderbare saligheidsplan is dat Hy ons as Sy Eie kinders aangeneem het. Hy het ons lewend gemaak en ons status verhef: "Maar God, wat ryk is in barmhartigheid, het ons deur Sy grote liefde waarmee Hy ons liefgehad het, ook toe ons dood was deur die misdade, lewend gemaak saam met Christus" (Ef. 2:4-5). "Maar nou in Christus Jesus het julle wat vroeër ver was, naby gekom deur die bloed van Christus" (v. 13). Paulus skryf verder: "Want julle is almal kinders

van God deur die geloof in Christus Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). Wat 'n grootse wonderwerk om God se kind te mag wees en in 'n liefdesverhouding met ons Vader te mag staan!

5. ONS BEGENADIGING

"...tot lof van die heerlijkheid van Sy genade waarmee Hy ons begenadig het in die Geliefde" (Ef. 1:6). Johannes herinner ons: "En die Woord het vlees geword en het onder ons gewoon - en ons het Sy heerlijkheid aanskou, 'n heerlijkheid soos van die Eniggeborene wat van die Vader kom - vol van genade en waarheid" (Joh. 1:14). Hierdie gedeelte vertel ons nie net van die feit van die Menswording van Jesus nie, maar ook van die aard daarvan: vol van genade en waarheid. Johannes gaan voort met hierdie tema: "En uit Sy volheid het ons almal ontvang, ja, genade op genade. Want die wet is deur Moses gegee; die genade en die waarheid het deur Jesus Christus gekom" (v. 16-17).

Hoewel die wet die tugmeester was na Christus toe (Gal. 3:24-25), het God se volle genade in die Persoon van Jesus ontvou. Ons het ook hierdie genade deelagtig geword. Geen verdienste aan ons kant nie. Net die geestelike seëninge en gawes van God. Jesus sê, "...want Ek het nie gekom om die wêreld te oordeel nie, maar om die wêreld te red" (Joh. 12:47). Laat ons ons dan verlustig in hierdie genadegawes van redding, regverdigmaking, en aanneming!

6. VERLOSSING EN VERGIFNIS

"In Hom het ons die verlossing deur Sy bloed, die vergifnis van die misdade na die rykdom van Sy genade" (v. 7). Soos 'n regter wat ons tydens 'n hofspraak vryspreek omdat 'n ander die prys reeds betaal het, word ons vrygespreek op grond van Jesus se offer aan die kruis. Paulus herinner ons aan hierdie liefdesdaad van God: "En julle, wat dood was deur die misdade en die onbesnedenheid van julle vlees, het Hy [God] saam met Hom [Jesus] lewend gemaak deurdat Hy julle al die misdade vergeef het, en die skuldbrief teen ons, wat met sy insettinge ons vyandig was, uitgedelg en weggeruim het deur dit aan die kruis vas te nael" (Kol. 2:13-14).

Die Amplified Bible sê dit so mooi, "...Having cancelled and blotted out and wiped away the handwriting of the note (bond) with its legal decrees and demands which was in force and stood against us (hostile to us)". Die skuld wat ons nooit kon betaal nie, is deur Jesus betaal, en "die straf wat vir ons die vrede aanbring, was op Hom, en

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A Prayer for Slowing Down

Busyness is more than just too many activities. It's the heaviness our brains feel when we have too many things to think about. It's the extra heavy heartbeat that comes when we think we may let others down. It's feeling in-over-our-heads. We may find ourselves holding our breath, longing for a day off, or feeling desperate for quiet space.

When we feel busy, we tend to get a bit short with others. Maybe we start to feel cynical. Perhaps we even ignore the text messages of our closest friends because we don't want to get out with them.

For some of us, slowing down is as simple as saying, "no" to a few things and taking some time off. For others, however, it may feel

like you're in an impossible place to slow down.

Regardless of your circumstances, consider taking a few deep breaths with us as we think about the following Scripture and pray the following prayer.

"In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat - for He grants sleep to those He loves" (Psalm 127:2 NIV).

Prayer: Dear Lord, I often feel overwhelmed. Busy. Rushed. Anxious. As I lay my wants, needs, and troubles before Your feet, please give me Your unique and wonderful peace! Help me to slow down and give me Your rest. In Jesus' Name. Amen.
- Our Daily Bread Ministries



God is Faithful

As I was pondering the Beatitudes, I was reminded of the faithfulness of God across generations. My grandfather left home at the age of eleven. His father and grandfather wanted him to leave school and earn money to support their dependence on alcohol.

Instead, he chose a different path. He built a simple mud hut on the banks of the Nahoon River in East London and planted carnations, which he sold on street corners to survive. Most importantly, he made a decision that would alter the course of generations to come. He chose to put God first.

Every Sunday he would walk barefoot to church. Only when he reached the corner near the church would he put on his shoes. He became a lay preacher and was involved in building several churches in East London and the Transkei.

His son, my father, Pastor Ed Roebert (Pronounced: Ray-Bert), felt the call of God on his life and became the pastor of a church that grew to more than 6 500 members. He faithfully served the Lord until 1997, when he passed away while participating in a March for Jesus event in Pretoria.

Today, all three of his sons are involved in ministry. Several of his grandchildren - all of whom he never met and never even saw - have also chosen to serve God and advance His Kingdom. These notes come from one of the third generation since my grandfather made the decision to break with the family curse of alcohol and pursue God wholeheartedly.

What an amazing reminder that the choices we make today can impact generations yet to come. A decision to follow God, to trust Him, and to put Him first can change not only your life but also the destiny of your family.

We often think that our lives are made up of big moments and major decisions, but many of life's greatest outcomes begin with small, faithful choices. One young boy decided to serve God instead of following the path laid out before him. Four generations later, the impact of that decision continues. Never underestimate what God can do through one life that is surrendered to Him.

May the Lord fill your heart with His peace, guide you through every season, and remind you that He is working in your life and through your life in ways that may only be fully seen by generations still to come.

- Pastor Andrew W Roebert, www.AlivetoGod.com

God is in die Fluistering...

Elia het pas een van die grootste oorwinnings van sy lewe beleef. Op Berg Karmel het God met vuur uit die hemel geantwoord. Die volk het uitgeroep: "Die Here is God!" 'n Mens sou dink Elia is op die kruin van sy geloof, maar kort daarna stort alles in duie. Koningin Isebel dreig hom. Elia vlug die woestyn in. Hy raak moedeloos, uitgeput en depressief. Onder 'n besembos bid hy selfs dat hy eerder wil sterf.

Dit is belangrik om die konteks te onthou. Elia is nie op hierdie punt ongeestelik of ongelowig nie. Hy is eenvoudig moeg. Die groot profeet het sy menslike grens bereik. God stuur hom na Horeb, die berg waar Moses eeue tevore God ontmoet het. Daar gebeur iets besonder. 'n Geweldige wind skeur die berge oop. Maar die Here is nie in die wind nie. 'n Aardbewing volg. Maar die Here is nie in die aardbewing nie. Dan kom vuur. Maar die Here is nie in die vuur nie.

En daarna ... 'n Fluistering. 'n Stil, sagte stem. En dáár ontmoet Elia vir God.

Walter Brueggemann merk op dat hierdie gedeelte ons leer dat God nie net in dramatiese mag en openbare oorwinnings teenwoordig is nie, maar ook in stilte, kwesbaarheid en verborgenheid. Die God van Karmel is ook die God van die fluistering.

Dit is iets wat ons maklik vergeet. Van die belangrikste werk van die Gees gebeur stil. 'n Gedagte wat nie wil weggaan nie. 'n Bybelvers wat aanhou terugkom. 'n Onverklaarbare vrede. 'n Sagte oortuiging in jou hart. 'n Stil wete van wat reg is.

Die Gees hoef nie altyd te skree om gehoor te word nie. In ons wêreld is stilte skaars. Ons word omring deur kennisgewings, nuus, menings, video's en eindelose geraas. Selfs wanneer ons alleen is, vul ons die stilte met musiek of skerms.

N.T. Wright skryf dat God se Teenwoordigheid dikwels nie in die buitengewone ervarings gevind word waarna ons soek nie, maar in die getroue, daaglikse wandel met Hom. Die groot oomblikke het hulle plek, maar die meeste geloof word gevorm in die gewone dae.

Miskien voel jy vandag soos Elia. Moeg. Ontnugter. Leeg. Mag ek sê: depressief? Dan is die goeie nuus dat God nie altyd met donderweer kom nie. Soms kom Hy net sit langs jou in die stilte. En in daardie sagte fluistering hoor jy weer: "Jy is nie alleen nie."

Gebod: Here, in die geraas van my lewe, help my om stil genoeg te word om U Stem te hoor. Amen.

Ds. Hettie Wessels

CHRISTIANITY IN THE AGE OF ALGORITHMS

THE NEW PULPIT

Not long ago, discipleship primarily happened through the local church, faithful pastors, family devotions, and personal Bible study. Spiritual growth was often a slower process. One built around reading, reflection, prayer, and learning from those who had walked with Christ longer than they had.

A significant shift has taken place. The average Christian now lives in a world saturated with digital content. Before many people open their Bibles in the morning, they reach for a phone. Before hearing from a pastor on Sunday, they may have already consumed dozens of videos, podcasts, memes, and social media posts. The modern believer often enters a worship service after spending hours immersed in a completely different information environment.

The smartphone has become a constant companion, and the social feed increasingly functions as a type of digital pulpit. Every swipe introduces ideas, values, fears, opinions, and worldviews. The issue is not merely that people are consuming more information than previous generations; it is that invisible systems now determine much of what they see. Those systems are called algorithms. Unlike a pastor who prayerfully prepares a message or a teacher who intentionally builds a lesson, algorithms are designed around a different objective. Their purpose is not spiritual maturity. Their purpose is attention. They are designed to learn what captures us, what keeps us watching, and what prevents us from moving on to something else. That reality raises an important question for Christians: If something is constantly shaping our thoughts, then who (or what) is teaching our minds?

ATTENTION HAS BECOME A BATTLEFIELD

The battle for truth has always involved the mind. Scripture repeatedly warns believers about deception, false teaching, and conformity to worldly thinking. Romans 12:2 tells believers, *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”* The battlefield of spiritual warfare has never simply been external; it has always involved what people believe and how they think.

What makes our present moment unique is that the competition for attention has become relentless. Modern platforms are built around systems that study user behaviour. Every pause on a

video, every click on an article, every search, and every interaction becomes data. Algorithms learn preferences and then serve increasingly personalised content designed to maximise engagement. If a user watches several videos involving political outrage, more outrage appears. If they stop on conspiracy content, more conspiracy content follows. If they linger on something inappropriate, more inappropriate stories begin filling their feed.

Research in recent years has increasingly suggested that emotionally charged and sensational content often spreads more effectively online than carefully reasoned information. This creates a troubling dynamic because truth and engagement are not necessarily the same thing. Truth frequently requires patience, context, and thoughtful consideration. Emotional reactions, however, happen almost instantly. The result is a culture increasingly conditioned to react before thinking.

For believers, this should create concern because spiritual maturity has never been built on immediate reactions. Growth in Christ often develops through slow and intentional practices: reading Scripture, praying, studying doctrine, spending time in fellowship, and allowing God's Word to transform the mind over time. The digital world increasingly trains people in the opposite direction.

THE RISE OF FAST-FOOD THEOLOGY

The influence of algorithms extends beyond entertainment and politics; it increasingly shapes theology itself. Many Christians today consume biblical teaching in the same way they consume every other form of online content. Instead of sustained study, theology can become fragmented into short clips and brief emotional moments. Complex doctrine becomes condensed into catchy quotes.

Short-form content is not inherently bad. God can certainly use brief messages to encourage believers. A short video may inspire a person to study a passage further. Problems emerge, however, when snippets replace substance. There is a significant difference between hearing a thirty-second motivational clip and studying an entire chapter of Scripture within its context. Sound doctrine requires depth, and depth takes time.

Many researchers and educators continue observing increasing difficulty among younger gene-

rations in maintaining sustained focus amid constant digital stimulation. Whether scrolling through endless videos or rapidly switching between applications, attention increasingly becomes fragmented. Spiritually speaking, this creates important questions.

If believers become accustomed to consuming information in ten-second increments, what happens when they are asked to sit quietly and meditate on Scripture? What happens when prayer feels slow? What happens when studying an entire book of the Bible requires more effort than scrolling through dozens of videos? Psalm 1 describes the righteous person as someone who delights in God's law and meditates upon it day and night. Meditation requires concentration and stillness. Yet stillness has become increasingly rare in a world filled with notifications and constant stimulation.

TECHNOLOGY AS A SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

Recent developments involving artificial intelligence (AI) have introduced an entirely new dimension to these concerns. Throughout the past year, multiple reports have highlighted people increasingly using AI systems for emotional support, life advice, and even spiritual guidance. Some users have described AI systems in surprisingly personal terms, seeking comfort, affirmation, and meaning through conversations with machines.

Technology has always served practical purposes, and AI can certainly provide useful information and assistance. Yet Christians should recognise an important distinction. Technology is meant to be a tool, not a source of ultimate authority. Human beings have always looked somewhere for guidance and meaning. Historically, people sought wisdom through family, tradition, religion, philosophy, or trusted relationships. Increasingly, however, many individuals now turn first toward digital systems. This becomes concerning because algorithms and AI do not possess spiritual discernment. They cannot convict sin. They cannot produce genuine wisdom. They cannot replace the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture describes God's Word as *“living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword”* (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible does not merely comfort people; it confronts them. It exposes pride, reveals sin, and calls believers toward repentance and transformation. Algorithms function

differently. Rather than confronting people, they frequently reinforce preferences. Instead of exposing blind spots, they commonly provide more of what users already enjoy. A virtual tickling of the ear.

GUARDING THE MIND IN A DIGITAL WORLD

None of this means believers should abandon technology altogether. Social media and digital platforms can spread the gospel, encourage believers, and connect believers around the world in ways previous generations never experienced. Ministries can reach millions of people instantly. Biblical resources have become available at unprecedented levels.

Technology itself is not the enemy. The greater issue involves stewardship. Believers must ask whether they are controlling technology or whether technology is controlling them. The issue is not whether someone owns a smartphone. The issue is whether the smartphone increasingly owns their attention.

Perhaps Christians need to periodically examine themselves by asking difficult questions. How much time am I spending in God's Word compared to scrolling through content? What voices influence me the most each day? Am I consuming more opinions than Scripture? Am I pursuing truth or simply pursuing whatever captures my attention?

Those questions matter because discipleship is rarely neutral. Something is always shaping our thinking. Something is always influencing our values. Something is always teaching us how to interpret reality. Jesus warned His followers in Mark 4:24, *“Take care what you listen to.”* Those words may carry even greater significance in the age of algorithms.

The modern world is filled with endless voices competing for attention. Yet followers of Christ must remember that not every voice deserves authority over their minds.

The Church cannot allow social feeds to become its primary teachers. Believers cannot allow algorithms to replace biblical discipleship. Because if Christians are not intentionally being shaped by God's Word, something else will gladly do the shaping for them. And increasingly, that something may be sitting in the palm of our hands.

- Joe Hawkins/Prophecy Recon, www.prophecynewswatch.com

GESEËN MET ALLE GEESTELIKE SEËNINGE

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deur Sy woude het daar vir ons genesing gekom" (Jes. 53:5).

7. OPENBARING VAN GODS WIL

"...deurdat Hy aan ons die verborgenheid van Sy wil bekend maak het na Sy welbehae wat Hy in Homself voorgeneem het" (v. 9). Hierdie hele hoofstuk is ryk aan aspekte wat deel is van God se wil. Oorkoepelend is dit Sy reddingsplan en om alle magte te verenig onder Christus. Hierdie wil was 'n misterie, maar God het gekies om dit aan ons te openbaar. Dit is geestelike kennis wat geestelik verstaan en beoordeel moet word. In wysheid en praktiese insig het God dit aan ons geopenbaar sodat ons hierdie geheim deelagtig kan word. In diep en ryke wysheid, maar ook in praktiese wysheid wat ons bemagtig vir die alledaagse lewe (Barclay).

8. DIE HOOFSKAP VAN CHRISTUS

"...met die doel om alle dinge wat in die hemele sowel as wat op die aarde is, onder een Hoof in Christus te verenig" (v. 10). In die volheid van die tyd, aan die einde van die eeue, sal God alle dinge aan Christus onderwerp, en dan sal Christus dit weer aan die Vader onderwerp (1 Kor. 15:28). Barclay skryf, "It is not the case of the Son being subject to the Father as a slave or even a servant is to a master. It is a case of One Who, having accomplished the work that was given Him to do, returns with the glory of complete

obedience as His crown. As God sent forth His Son to redeem the world, so in the end He will receive back a world redeemed; and then there will be nothing in heaven or in Earth outside His love and power."

Alle mense kan nou tot redding kom, nie net een uitverkose groep nie. Dit is die resultaat van Jesus se gehoorsame offer - Sy verlossingswerk is vervul. En dit skep eenheid in hoe God besluit om die wêreldse orde te reël en almal met Homself te versoen. Hemelse sowel as aardse outoriteit word aan Christus onderwerp en dus aan die Vader. God het die seisoene en tye só gereël dat hierdie hoofskap van Christus aan die einde van tyd sal realiseer. Tye van vrede en harmonie.

9. ONS GEESTELIKE ERFDEEL

"in Hom in Wie ons ook 'n erfdeel ontvang het" (v. 11). Sommige kommentators interpreteer die Grieks meer letterlik: ons het die erfdeel van God geword. In hierdie verband word Deut. 4:20 aangehaal, "Maar die Here het julle geneem en julle uit die yster-smeltoond, uit Egipte, uitgelei om Sy erfvolk te wees soos dit vandag is."

Ons redding en aanneming as God se eiendom is die finale doel van Sy verlossingsplan, en ons het dus Sy geloofskinders geword. Wat 'n wonderlike hoogtepunt en uitkoms van hierdie plan wat God teen die hoogste prys uitgevoer het! Natuurlik

strek hierdie feit ook tot ons eie geweldige voordeel, en ons kan ons saligheid as ons ewige, geestelike erfenis sien. Meer nog, God Self is ons erfdeel (MacLaren)! Paulus herhaal die feit dat hierdie geloofsvoordeel gebaseer is op God se genadige uitverkiesing en voorkennis, Sy ewige, liefdevolle besluit voor die begin van tyd. Hoe sal ons God se grootheid ooit na waarde kan prys?

10. DIE WAARBORG VAN DIE GEES

"in Wie [Christus] julle ook, nadat julle die woord van die waarheid, die evangelie van julle redding, gehoor het, in Wie julle, nadat julle ook geglo het, verseël is met die Heilige Gees van die belofte, wat die onderpand is van ons erfdeel om Sy eiendom te verlos tot lof van Sy heerlijkheid" (v. 13-14). Laastens skryf Paulus dat al hierdie waarhede in die hede vir ons 'n werklikheid word deurdat God Sy Gees in ons harte uitstort. Die metafoor wat gebruik word, is van 'n seël wat in die ou tyd die teken was van waarvandaan 'n pakkie gestuur is en aan wie dit behoort. Dus verwys die seël van die Heilige Gees dat ons nou aan God behoort. Die Griekse woord vir onderpand is arrabōn en dui op 'n deposito, 'n belofte dat die res van die betaling vir 'n diens of produk spoedig sal volg. Dus is die Heilige Gees 'n voorsmaak van die hemelse vreugde, 'n waarborg dat ons eendag die volle heerlijkheid van God se verlossingsplan sal beërwe.

Green skryf dat hierdie woord in 'n moderne Griekse konteks gebruik word as verwysend na 'n verlowing. Hy skryf, "The Holy Spirit [the Arrabon] is the heavenly Lover's engagement ring given to us. We shall carry that engagement ring with us into God's future, when we have the full wedding ring of final union with Christ." Die druppels wat ons nou ervaar is 'n belofte van soveel meer wat ons in die ewigheid deelagtig sal word!

SAMEVATTING

Paulus het 'n wonderlike seënbede uitgespreek wat propvol lering en bemoediging is. Ons kon slegs kortliks stilstaan by die vele seëninge waarmee God ons geseën het. Dit sal ons baat om weer en weer terug te keer na Efésiërs 1 en elke seën diep te oordink - 'n kort oordenking kan nie reg daaraan laat geskied nie. Al die bogenoemde seëninge volg as resultate van God se saligheidsplan vir die mensdom, en dit gebaseer op Sy ondeurgrondelike liefde. Ons sien God Drie-enig wat hier werk: Die Vader stuur die Seun, die Gees bekragtig die Seun en die Kerk vir bediening. Die Gees is die Waarborg van die volle heerlijkheid wat ons deelagtig sal word. Laat ons die Vader, Seun, en Gees loof en prys met innige bewondering en danksegging oor die onbeskryflike wysheid, grootsheid, en liefde van die reddende genade van God!

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Putting on Spiritual Clothes

As I stood in my closet today and picked out my clothes, a thought hit me! I don't "accidentally" put on clothes in the morning. I choose them.

Sometimes, even the night before, depending on what the next day holds, I lay out my wardrobe - socks, pants, shirt, jacket, shoes. If I am going to the gym, my wardrobe reflects that activity. If I am doing a funeral that day, shorts and running shoes will not be suitable; a suit and tie is more appropriate.

Scripture tells me the same is true spiritually.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12, NIV).

Notice: clothe yourselves. That

means I have a responsibility to put on what God has made available.

I can't speak for you, but this is true for me. If I don't intentionally put on compassion, I default to indifference. If I don't choose humility, pride slips in. If I don't prepare to be patient, frustration takes over.

In Jesus, God has given me a new identity. Now I'm called to live like Him and wear my new identity every day. **Compassion** means I see people. **Kindness** means I act. **Humility** means it's not about me. **Gentleness** means strength under control. **Patience** means trusting God's timing.

And then there's **forgiveness**: "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13, NIV).

That stretches me. I'm asked to forgive to the same degree Jesus forgave me. Completely. Love becomes the overcoat that holds it all together.

Today, before I step into conversations, responsibilities, and relationships, I ask: What am I wearing spiritually? What fills the inside will show on the outside.

My friend, the miracle of today is that Jesus has a whole new wardrobe for us to wear!

Let's pray together.

Lord, help me to intentionally clothe myself with what reflects You. Replace my impatience with patience, my pride with humility, my harshness with gentleness. Teach me to forgive the way You forgave me. Let love be the covering over every interaction today. Dress my soul in Your character. Amen.



- Grant Fishbook

<https://jesus.net/a-miracle-every-day/>

METANARRATIVES OF THE SOUL

George Friedman calls overarching cultural and strategic ambitions held by nations that explain their past and predict their future “metanarratives”. Vladimir Putin wants to restore “Mother Russia”; Xi Jinping wants to elevate China to the superpower status he believes it deserves.

The same is true of individuals: You have a reason for living, a purpose that frames and focuses your life. Or, if you do not, your lack of purpose similarly defines your days.

Our metanarrative, the Big Commission to which Jesus calls us,

is clear: *“Make disciples of all nations”* (Matthew 28:19). Everything we do is to be a means to this end. Your job, school, and home are your mission field. Your gifts, abilities, and resources are instruments intended for this purpose.

But to make disciples of Jesus, we must be disciples of Jesus. We cannot give what we do not have or lead people where we will not go. To lead people to Jesus, we must walk with Jesus.

THE LIFE WE WERE MADE TO EXPERIENCE

We must seek an intimate, transforming relationship with our

living Lord. The most foundational reason for seeking this is that this is the life we were created to experience!

Before the Fall, our primordial parents lived in conversational relationship with God in the Garden that He created for them. When our Lord returns to our fallen planet, we will return to such a “garden” with its “tree of life” (Revelation 22:2). He will usher us into His unveiled Presence.

In between, Jesus is working every day to reverse the Fall in our lives and world (cf. Ezekiel 34:15-16). His atoning death purchased

our salvation and restored believers to a right relationship with our Father (Romans 5:1). Now His Spirit wants to sanctify us completely (1 Peter 1:2) until we experience and manifest the very character of Christ (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 5:1-2). One day, *“when [Jesus] appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3:2). In the meantime, our job is to walk so closely with Jesus that we become like Jesus.

The great evangelist, Dwight Moody, testified, “If I walk with the world, I can’t walk with God.” Choose wisely today.

www.denisonforum.com

The God Who Pursues

“Bright future” said it all. Single, good-looking, recent college grad. His family loved him, girls noticed him, career opportunities invited him.

And yet, while Eric appeared confident without, he was tormented within. Tormented by inner voices he could not quiet. Tortured by mental images he could not avoid and by thoughts he could not understand. So, desperate to escape the torment, Eric decided to escape from life. On a grey, rainy February day, Eric walked out the back door of his home. He never returned.

When Eric walked away, someone was watching. His sister Debbie saw her brother leave, his tall frame ambling down the street. She assumed he would return. He didn’t. She hoped he would call. He didn’t. She thought she could find him. She couldn’t. Hours became years. Years of wandering and wondering. As Eric wandered, Debbie wondered. Where could he be? What could have happened? Is he all right? Is he alive?

Where Eric journeyed, only God and Eric know. But we know that he ended up thousands of miles from his home. And somewhere along his path, somehow, Eric began to believe he had been given an assignment. Someone noticed Eric going through a garbage can, looking for food. And that someone suggested Eric sweep up in exchange for the garbage.

Eric interpreted this comment as an assignment: he believed he had been given a permanent commission to clean up a roadside in San Antonio, Texas. To the

local residents, Eric’s lanky form and bearded face became a familiar feature as he walked up and down his “assigned” section of Interstate 10, gathering garbage.

Through the years, many tried to assist him, but Eric resisted. He was content to survive on what he collected. He created a home out of a hole in a vacant lot. He designed a wardrobe out of split trousers and a torn sweatshirt. Summer sun was deflected by an old hat, winter chill softened by a plastic bag covering his shoulders.

His weathered skin and stooped shoulders made him look twice his forty-four years. But then, sixteen years of living on the side of the road would do that to you.

It had been sixteen years since Debbie had seen her brother. And she might never have seen him again, had it not been for two events. The first was the construction of a car lot on top of Eric’s hovel. The second was a pain in Eric’s abdomen. The car lot took Eric’s shelter. The pain took Eric’s health.

When the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) found Eric curled up in a ball on the roadside, he was already dying of cancer. Another few months and Eric would be gone. And with no known family or relatives, he would die as he’d lived - alone.

Eric’s court-appointed temporary guardian couldn’t handle this thought. Surely someone is looking for this man, reasoned the attorney. So the attorney searched the Internet for anyone missing a brown-haired adult

male with Eric’s last name.

A reply came from a New Hampshire woman. Could this homeless man in Texas be the brother she’d been seeking for so long? The description seemed to match, but she had to know for sure. So Debbie, her husband, and two children headed for Texas.

By the time Debbie arrived, Eric had been released from hospital. Debbie found him near his old home, resting against the side of a building. One look was all it took to convince her - the search was over. She saw beyond the sun-dried skin, beneath the unkempt hair and beard. She saw her brother.

Eric, however, didn’t recognise his sister. The years had ravaged his mind. Debbie longed to embrace this long-lost sibling, but her instincts told her she must await his cue. And then something small led the way. Eric noticed an angel pin Debbie was wearing. He was intrigued by it. When Debbie offered the pin to Eric, he said yes. He even allowed her to pin the angel on his shirt. And with that one gesture, she, at long last, touched her brother.

Debbie came to Texas planning to spend a week. But a week passed and she couldn’t leave. She rented an apartment, began homeschooling her children, and reaching out to her brother.

It wasn’t easy. He didn’t always recognise her. He wouldn’t call her by name. One day he cursed her. He refused to sleep in her apartment. He didn’t want her food. He didn’t want to talk. He just wanted his vacant lot. He wanted his “job.”

But Debbie didn’t give up on Eric. Weeks became months, and still the sister stayed. She understood that he didn’t understand. So she stayed. I came to know her as she began to attend our church. After hearing her story, I asked what you would have asked. Why? Why didn’t she give up? “Simple,” she told me. “He’s my brother.”

Her pursuit reminds us of Another, doesn’t it? Another kind heart Who left home in search of the confused. Another compassionate Soul Who couldn’t bear the thought of a brother in pain. So, like Debbie, He left home. Like Debbie, He found His sibling.

And when God found us, we acted like Eric. We didn’t recognise the One Who came to help us. When He told us we were part of His family, we didn’t believe Him. When He offered a safe place to stay, we didn’t follow Him. We ignored Him. Some even cursed Him and told Him to leave.

But He didn’t leave. He lingered. And still He lingers. He understands that we don’t understand. He knows that we are torn by many voices and infected by a cancerous sin. He knows we are near death. But He doesn’t want us to die alone.

Like Debbie, He wants to give us something before it’s too late. He wants to give us a place in His family. And He wants to hold our hand when we die.

So God follows us. He pursues us along every roadside; He follows us down every highway. He follows us all the days of our lives.

“Surely goodness and mercy
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The God Who Pursues

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shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6). What a surprising way to describe God. A God Who pursues...

Dare we envision a mobile, active God Who chases us, tracks us, following us with goodness and mercy all the days of our lives? He's not hard to find. He's there in Scripture, looking for Adam and Eve. They're hiding in the bushes, partly to cover their bodies, partly to cover their sin. Does God wait for them to come to Him? No, the words ring in the garden. "Where are you?" God asks (Genesis 3:9), beginning His quest to redeem the heart of man. A quest to follow His children until His children follow Him.

Moses can tell you about it. After forty years in the desert, he looked over his shoulder and saw a bush blazing. God had followed him into the wilderness.

Jonah can tell you about it. He was a fugitive on a boat when he looked over his shoulder and saw

clouds brewing. God had followed him onto the ocean.

The disciples of Jesus knew the feeling of being followed by God. They were rain-soaked and shivering when they looked over their shoulders and saw Jesus walking. God had followed them into the storm.

An unnamed Samaritan woman knew the same feeling. Alone in life and alone at the well, she looked over her shoulder and saw a Messiah speaking. God had followed her through her pain.

The apostle John, banished on Patmos, looked over his shoulder and saw the skies begin to open. God had followed him into his exile.

Lazarus had been dead for three days in a sealed tomb when a Voice awakened him. He lifted his head and looked over his shoulder to see Jesus. God had followed him into death.

Peter the Apostle had denied his Lord and gone back to fishing

when he heard his name and looked over his shoulder and saw Jesus cooking breakfast. God had followed him in spite of his failure.

Sin, wilderness, ocean, storm, pain, exile, death - our God is the God Who follows. Have you sensed Him following you? He is the One Who came to seek and save the lost. Have you sensed Him seeking you? Have you felt His Presence through the kindness of a stranger? Through the majesty of a sunset or the mystery of romance? Through the question of a child or the commitment of a spouse? Through a word well spoken or a touch well timed, have you sensed Him?

Like Eric, we have left home. But, like Debbie, God has followed us. Like Eric, we are quick to turn away. But, like Debbie, God is slow to anger and determined to stay. We don't accept God's gifts. Yet God still gives them.

God gives us Himself. Even when we choose our hovel over His house and our trash over His

grace, still He follows. Never forcing us. Never leaving us. Patiently persistent. Faithfully present. He uses all His power to convince us that He is Who He is and He can be trusted to lead us home.

By the way, Debbie's faithful persistence moved Eric's heart. Before his life ended, he acknowledged her as his sister. In doing so, he found his way home.

And that's what God wants for you. He simply wants you home with Him. And to bring you home, He offers you a gift - the gift of salvation (John 1:12).

My prayer is that you'll see God's gift like you've never seen it before. If you've already accepted Jesus as your personal Saviour, you'll thank Him again. And if you've never accepted His invitation, now is the time to consider accepting this gift of a lifetime, a gift for all people!

- Max Lucado, *The GIFT for all people*, Christian Art Publishers, 1999

PEACE

We live in a day and age where things are often turbulent and uncertain. Around us we see wars, conflicts, economic pressures, rising costs, and concerns about the future. It can often seem easier to default to worry, anxiety, and stress than it is to walk in peace.

Yet I believe the Lord wants to replace worry with His peace, anxiety with His peace, and stress with His peace. God has not called us to live under the weight of fear and uncertainty. He desires that we experience His peace in every area of our lives.

1. PEACE WITH GOD

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, we can have peace with God. Before salvation, we are separated from God and living apart from His purposes. Through Christ, that separation is removed and we are brought into a right relationship with Him.

Peace with God means the conflict between us and God has been settled. We no longer strive against Him; we belong to Him.

Think about the Apostle Paul. Before his conversion, Saul was actively opposing God and persecuting Christians. Acts 9:1-2 describes Saul as breathing threats and murder against the disciples. Then he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. Everything changed! The man who was once opposed to God became a servant of God. He moved from being at war with God to being at peace with God.

Acts 22:14 says: "The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the Voice of His mouth."

God wants each of us to know His will, to see Jesus clearly, and to hear His Voice. God's will is His best plan and purpose for our lives.

Part of God's wonderful offer of salvation is peace with Him. If we have surrendered our lives to Christ, this peace is ours. If you are feeling as if there isn't peace between you and God, feel free to pray the prayer of salvation at the bottom of this article, and you can experience this peace with God. Because once there is peace with God, we can begin to experience the peace of God.

2. THE PEACE OF GOD

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

Peace is more than the absence of trouble. It is a supernatural calm and wholeness that comes from God. The Greek word for peace (eirene) carries the idea of wholeness and completeness. God's peace joins together the broken pieces of our lives.

In John 14:27, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." Notice that Jesus does not simply give peace. He gives His peace. It is not manufactured by our own efforts. It is not found through worldly methods or temporary solutions. It comes directly from God Himself.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, we read, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely." The God of peace gives His peace to His children. There is no substitute for God's peace. The world offers temporary relief. God offers lasting peace.

What Opposes God's Peace?

* Looking Elsewhere

"They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns" (Jeremiah 2:13). We lose peace when we look to other sources instead of God.

* Trusting in Ourselves

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You" (Isaiah 26:3). Peace grows when trust grows.

* Worrying

"Do not be anxious about anything..." (Philippians 4:6-7). Anxiety and peace cannot occupy the same throne in our hearts. Worry focuses on the problem. Prayer focuses on God.

What Builds God's Peace?

* Draw Near To God

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). The closer we draw to God, the more we experience His peace.

* Trust His Faithfulness

"Great is His faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). God's faithfulness never changes.

* Stand On His Promises

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PEACE

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"Those who love Your instructions have great peace" (Psalm 119:165). God's Word strengthens our faith and brings peace.

* Resting In His Love

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear" (1 Joh. 4:18a, NIV). The more we understand His love, the more secure and peaceful we become.

* Focusing On His Unchanging Nature

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Circumstances change. God never changes.

3. PEACE IN GOD

Peace with God is foundational to our relationship with Him. The peace of God gives us inner calm. It teaches us how to live and rest in Him. Now, we can live in the peace of God every day of our lives:

* God Is Our Refuge

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). *"Trust in Him at all times... God is a refuge for us"* (Psalm 62:8). When we make God our refuge, we discover deeper levels of peace.

* Dwelling In His Presence

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1). God wants us to live close to Him. His Presence is the place where peace grows. The closer we remain to Him, the more His peace fills our lives.

* Resting In God

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). As we focus on God and trust Him, we learn to rest.

Rest is not inactivity. Rest is confidence in God's goodness and faithfulness. We can remain peaceful even when circumstances around us are not.

* Rejoicing in the Lord

"Rejoice in the Lord always..." (Philippians 4:4-7). Rejoicing shifts our focus from our problems to God's faithfulness. Thanksgiving opens the door for God's peace to flood our hearts. Prayer, gratitude, and trust all work together to strengthen peace within us.

CONCLUSION

God wants us to experience peace. First, peace with God through salvation. Then the peace of God that guards our hearts and minds. Finally, peace in God as we learn to make Him our refuge and resting place. The Lord does not want us controlled by fear, anxiety, or worry. He wants us to walk in His supernatural peace. Jesus said, *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:27). May we continually look to Him, trust Him, and experience the wonderful peace that only He

can give!

PRAYER OF SALVATION

Lord Jesus, I know I have sinned in my thoughts, words, and actions. There are so many good things I have not done.

There are so many sinful things I have done.

I am sorry for my sins and turn from everything I know to be wrong.

I know You gave Your life on the cross for me.

Gratefully I give my life back to You.

I ask You to come into my life.

Come as my Saviour to cleanse me.

Come in as my Lord to control me.

Come in as my Friend to be with me, and by Your grace, I will serve You all of the remaining years of my life in obedience.

Thank You, Lord!

I now acknowledge You as the One and only true Living God.

Amen.

- Pastor Michael Roebert

What it Means to Be a Child of God

Normally, I don't have deep philosophical thoughts on the treadmill, but thanks to my daughter, today was an exception. We had just started our exercise class. My sixteen-year-old leaned over and shouted over the noise, "Do you ever look at me and think, 'Wow. Isn't it crazy that, like, I'm your daughter? That I belong to you?'" Under different circumstances, I would've asked her where that question came from, but I was breathless and honestly replied, "All the time."

Raising our four almost grown kids has been my greatest joy, challenge, and accomplishment. Even as my nest slowly empties and our lives and roles change, they will always be my children, and I will always be their mom. Adoptive families I know feel exactly the same way. They are all their kids. And adoptive families proudly display their often multi-coloured family photos and proclaim, "They are mine!"

ADOPTED AND BELOVED

If there were such a family photo in heaven, God would look at us, His multi-coloured, multi-everything family, and proudly proclaim, "They are all adopted, and they are all Mine!" Paul says the same is true of every believer - whatever your story, if you are in Christ, you have been adopted. In Romans 8:15-17, Paul writes,

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by Whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him."

In first-century Rome, when Paul penned these words, adoption wasn't primarily about taking in orphaned children - although that was part of it. Adoption was often a deliberate, legal act in which wealthy men would adopt or specifically choose sons as heirs. Fathers sometimes passed over or disinherited their natural-born sons in favour of a chosen adopted one. And the adopted son immediately came into his inheritance. He didn't wait until his father's death to enjoy all the benefits of belonging. Once the papers were signed, everything the father owned became the son's.

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION

If you are in Christ, you are in the family photo as His adopted son or daughter. How do we know this for sure? Paul says there are two spirits at play in our identity as sons and daughters of God. Once we lived in a spirit of fear, which made us like slaves who cower in

fear of the Master. Slaves don't cuddle up with the Master at the end of a long day and share their thoughts, needs, or feelings. They aren't free to run into His arms and call Him "Abba! Father!" But now, the Spirit of adoption works in us and assures our hearts that we belong. We're no longer afraid of the Master, because now He's our Abba, Father - our Daddy. We know this is true because the Spirit Himself reassures us we belong - signing the certificate of our adoption in our hearts. But belonging is only the beginning.

JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST

Spiritually speaking, we were homeless children, living on the streets. Dirty, lonely, vulnerable, and without any resources. Daily survival was all we knew, and we had no future, no hope, and no way out. Until a wealthy, generous, and unfathomably kind Father noticed you and chose to adopt you as His son or daughter. You did nothing to deserve this honour, and you have nothing to offer Him in return. But that doesn't bother the Father - in fact, He likes it that way. He scooped you out of the filth of the streets and welcomed you into His happy, beautiful home and family.

But this is a now-and-not-yet reality. In Christ, God adopted us. He didn't just rescue us out of the slums of sin (which would've been more than enough!), but He

has given us everything He owns. The not-yet part is that we have an inheritance waiting for us in heaven.

In His lavish kindness, the Father will one day place a jeweled crown on our heads and seat us next to His other Son, Jesus Christ. As joint heirs with our brother Jesus (Heb. 2:11), all that belongs to Him is now ours. Our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, unfading and kept in heaven for us (1 Pet. 1:3). But most of all, our portion will be God Himself - and for eternity we will enjoy our inheritance of knowing and enjoying Him (Ps. 16:5-6).

MARVELLING IN THE MIDDLE

As adopted sons and daughters, we see the all-surpassing value of belonging to the family of God, but there's also a condition attached. As we identify with Jesus in His suffering, we will also share in His glory. This is how we bear the family resemblance. This pattern uniquely marks us as His children.

"Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed" (1 Pet. 4:13). Suffering is the path that leads to glory, and this is the family way. There's really only one response to news like this: we marvel. What marvelous grace!

- Cara Ray, <https://cara-ray.com>