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# Die Verligter

## Gregorius, Armenië, 301 n.C.

**T**erwyl Gregorius na die kasteel toe stap, skerm hy sy oë teen die skerp son. Tog kan hy nie help om die lig- en kleurespel te bewonder nie, en hy kyk skreefoog na die landskap voor hom.

Dit is veertien jaar sedert hy laas die son gesien en vars lug ingeasem het. Hy weet nie of hy hom gaan ooreis nie, maar hy neem in elk geval soveel moontlik daarvan in. Hy onthou met ontsag die aanskoue van die berg Ararat, die eerste toneel wat hom begroet het toe hy uit die gevangenis van Khor Virap vrygelaat is. Dis die mooiste gesig wat hy nog in sy hele lewe gesien het.

Waar hy deur die wagne in die gange van die kasteel af gelei word, is hy 'n vreemde gesig in kontras met die weelde van die Armeense koninklike woning. Terwyl hy 'n oomblik voor 'n tapisserie talm, kyk een van die soldate na hom.

Sy hare is lank en onversorg, nes sy baard wat amper tot aan sy middel reik. Alhoewel hy net oor die 40 is, is sy hare grys en lyk dit of hy al in sy 60's moet wees. Boonop is hy uitgeteer en sy klere hang in vodde aan sy lyf.

"Tog," dink die wag, "die koning se suster het hom ontbied. Ons durf nie tyd mors nie." "Kom," sê hy vir die man, "ons word elders ver wag."

Gregorius volg inskiklik, sonder om 'n woord te sê.

Toe hulle 'n luukse kamer binnegaan, staan die koning se suster, Khosrovitookht, op en kom nadergestap om die gevangene

se hande in hare te neem. Die wag word opnuut getref deur die skerp kontras tussen haar koninklike teenwoordigheid en hierdie skim van 'n gevangene. Vol afkeer tree hy vorentoe om tussenbeide te tree. Maar in plaas daarvan om die wag se besorgdheid te verwelkom, draai sy na hom en wys dat hy kan gaan.

"Broeder Gregorius, u het my so dikwels in u 'huis' verwelkom. Ek is bly dat ek u nou in myne kan ontvang," sê Khosrovitookht, gedagtig aan haar gereelde besoeke aan Gregorius in die kerker waar haar broer hom veertien jaar gelede laat opsluit het.

Gregorius glimlag, en vir 'n oomblik kyk sy in sy oë. Ten spyte van sy uiterlike voorkoms sou sy nooit kon dink dat hierdie man so pas vrygelaat is nadat hy jare in 'n donker gat deurgebring het nie. Hy straal vrede uit soos wat die son lig uitstraal!

"Ek het u vrylating gereël," begin sy stadig. "My broer, die koning is nie gesond nie." Dan vertel sy hom die res van die verhaal.

Na Gregorius se gevangeneeming het koning Tiridates III, haar broer, al hoe wilder geword in sy pogings om die "ketterse" Christendom in Armenië uit te wis, soos sy hom alreeds tydens haar besoeke vertel het. Verskriklike dinge het gebeur sedert sy hom die laaste keer gesien het. Baie mense is doodgemaak en tog is daar al hoe meer mense wat Jesus as Here bely.

Tydens die laaste insident het Tiridates self na die teregstelling van 'n groep Hripsimeyaanse

nonne gaan omsien. Sy weet nie wat presies gebeur het nie, maar telkens wanneer sy mense daarvoor uitvra, vertroebel hulle oë en sê hulle dat dit nie die soort ding is wat 'n prinses behoort te hoor nie.

Met Tiridates se terugkeer het hy hom in sy kwartiere gaan toesluit en geweier om enigiemand te sien. Toe 'n bekommerde hofknaap uiteindelik 'n paar dae later met 'n bord kos na hom toe gaan, het hy gesien dat die koning alles met sy kaal hande verwoes het. Die hofknaap het net-net met sy lewe daarvan afgekome.

"Ek is bevrees hy het van sy verstand af geraak," sê die prinses. "Niemand kan sy kamer binnegaan nie uit vrees dat hy hulle sal doodmaak. Ek weet dis seker die beloning vir al sy boosheid. Maar dit het my ook die geleentheid gegee om u vrylating te reël."

"Vat my na hom toe," val Gregorius haar in die rede.

Die prinses kyk vol ongeloof na hom. "Maar verstaan u nie wat ek gesê het nie? Dit is die man wat u so lank gelede in daardie gat opgesluit het! Hy sal u doodmaak. U van alle mense! U kan nie ingaan!"

Weer maak Gregorius haar stil. "Vat my na hom toe. Soos ek jou probeer leer het, is God nie 'n God van waansin nie, maar van liefde. Hy het my ter wille van sy majesteit hiernatoe gebring."

Oplaas laat vaar die prinses haar besware en maak soos Gregorius vra. Toe sy aanbied dat hy eers bad en nuwe klere aantrek, sê hy dat dit kan wag tot nadat hy by die

koning was.

Khosrovitookht lei Gregorius na die koning se kwartiere, sluit die deur oop om hom in te laat en sluit dit dan weer agter hom. Daar is 'n taamlike kabaal, maar dan is dit stil.

Terwyl sy buite sit en wag, bid die prinses. Hoekom is dit so stil? wonder sy. Het Tiridates vir Gregorius vermoor? Lê hy nou dood op die vloer terwyl ek hier sit?

Dan hoor sy 'n klop aan die deur. Sy hardloop nader om dit op 'n skrefie oop te maak en is verlig om Gregorius se verweerde gesig aan die ander kant te sien. Wat haar egter nog meer verbaas, is haar broer, kalm en by sy volle positiewe, wat agter Gregorius verskyn.

Binne die volgende paar weke is die koning en almal in die kasteel as Christene gedoop. Armenië het die eerste land geword waar Christenskap gewettig is, twaalf jaar voordat Konstantyn se Edik van Milaan Christenskap in die Romeinse Ryk gewettig het.

Omdat hy die lig van geestesgesondheid en Christenskap aan die koning en die mense van Armenië gebring het, het Gregorius later as "Gregorius die Verligter" bekendgestaan.

— ooo OOO ooo —

"Die wil van die koning staan onder die gesag van die Here; soos 'n stroom water lei Hy dit soos Hy verkies" (Spreuke 21:1). - *Fanaties vir Jesus, Volume II, dc Talk en The Voice of the Martyrs, CUM, 2004.*

# 'n Brief aan Ons Seniors: Soos 'n Koel Aandwindjie

**D**ie ou swartman het gesê: My favorite words ob de Bible am dese: 'And it came to pass.' And here am de reason: When trouble comes and over-flows my soul wid sorrow; when de testings and trials ob life break in their fury over my head, I turns to God's Word for help and com-fort. I don't read very long until I comes acros de words, 'And it came to pass.' Dese words teaches me dat de sorrows and troubles didn't come to stay. Dey come to pass.'" Wise indeed was our aged friend! **After the sorrows and trials of life will have wrought their soul their soul-refining, character-ennobling purposes, they will pass away:** "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!"

In die ouderdom het baie van ons 'n belewenis van NIKSWEES of NIKSWERD VOEL. Jy het God al op jou lewenspad leer ken, asook Sy genade en jou in Sy liefde verlustig. Jy het 'n lang pad met Hom geloop tot hier toe. Jy het die piek van jou lewensbestaan bereik, baie beleef, was vir baie mense van groot waarde en het baie lewenservaring en wysheid opgedoen. En nou? Nou is jy oud. Nou is dit asof alles drasties tot 'n stilstand gekom het. Jy het al afgeskaal, kleiner gegaan, in 'n meenthuis of selfs in 'n ouetehuis jou intrek geneem, of by die kinders gaan bly. Soms voel dit asof jou familie jou verlaat het. Ek onthou 'n ou dame se woorde: "My kinders is almal te BESIG om by my uit te kom." 'n Ander een: "My seun is altyd haastig, wil nie eers 'n minuut by my kom sit nie!"

Dit is gelukkig nie altyd die geval nie. Maar 'n mens wonder: Wat moet ek doen? Grawe jou in die Woord van God in en leef in 'n noue verhouding met die Here. Dink aan die woorde van die ou swartman: "And it came to pass." Ja, daar is 'n einde aan elke storm, elke storm woed uit. Kom ons kyk na verskillende bejaarde Bybel-figure se lewens.

By die geboorte van Rut se seun Obed, het die vrou vir Naomi, die skoonmoeder van Rut, gesê: "**Hy sal vir jou een wees wat jou siel verkwik en jou grysheid versorg; want jou skoonogter wat jou liefhet, het hom gebaar, sy wat vir jou meer werd is as sewe seuns**" (Rut 4:15). Naomi het 'n bitter lewe gehad in die vreemde. Weens die droogte en hongersnood in haar eie land het hulle as gesin na Moab verhuis. Daar het sy haar man en twee seuns verloor. Sy besluit om terug te keer na haar eie land. Na Betlehem-Juda. Net

sy en haar twee skoonogters, Moabiete, het oorgebly. Sy wil hulle terugstuur, want sien geen toekoms vir hulle saam met haar nie. Wat hou die lewe vir haar in op haar ouderdom? Orpa draai om.

En Rut? Sy bly lojaal en verklaar: "**Moenie by my aandrang dat ek u moet verlaat om agter u om te draai nie; want waar u gaan, sal ek gaan; en waar u vertoef, sal ek vertoef; u volk is my volk, en u God is my God. Waar u sterwe, sal ek sterwe en daar begrawe word! Mag die HERE so aan my doen en so daaraan toedoen - net die dood sal skeiding maak tussen my en u. Toe sy sien dat sy vas besluit het om met haar saam te gaan, het sy opgehou om met haar te spreek**" (Rut 1:16-18). Wat 'n lieflike skoonogter! Baie van ons het so 'n skoonogter of 'n skoonseun of kinders wat trou sweer aan ons op ons oudag, "**wat jou siel verkwik en jou grysheid versorg.**" God het Naomi se smart omgedraai en sy het 'n gelukkige oudag gehad.

Volgende getuig die Psalmis van God se konstante hulp van sy jeug af tot in die gryse ouderdom: "**En ook tot die ouderdom en die grysheid toe - o God, verlaat my nie, totdat ek aan die volgende geslag U arm verkondig, aan almal wat sal kom, U mag**" (Ps. 71:18). Salomo voeg by: "**Grysheid is 'n sierlike kroon; dit word gevind op die weg van geregtigheid**" (Spr. 16:31). Die Here het al dikwels vir ons gesê: "**...en tot die ouderdom toe is Ék dieselfde, ja, tot die grysheid toe sal Ek julle dra; Ék het dit gedoen, en Ék sal julle opneem, en Ék sal dra en red**" (Jes. 46:4).

Jy kom deur baie storms, baie smarte, pyn en lyding. Maar met die Here se genade het jy deur-gekom! Hoe? **Want Hý het jou gedra! En jy is nog hier! God kan en sal en wil jou nog gebruik!** Die Here kom in sagtheid, met liefde en medelye na jou, en Hy kom om jou trane af te vee. Soos 'n koel aandwindjie na Adam en Eva, direk na die sondeval, terwyl hulle met skuld belaa is. In 'n staat van selfveroordeling. Met 'n berouvolle hart. Met die wete: "Ek het geval!" Kan nie weer opstaan nie. Dalk voel jy ook so. Luister mooi, luister fyn. Voel jy die ligte Briesie van die Heilige Gees? Jy vra: Hoe sal ek dit kry? Sak neer in verootmoediging en gebed voor Hom. Stort jou hart uit. Vra Hom vir 'n geopende oor om te hoor en 'n geopende oog om te sien met die geopende Woord voor jou. **En jy sál die koel aandwindjie voel wat verkwikkend na jou toe kom.** Verlustig jou in Hom! Bou jou lewe

op die Woord.

Onthou, jy is die boom wat by die waterstroom geplant is, en Jeremia sê: "**Want hy sal wees soos 'n boom wat by die water geplant is en sy wortels uitskiet by die stroom en nie vrees as daar hitte kom nie, maar sy blad bly groen; en in 'n jaar van droogte is hy nie besorg nie en hou nie op om vrugte te dra nie**" (Jer. 17:8). Jy sal kom op 'n plek waar jy jubel in Die Here. **Jy sal tot rus kom in die Here**, omdat Hy Hom oor jou ontferm en vir jou omgee, en jy sing en bid die volgende liedere saam met Israel: "**Toe die HERE die lot van Sion verander het, was ons soos die wat droom. Toe is ons mond gevul met gelag en ons tong met gejubel; toe het hulle onder die heidene gesê: Die HERE het groot dinge aan hierdie mense gedoen. Die HERE het groot dinge aan ons gedoen: ons was bly! O HERE, verander ons lot soos waterstrome in die Suidland. Die wat met trane saai, sal met gejubel maai. Hy loop aldeer en ween en dra die saadkoring; hy sal sekerlik kom met gejubel en sy gerwe dra**" (Ps. 126:1-6). Bid saam met Dawid: "**Die meet-snoere het vir my in lieflike plekke geval, ja, my erfenis is vir my mooi. U sal my die pad van die lewe bekend maak; versadiging van vreugde is voor U aangesig, lieflikhede in U regterhand, vir ewig**" (Ps. 16:6, 11).

Lees wat sê Paulus vir Timótheüs, wat op hierdie stadium self die herder, die pastor van die gemeente in Efese is: "**Ek het die goeie stryd gestry; ek het die wedloop voleindig; ek het die geloof behou. Verder is vir my weggeleë die kroon van die geregtigheid wat die Here, die regverdige Regter, my in dié dag sal gee; en nie aan my alleen nie, maar ook aan almal wat Sy verskyning liefgehad het**" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Jy kan dalk sê: "Ek voel ek het in baie opsigte gefaal! Ek voel so nutteloos! Ek voel soms so ver van God verwyder!" Maar, jy weet mos al teen dié tyd, dit gaan nie oor hoe jy voel nie. Die Woord sê die regverdige sal uit die geloof lewe. Dit het Martin Luther ontdek toe hy 'n studie van Rom. 1:17 gemaak het. As dit dan nie gaan oor hoe ek voel nie, waarom gaan dit dan? **Jou gevoel is nie nie jou anker nie, maar jou anker is die standhoudende, onwankelbare karakter van God**, wat gesê het: "**Ek hou jou vas! En niemand sal jou uit My Hand ruk nie!**" (Joh. 10:27). Hy het dan ook gesê: "**Ek sal jou nooit begewe en jou nooit verlaat nie**" (Heb. 13:6). Jou behoudende anker is NIE hoe jy

voel nie, maar God se Standvastigheid. God bly getrou. Paulus skryf aan Timótheüs: "**As ons ontrou is, Hy bly getrou; Hy kan Homself nie verloën nie**" (2 Tim. 2:13). Een sangeres sing: "Hou aan met glo, tot die lig deurbreek." En die Woord moedig ons aan: "**O julle wat die HERE herinner aan Sy beloftes - moenie rus nie**" (Jes. 62:6). By die glo moet ons byvoeg: **Bid en glo en vertrou totdat... En wanneer jy deurbreek, ervaar jy die oorwinning!**

Noudat jy in 'n staat van oorwinning leef, kan jy ander help en raadgee en bid, ander ondersteun en verkwikkend wees. Want die koel aandwindjie het genadiglik oor ook jou gewaai. Dan sing ons die liedjie:

**Waaideur my, waaideur my  
O Heilige Gees, kom waaideur my  
Ek stel my oop, laat my oorloop  
Van al U volheid, kom en waaideur my.**

Die koel aandwindjie van God se Teenwoordigheid waaie onophoudelik deur my, en waaie alle vrees, alle bekommernis, alle negatiewe en sondige gedagtes, alle besoedeling in my gees, woede, toorn, wrokkigheid, veronregting, miskenning, alles wat my intieme verhouding met God kan skaad, eie planne en alle ander mense se negatiewe gedagtes, weg. Soos die wind die besoedeling in die lug wegwaai en skoon lug die hemelruim vul wat aangenaam is om in te asem, **reinig en verkwik God my gees**. Dan bring die wind die wolke bymekaar wat helder, skoon en suiwer druppels water laat neersif wat goed is vir plante, mens en dier.

**Ek beleef die koel aandwindjie spoel soos 'n golf deur my met die salwing van die Heilige Gees, want ek het weer eens oorwin!** Nee, dit is nie bloot emosie nie, maar 'n belewenis van God se Teenwoordigheid wat werksaam is in my. En dit bring my tot aanbidding en lofprysing! Dit is wat Jesus bedoel het tydens Sy gesprek met die vrou by die put: "**Maar daar kom 'n uur, en dit is nou, wanneer die ware aanbidders die Vader in gees en waarheid sal aanbid; want die Vader soek ook mense wat Hom só aanbid. God is Gees; en die wat Hom aanbid, moet in gees en waarheid aanbid**" (Joh. 4:23-24). **Aanbid Hom met jou stem en met jou lied wat jy sing. Aanbid Hom! Want waardig is Hy om aanbid te word, en jou lofuiting is aanneemlik vir Hom. Hy het nog 'n taak vir jou. Hy sal jou nie verlaat nie!**

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# Encountering God

When was the last time you encountered God?

I have been a follower of Jesus for 50 years. I accepted Jesus at the age of 8... you can do the math! I have been a pastor for over 30 years, and I can say this from the depth of my soul: I have been encountering Jesus in a new, personal, joyful, deep, challenging, and exciting way MORE in the past three years than in the previous 47.

You may be asking: What changed? I struggle to put my journey with Jesus into words, but I believe it came down to this: I have spent my life telling people that Jesus loved them and that He had grace for them and knew them by name, but I struggled to receive it for myself. **I knew He loved YOU but I struggled to believe that He could truly love**

ME.

Jesus, knowing that I was struggling, sent people to me (my wife, my therapist, my friends), to confront my wrong belief that I was in a different category when it came to God's love. Through their love and example, I started to open my heart to the promise that when Jesus said, "I love you," He not only meant it but that I could believe it and receive it for myself.

I am in a different place in my faith than I have ever been before, because, in an ongoing way, I am connecting, colliding, and deeply engaging with Jesus in ways that I never imagined possible. And to be honest, most of it is happening in the quiet, reflective moments of my life where God whispers His love to me!

Elijah had been through incredi-

ble trials, from confrontations with kings to moments of fear and despair. He found himself in a cave, hoping for clarity from God. But instead of God coming in a mighty wind, earthquake, or fire, He came in a **gentle whisper**. God often speaks to us not in the dramatic, but in the quiet, subtle moments.

We tend to expect God to speak loudly or forcefully, especially in times of crisis. But often, it's in the stillness that we hear Him most clearly.

Are you in a season where you're searching for God's Voice? Are you waiting for Him to speak dramatically when He's already speaking softly? Listen to how God shows up in Elijah's life: *"After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle*

*whisper"* (1 Kings 19:12 NIV). The whisper of God is a reminder of His proximity. He's near, even when we don't feel it. **The key is learning to listen**. God's Voice may come in the quiet moments, through Scripture, prayer, or even through the words of others. But if we don't pause to listen, we might miss it.

Take a moment today to sit in silence. What is God whispering to you? How can you quiet your heart to hear Him and what will you do with all that He says?

Let's pray: God, thank You for speaking to us in the stillness. Help us to listen for Your Voice, even in the chaos of life. We want to hear Your gentle whisper and follow where You lead. Amen.

-Grant Fishbook

## A KOLOBETSO E TLHOKEGA GORE MOTHO A PHOLOSWE? (Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?)



**T**umelo ya gore kolobetso e tlhokega gore motho a pholoswe e itsewe gape e le 'tsosoloso ya kolobetso.' Re dumela gore kolobetso ke kgato ya botlhokwa ya tumelo mo go Mokeresete, mme re ganetsa thata gore e tlhokega gore motho a pholoswe. Re dumela ka tlhoafalo gore Mokeresete mong-we le mongwe o tshwanetse go kolobetswa ka go inelwa mo metsing.

Kolobetso e supa fa modumedi a ikamanya le loso, go fitlha, le tsogo ya ga Jesu Keresete. Baroma 6:3-4 e bua jaana: *"A ga lo itse gore botlhe ba ba kolobeditsweng mo go Keresete Jesu ba kolobeditse mo losong lwa gagwe?"* Ka jalo, re ne ra fitlha le

ene ka kolobetso mo losong gore fela jaaka Keresete a tsositswe mo baswing ka kgalalelo ya Rara, le rona re tle re tshele botshelo jo bosh.

Tiro ya go inelwa mo metsing e supa loso le go fitlha le Keresete. Tiro ya go tswa mo metsing e emela tsogo ya ga Keresete. Ga go tlhokege sengwe gape mo godimo ga tumelo mo go Jesu Keresete gore motho a pholoswe. Go kolobetswa ke go supa fela gore o dumela pholoso ya gago le gore o bontsha batho le Modimo gore o mopholosi ka nnete. Ga se gore ke tshwanelo mme ke go tiisa tumelo le bopaki jwa gago. Go oketsa sengwe mo Efangeding ke go bolela gore loso lwa ga

Jesu mo sefapaanong ga lo a lekana go reka pholoso ya rona.

Go re kolobetso e tlhokega gore motho a pholoswe ke go bolela gore re tshwanetse go oketsa ditiro tse di molemo le tumelo mo losong lwa ga Keresete gore pholoso e tle e felele. Loso lwa ga Jesu fela lo dueletse dibe tsa rona (Baroma 5:8; 2 Bakorinthe 5:21). Tuelo ya ga Jesu ya dibe tsa rona e beelwa mo 'tlhokomelong' ya rona ka tumelo fela (Johane 3:16; Ditiro 16:31; Baefeso 2:8-9).

Ka jalo, kolobetso ke kgato ya botlhokwa ya tumelo morago ga pholoso, mme ga e ka ke ya tlhokega gore motho a pholoswe. Kolobetso ga e tlhokagale gore motho a pholoswe. Kolobetso ga e pholose motho mo dibeng mme e mo pholosa mo segakoloding se se maswe mme se aga tumelo. Mo 1 Petero 3:21, Petero o ruta sentle gore kolobetso ga se tiro ya setso ya go phepafatsa mmele, mme ke ikano ya segakolodi se se siameng mo Modimong. Kolobetso ke sesupo sa se se setse se diragetse mo pelong le botshelong jwa yo o dumetseng mo go Keresete e le Mopholosi (Baroma 6:3-5; Bagalata 3:27; Bakolose 2:12). Kolobetso ke kgato ya botlhokwa ya kutlwelo e Mokeresete mongwe le mongwe a tshwanetseng go



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e tsaya.

Kolobetso ga e ka ke ya tlhokega gore motho a pholoswe. Go e dira jalo ke go itsenya tumelong go lekana ga loso le tsogo ya ga Jesu Keresete.

### THAPELO

Ntate wa rona Jesu Keresete re lebogela se o se dirileng mo sefapaanong mme wa swela dibe tsa rona. Re thuse re tlhologanye gore pholoso ya rona e tlisitswe ke loso la Gago le gore madi a Gago a re tlhatswitse gore re nne phepha, re thuse go tlhologanya gore kolobetso go gore re bontshe tumelo ya rona mo go wena le go supa gore re swa le wena mme re tsoga le wena. AMEN.

# Om Hom te Ken

In Johannes 10 vind ons die pragtige beeld van die Goeie Herder. Jesus pas hierdie metafoer op Homself toe om Sy verhouding met Sy kinders uit te beeld: *“Dit verseker Ek julle: Wie nie deur die hek in die skaapkraal ingaan nie maar van 'n ander kant af inklim, is 'n dief en 'n rower. Maar hy wat deur die hek ingaan, is die skape se herder; vir hom maak die hekwagter oop. Die skape luister na die herder se stem. Hy roep sy skape op hulle name en lei hulle uit. Wanneer hy al sy skape uitgebring het, loop hy voor hulle uit, en die skape volg hom, omdat hulle sy stem ken. Hulle sal nooit 'n vreemde volg nie maar van hom af weghardloop, omdat hulle nie die stem van vreemdes ken nie”* (Joh. 10:1-5 NV). Kom ons oorweeg die progressie van ons verhouding met die Here en hoe ons groei in ons kennis van Hom.

## 1. EERSTE KENNISMAKING

Jesus roep Sy skape op hulle name: *“Hy roep sy eie skape op hulle naam en lei hulle uit”* (Joh. 10:3b DV). In daardie tye het die skaapwagters hulle skape name gegee en elkeen uitgeken. Paulus herinner ons: *“So het Hy ons voor die grondlegging van die wêreld in Hom uitgekies, sodat ons heilig en onberispelik in liefde voor Hom sou wees, nadat Hy ons voorbestem het om ons deur Jesus Christus as Sy kinders aan te neem, soos Hy dit volgens Sy wil goedgevind het, tot lof van die heerlijkheid van Sy genade, waarmee Hy ons in die Geliefde begenadig het”* (Ef. 1:4-6 DV). In Jesus het God ons begenadig en ons op die naam geroep om Syne te wees.

God se wil is dat almal gered word (2 Pet. 3:9). Wanneer ons die eerste keer hierdie Roepstem hoor, hetsy deur 'n preek, 'n voorbeeld of gesprek met 'n gelowige ouer of familielid of vriend, of via 'n TV-program of skryfstuk, die natuur, 'n droom of visioen, moet ons oorweeg of ons wil beantwoord. Dit mag dalk aan die begin vreemd wees. Ons moet ook oorweeg Wie dit is wat ons roep. Paulus het gevra, *“Wie is U, Here?”* toe Jesus die eerste keer aan hom verskyn het (Hand. 9:5).

In Joh. 10 sien ons dat die Joodse leiers ook hierdie vraag vra, maar dalk met meer ongeloof en verharding van hart: *“Die Jode het daar om Hom saamgedrom en vir Hom gesê: ‘Hoe lank gaan U ons nog in onsekerheid hou? As U die Christus is, sê dit reguit vir ons.’ Jesus antwoord hulle toe: ‘Ek het dit vir julle gesê, en tog glo julle nie. Die dae wat Ek in die Naam van My Vader doen, bewys Wie Ek is. Maar julle glo nie, omdat julle nie van My skape is nie. My skape luister na My stem; Ek ken hulle,*

*en hulle volg My. Ek gee hulle die ewige lewe, en hulle sal in alle ewigheid nooit verlore gaan nie. Niemand sal hulle uit My hand ruk nie”* (Joh. 10:24-28 NV).

Elke mens moet besluit of hulle die Roepstem van God, die appèl op hul gewete, wil volg of nie. Hy of sy moet die feite of motiverings oorweeg wat hom of haar bereik en roep tot oorgawe. Uiteindelik moet dit oorgaan vanaf kopkennis na hartskenis. Wanneer word Jesus meer as net 'n historiese of mitiese figuur in my lewe? Op 'n stadium moet ons besluit of ons “God se hand wil skud” en 'n pad met Hom wil stap. Ons moet besluit hoe ons op die eerste (of tweede of derde) kennismaking wil reageer. Op indirekte kennis. Maar om die volgende stap te kan neem, moet ons eers uitvind Wie Jesus werklik is.

## 2. CHRISTUS SE IDENTITEIT

in Johannes 10 maak Jesus dit duidelik Wie Hy is: *“n Dief kom net steel en slag en uitroei; Ek het gekom sodat hulle die lewe kan hê, en dit in oorvloed. Ek is die goeie herder. Die goeie herder lê Sy lewe af vir die skape. 'n Huurling is geen herder nie, en dit is nie sy eie skape nie. As hy 'n wolf sien kom, los hy die skape en hardloop weg, en die wolf vang die skape en jaag die trop uitmekaar. Hy is 'n huurling en bekommer hom nie oor die skape nie”* (Joh. 10:11-13 NV). Hierdie beeldspraak bou op dié van die Ou Testament (Ps. 23; Jes. 40:11; Jer. 23:1-4; Eseg. 34; Sag. 11). Jesus is die Messias, die Gesalfde, die Een wat gestuur is om redding vir ons te kom bewerk (Joh. 4:25). Hy is die Seun van God wat die ewige lewe gee aan dié wat glo: *“Ek gee hulle die ewige lewe, en hulle sal tot in ewigheid nooit verlore gaan nie, en niemand sal hulle uit My hand ruk nie. My Vader, wat hulle aan My gegee het, is groter as almal, en niemand kan hulle uit die hand van die Vader ruk nie. Ek en die Vader is een. Die Jode het weer klippe opgetel om Hom te stenig”* (Joh. 10:28-31).

Dit was baie duidelik dat Jesus bedoel het dat Hy Self God is, want die Jode wou Hom stenig omdat hulle dit as gods-lastering gesien het (v. 33). Daar is baie vandag wat sê dat Jesus nooit gesê het dat Hy God is nie. Maar dit is onwaar. Jesus het gesê dat Hy voor Abraham bestaan het, en Hy gebruik die Naam “Ek is” (Joh. 8:58; ook Joh. 8:28) wat terugverwys na Eksodus 3:14, waar God Homself aan Moses (en Israel) openbaar het as “Ek is”. Jesus het van God uitgegaan (Joh. 3:13; 4:34; 6:38; 8:42) en noem God Sy Vader (Joh. 8:49, 54), die Regter. Hy het God se heerlijkheid gedeel (Joh. 17:5). Hy

gee ewige lewe (Joh. 8:51; 10:28). Weer eens wou die Jode Jesus stenig oor Sy uitsprake (Joh. 8:59). Hy het ook gesê dat Hy Here oor die sabbat is (Mark. 2:23-28), dat Hy mag het om sondes te vergewe (Mark. 2:5), en outoriteit om te oordeel (Mark. 14:62) en dat Hy die Vader se Verteenwoordiger is (Joh. 14:9). Ja, Jesus het definitief Homself geopenbaar as die Seun van God, en Self ook God (Joh. 1:1-2).

Skeptici sal dadelik sê, “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence” (‘n gesegde wat deur Carl Sagan en ander bekendgemaak is). Daar is waarheid hierin. Daarom sê Jesus dat die Jode in Hom moet glo op grond van Sy wonderwerke. Sy Vader getuig ook van Hom (Joh. 8:18; Matt. 3:17). So ook die Ou Testamentiese profesieë. Natuurlik is Sy opstanding die grootste bewys dat Sy woorde waar is. Hy is die deur waardeur ons moet ingaan (Joh. 10:7) en die enigste weg tot die Vader (Joh. 14:6). Ons het dus Skrifgetuigenis wat Jesus se Identiteit blootlê en ons moet daarop reageer as ons wil vorder op ons geestelike pad. Ons moet die deur as't ware oopmaak en deurstap.

## 3. VERTROU SPRUIT UIT VERHOUDING

‘n Mens mag dalk wonder: Ek hoor al hierdie dinge en wat Jesus oor Homself gesê het. Ek neem kennis van die historiese bewyse en van mense se verhale en getuigenisse. Maar hoe weet ek of ek Hom kan vertrou? Hy vra dat ek alles aan Hom moet oorgee, maar hoe weet ek of ek nie 'n fout sal maak nie? Dit klink darem baie riskant. Dit is hier waar ons vanaf kopkennis na ervaringskennis moet beweeg.

Die groot genade is dat Jesus nie net 'n magtige God is wat aanbidding vereis nie. Hy is nie 'n kosmiese Diktator nie. Hy forseer niemand om Hom te dien of Hom lief te hê nie. Maar Hy verlang 'n intieme verhouding met elkeen van ons. Hy was bereid om alles neer te lê om die Vader se wil te doen en aan ons die ewige lewe te kan gee (Joh. 10:15). Hy het ons eerste liefgehad en dit bewys deur Sy lewe vir ons te gee. Hoe sal Hy ons dan nie in liefde verder lei tot die voleinding van alle dinge nie?

Ons moet begin om in geloof die eerste stap te neem. En dan die volgende een. Altyd afhanklik van Sy leiding. Ons val en ons staan op. Ons volg die Goeie Herder omdat ons Sy Stem ken - al hoe beter soos wat ons hand aan Hand deur al die lewenskrisisse en -vreugdes beweeg. Al weet ons nie waarheen Hy lei nie, weet ons Wie dit is wat lei. Ons vertrou Sy motiewe, al lyk dinge vreemd of

het mense ander raad. Al gaan ek ook in 'n dal van doodskaduwee, Hy lei my daardeur (Ps. 23:4). Ek begin besef dat ek Hom kan vertrou, selfs met my hele lewe.

## 4. VERDIEPING VAN 'N INTIEME VERHOUDING

Jesus bevestig nog 'n maal: *“Ek is die goeie herder. Ek ken My skape, en My skape ken My, net soos die Vader My ken en Ek die Vader ken; en Ek lê My lewe af vir die skape”* (Joh. 10:14-15 NV). Meyer skryf: *“As between God and Christ, so also between Christ and His people, the reciprocal knowledge is a knowledge growing out of the most intimate fellowship of love and life.”* Dit is ervaringskennis. En soos wat ek meer en meer verhoudingservaring opdoen, groei my verhouding en my vertrou in Hom. Ek rig geestelike mylpale op en kan gereeld terugkyk en Hom loof vir Sy getrouheid. Ek toets die beloftes van Sy Woord en kan dan proefondervindelik verklaar dat Hy betroubaar en getrou is.

Ons word herinner aan Paulus se uitroep: *“Inderdaad reken ek alles as verlies, ter wille van die uitnemendheid daarvan om Christus Jesus, my Here, te ken”* (Fil. 3:8 DV). Vir Paulus is hierdie persoonlike, intieme kennis van Jesus die kosbaarste ding in sy lewe. Soos iemand skryf, hierdie kennis hang saam met oorgawe, intimiteit, eer, verwondering, 'n dinamiese, inniger besef van God se wil, 'n fondasie vir Christelike karakter, en die ideale balans tussen die rasonele en emosionele aspekte van my verhouding met God. Benson verwys na *“experimental and practical knowledge of Christ, as my Lord, as my teaching Prophet, my delivering and ruling King, reigning in my heart by His grace, and governing my life by His laws.”* Nog iemand skryf, *“[The glory of knowing Christ,] like the rising sun, overwhelms and hides all lesser lights.”* Wat 'n kosbare voorreg het elkeen van ons om genooi te word tot die dieper waters van 'n inniger kennis (*“experiential and relational understanding and perception”*) en verhouding met die Here!

## SAMEVATTING

Jesus, die Goeie Herder, roep Sy skape. Ons moet op hierdie Roepstem reageer en 'n pad met Hom begin stap. Ons kan Hom vertrou en in ons verhouding met Hom kry ons bevestiging dat Hy hierdie vertrou waardig is. Dan kom ons tot die besef dat hierdie innige verhoudingskennis meer werd is as enigiets anders. Hoe ver het jy al gevorder op die pad van heilskennis en verhoudingskennis? God nooi jou na dieper waters...

# STAY IN YOUR LANE

*“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life” (Ephesians 2:10, Berean Standard Bible).*

## INTRODUCTION

Each of our lives is far more than mere existence. For you to be born, thousands of different aspects had to come together over hundreds of years. Just think of the miracle of your existence: For you to be born, you needed 4 094 predecessors over the last four hundred years. Just think about it: all the struggles, all the challenges, all the difficulties, all the mistakes, all the sadness and all the joys. Those who went before you had to experience all of this to bring about the conditions so that you could be here at this time in history. If even just one aspect had not happened, or turned out differently, you would not be here. But here you are! If you think that this myriad of things that needed to fall in place for you to be born was simply something that happened by default, that is to underestimate the wonder of life.

You are here and alive at this time by the very design of God, and His workmanship (His divine hand of providence) is written all over your life and down through the ages of time. You are unique in every way, the result of innumerable and untold things that came together in God’s remarkable plan.

It reminds me of my own mother’s story: she was born into a poor family and was one of five daughters. The sister born just ahead of her had died at the age of two from meningitis. Her parents never got over this loss. My mother was born into this environment of extreme sadness, the replacement daughter who could never replace the one that was lost. Yet God knew that He would use my mother to touch the lives of many people, especially women. She would remind them of how God loved them and how He wanted to use them, and who they were in Christ. She developed a series of books for Bible study purposes called KINGDOM WOMEN and many were helped and strengthened as a result.

The result of the coming together of our lives through our unique history and circumstances, sets us up to be used by God to do something (good works). In fact the Lord has prepared things that only you can do and He has done this in advance through the specific set of life circumstances

you were subjected to, and the unique process or treatment that brought you to this point (Eph. 2:10). This special gift that you bring to the world should become your way of life. Each one of us has a specific calling and purpose from God.

When we operate in that calling, we experience fulfilment and effectiveness. However, many get distracted, compare themselves to others, or take on things they were never meant to do. True success comes from staying in the lane God has set before us. God has uniquely designed and equipped each of us for His purpose.

## 1. KNOWING WHAT YOU ARE CALLED TO DO

When I was a child my mother would tell me the story of Joseph and the route he had to pass through to get to God’s final destination for his life. She would tell me that although Joseph did not understand why he had to go through certain things, those things were all part of the blueprint of God for his life. A blueprint is a copy of a map, or a drawing or a plan of something still to be developed. Although, while we are going through the issues of life, we may not be able to see the sense in everything, God is at work.

Our stumbling block may become our stepping stone. Seemingly unnecessary obstacles or setbacks in life can actually bring change and transformation, opening up a door of opportunity. These very things can make our lives of value to God and to others. Out of our misery can come our ministry.

Discovering your calling requires seeking God through prayer and His Word. Years ago I attended a sermon by Dr Myles Munroe. He was speaking on the subject of purpose. He encouraged us to read God’s Word. He said that as we did this we would find that we identify with certain thoughts and ideas. He mentioned that these very things, that we identified, would be indicators of purpose and would help us to discover what we are called to do. I did this and every time I came to a verse about encouraging people, strengthening people, giving hope to people, helping to repair the breach that had developed between them and the Lord, I would say - This is me, I can, and I must do this!

Often, our calling aligns with the gifts and passions God has placed in us. It was in my very



nature to be an encourager. The Holy Spirit guides and confirms our calling as we walk in faith. It is not about what seems impressive, but about what God has assigned to us. **Obedience to God’s calling leads to peace and purpose.** Jonah ran from his calling and faced turmoil, but when he obeyed, he saw God’s power at work.

## 2. STAYING IN YOUR LANE

My lane, my purpose and my calling, was simply to encourage people with the Word of God which is alive and powerful. For you it may well be completely different. As I busied myself with being an encourager, people would come to me and tell me that I should do something different. Some felt I should move away from encouraging people and start to teach them. Others felt I should not just encourage people but I should tell them that every blessing was conditional on their behaviour. Sometimes I could see their point, but I would remind myself of my calling and that I should ‘stay in your lane’ because God would call others to fulfil other parts of the big picture.

It is easy to look at others and feel the pressure to do what they are doing. Comparison leads to distraction and discouragement. 1 Corinthians 12:12 reads, *‘For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.’* Just as each part of the body has a function, each person has a unique role. Running someone else’s race leads to frustration and ineffectiveness. **Focus on what God has given you to do, and trust that it is enough.**

## 3. AVOIDING DISTRACTIONS

The enemy often uses distractions to try and pull us away from our calling. I grew up as the son of a pastor. My father ran a wonderful church that had 6 500 mem-

bers at the time of his passing. The Lord had allowed this church to grow and become an influence in our country. My father’s calling was to help people in their pursuit of God and His precious Holy Spirit. He loved the local church and to be able to work with and encourage other pastors in the work of the ministry.

One day a colleague of my father’s, who was running a very successful church in another part of the province, decided to leave the ministry and become a travelling evangelist. He suggested to my father that it was time for him (my father) to step into a bigger calling and leave the local church. But my father was resolute and said that his calling was the local church and the work he was doing.

On another occasion, another pastor who had stepped into international itinerant ministry also came to speak to my dad. He told my dad that he was too big for the local church and besides, there was much more money in itinerating internationally. Again, my father was not going to be distracted. He would stick to his calling however humble or insignificant others thought it was. The end result was that both these other individuals’ marriages ended in divorce and their ministries never regained their original proportions.

Luke 10:41-42 reads, *“Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’”*

**Distractions can be good things that are not the right things.** Staying close to God helps us discern on what we should focus. Time spent with God in prayer and His Word keeps us grounded.

*Continued on p. 7*

# PAIN AND SUFFERING VS GOD'S LOVE?

"O Joy that seekest  
me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to Thee  
I trace the rainbow  
through the rain,  
And feel the promise  
is not vain,  
That morn shall tearless be."  
- George Matheson

"I dimly guess  
from blessings known  
Of greater out of sight,  
And with the chastened  
psalmist own  
His judgments, too, are right."  
- J. G. Whittier

The Bible teaches us plainly that "God so loved the world" (John 3:16). But some people cannot bring themselves to believe that God loves this world in the face of pain and suffering. "Look at the widespread physical suffering," they object, "the untold physical suffering inflicted by sickness and disease and accident and the forces of nature over which man has no control. Look at the mental suffering inflicted by social inequalities and injustices, by poverty and adversity, by hatred and strife, by moral evil, death, and war! How can all this be reconciled with the supposed love of God for this world?"

We are quick to appreciate the depth of this problem, for we ourselves have suffered and have sympathetically shared in the sufferings of others. It remains a deep mystery. Moreover, we are far from daring to claim that we can clear up this mystery of suffering once and for all. We are keenly aware that all merely human philosophies break down pathetically in their struggle to find some satisfying solution to this vexing problem. Yet, we will not hesitate to say that there is far more light on this problem than most people realise - light which confirms the Gospel message that "God so loved the world..."

Let us ponder this deep problem in the light of three lines of thought.

## 1. THE BIBLICAL REVELATION

First, we should view the problem of suffering in the light of *the full sweep of Biblical revelation*. Few people sense what enlightenment we owe to the Bible. The Bible

teaches that this world, in its present condition, is neither as God originally created it nor as He ultimately purposed it to be. We are in an intermediate stage, and it is fraught with suffering and sin, and this not by God's design.

The Bible recognises a difference between what we may call God's *directive will* and His *permissive will*. We may picture these as being two straight horizontal lines, the one below the other. The higher one represents the line of God's directive will, and the lower one His permissive will. Now when God prepared this earth to become the habitation of man, as described in Genesis, it was according to His directive will; that is, it was in the line of His ultimate purpose for mankind. Man was created in a condition of sinlessness, and was called to fellowship with God in the fulfilling of a high and holy purpose. But man, being made "in the image of God," was endowed with the God-like attribute of free will; and through man's disobedient exercise of that power, sin entered the human race, alienating them from God. Thus, with the incoming of sin, this world fell to the lower level of God's intermediate or "permissive" will, which was not His ultimate purpose. This is the great consequence of the Fall due to Adam and Eve's disobedience. And we are facing the consequences of this dire choice to this day, as the human race keeps making wrong, disobedient, rebellious and selfish choices that alienate them from God.

In the foreknowledge of God this was anticipated and provided for. He knew that man would exercise his free will to sin against Him. But God's answer was the provision of THE SAVIOUR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD AND SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, Who would come in "the fulness of time" to redeem the human race. In Jesus, the world will eventually be lifted back on to the line of God's directive will and ultimate purpose (1 Corinthians 15; Rev. 21-22). This is the ultimate goal toward which the closing decades of this present age are rapidly moving.

We understand that God has

created human spirits with free agency and a power within necessary limits to do their own will, even if it is opposed to His Own. He does not force His will upon man, as this would be a violation of their nature. Therefore, during the present intermediate period in which we live, sin and suffering are permitted. But we can hold fast to the blessed hope that He will restore all things and right all wrongs, wiping all tears.

Moreover, in the end, it will be seen that accidents and sickness and all other sufferings have been overruled and good came out of them, even though at present they seem tragic and costly. What an accumulated mass of evidence there is already, gathered from the experience of millions, which proves that suffering has been used by God to bring souls to a saving knowledge of Himself! What education has been imparted, what sympathy inspired, what insight given, what character developed, through suffering! It is not that suffering itself is blessed, but the results thereof are blessed as God overrules them in anticipation of the coming consummation when the world shall be lifted back to the higher level of God's original and final purpose. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," says Paul (Rom. 8:22); but he also says, "The creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption."

This present intermediate period of God's permissive will, then, other than being incompatible with God's love, is really the expression of His loving patience with sinful man, as He brings him through permitted, but self-inflicted suffering, to the final triumph of right and good.

## 2. THE DIVINE RELATIONSHIP

The problem of suffering must also be seen in light of *the full sweep of God's relationship with the world*. From the Bible, we glean the following wisdom: (1) God is the Source of the Universe; (2) God is a free Spirit, greater than the Universe; (3) God has a fair and righteous method in conducting the Universe; (4) God has a purpose in the Universe. The order, unity, uniformity, and

method which pervade the Universe attest the presence of such a purpose.

Yes, God has a good purpose for this Universe. It is impossible to think of a bad Creator: for if He is evil, where does good come from? And where does the innate human recognition of, and desire for, good come from? The problem of present pain does not annul God's good purpose any more than current problems which lie in the line of new scientific research annul the well-established general findings of Science.

But how do we balance God's sovereign will with the free will of humankind? How will the final outcome be predetermined? God leaves enough scope for the free action of the human will to make men conscious at all times that they are acting of themselves and by their own intelligent choice; but He does not allow His larger purposes for the human race to rest upon the uncertain behaviour of the human will. God foreknows all things and He sovereignly predetermines the outcome of all things.

This may be illustrated by the example of the unbelief of the Jewish nation when Christ came to Earth, according to Old Testament prophecy, and offered Himself as the Messiah of Israel. Did this unbelief thwart God's larger purpose? No. It was foreknown and overruled. In sovereign super-control, God caused even the crucifixion of Israel's Messiah to become the coronation of the world's Saviour. Instead of God's purpose having become frustrated, there emerges from the very ruins of Jewish unbelief God's further movement through the Christian Church, and the proclaiming of a world-embracing Gospel of salvation to the Gentiles. This is the mysterious balance between God's sovereign will and man's free will, and what a delicate balance this is. Yes, without violating the freedom of the human will, God, as the good Creator, exercises full control throughout the Universe, thereby guaranteeing the final fruition of His all-comprehending purpose. And in the fulfilment of this grand

*Continued on p. 7*

  
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# STAY IN YOUR LANE

*Continued from p. 5*

Not all redirections are distractions - sometimes, God shifts our course. That is a different matter completely, as long as it is not beyond or outside of our calling.

#### 4. AVOIDING BURNOUT BY OPERATING IN YOUR CALLING

As we operate in our calling, there are grace, strength and an ease of functioning. I'm called to encourage people. It comes naturally to me. It is the easiest thing for me to do. It invigorates me, it gives me joy and when I am done, I am not tired and worn out, but I am strengthened and empowered. However, when I try to operate outside of that, it seems to drain me and leave me feeling weak and sometimes discouraged.

There was a season in our church when meetings became the order of the day. It felt like we were having meetings morning, night and day. In fact there was a joke that was going around that all we needed at this church was another meeting! We seemed to get into 'meeting mode.' I was not built for perpetual meetings. Meetings seemed tiresome - the more we met the less things seemed to change, except in the minutes.

I would come home from these multiple meetings and fall asleep on the couch. I realise that meetings do play a role, but if they

are not moving you rapidly towards your calling, you will get burnt out. Isaiah 40:31 says, "Those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Burnout happens when we try to do things outside of our calling and God's leading. God's assignments and calling come with His provision and enabling power. Regular rest and reliance on God also assist in sustaining us in our calling.

#### 5. THE BLESSING OF FOCUS AND FAITHFULNESS

When we focus on our calling, we can look forward to fruitfulness in our lives. John 15:5 says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." A little can become much with a touch of the Master's hand. We can plant a seed and reap a great harvest, which is God's pattern for our lives.

I believe that when we are operating in our calling and purpose we can put a little in and reap a lot. On the other hand, when we operate outside of this, we can often plant a lot and reap very little. John 15:16 reads, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you.

And I appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will remain." Let us do what God chose for us to do and what He appointed us to do.

Another aspect is the reward that comes with continued faithfulness to our calling. In the Living Bible, Hebrews 12:1 says, "Let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us." Faithfulness in the small things leads to greater things. God rewards those who are diligent and consistent in their calling. A life of persistent obedience brings peace, joy, and fulfilment.

#### CONCLUSION

God has a unique calling for each of us. Ephesians 2:10 reads, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us]" (Amplified Bible).

Staying in our lane leads to effectiveness, fulfilment, and divine provision. By seeking God, avoiding distractions, and trusting His plan, we can walk confidently in our calling. Hebrews 12:1 reminds us, "Let us run with endurance and active persistence the race that is set before us." As

we run our particular race, sometimes God will allow us to go through things that seem hard at the time. This is to prepare us for what His plans are for our lives.

"If you are going to be used by God, He will take you through a number of experiences that are not meant for you personally at all. They are designed to make you useful in His hands, and to enable you to understand what takes place in the lives of others" - Oswald Chambers

Joseph remained faithful to his calling, even in the most difficult circumstances. "The LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison" (Genesis 39:21-22).

Despite being falsely accused and imprisoned, Joseph continued to walk in integrity and use his God-given gifts. His faithfulness in that season prepared him for the greater calling of leading Egypt. Staying in our calling, even when circumstances seem unfair, leads to God's appointed promotion. Let us remain faithful and focused, knowing that God's plan is the best plan for our lives. YOUR STORY ISN'T FINISHED YET! - Pastor Andrew W. Roebert

## PAIN AND SUFFERING VS GOD'S LOVE?

*Continued from p. 6*

purpose, even the sin and suffering of the present phase are made His servants. We can trust that He works together all things for good, even the pain and suffering (Rom. 8:28). Take the example of war. People may ask: "Why does God permit war?" Yet, as we have seen, within limits God accords the human will a real freedom. War is man's own doing, brought on himself by his own wrongdoing, hatred, and godless folly. If man stubbornly refuses to learn the folly and tragedy of godlessness except by bringing upon himself the blood and agony of war, then he shall be permitted to learn in that way. Finally, it will be seen that even war has been a sadly necessary permission in the education of our fallen race. Man knows the right and does the wrong. In the end man shall indeed have learned, in the school of self-inflicted suffering, that he

needs the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### 3. THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

The problem of suffering should also be viewed in the context of the full sweep of history. Admittedly, if one looks merely at disconnected strips of history, or at different communities in isolation, one often gets a muddled picture rather than a meaningful one. But if we take history as a whole, we see the purpose of the Almighty marching down the ages with irresistible tread. Paradoxically, we may reconcile our suffering with the fact of God's love for this world upon grasping the broad sweep of history, the history of Jesus Christ as described in the New Testament.

In the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal God Himself entered into our human life, assumed our nature, lived our life, shared our lot, felt our woes, and

sublimest of all mysteries - has borne the guilt and penalty of our sins by suffering on the Cross of Calvary. God entered into our suffering! Oh, see the incarnate God nailed to that awful, wondrous, glorious Cross! He weeps, groans, bleeds, and dies that bitterest of all deaths due to our sin. Oh, that marvel of love! The Creator becomes the Redeemer! He entered into our suffering to redeem us of our suffering.

We therefore realise that God created us in His image, which included giving us free will. Due to our wrong choices, we ended up in sin and keep sinning by violating His commandments. Far from being surprised, God prepared a plan of salvation that included Jesus' death on the cross. We can trust in His fair and moral character and loving purpose, and we can believe that He works everything for good, even our pain and

suffering. We see that Jesus entered into our broken and fallen world, and we can look toward a glorious future which will be devoid of doubt and pain and tears. Thus we see that, despite the suffering and sorrow which sin has poured unto man, it is still true that, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Cling to Him today, and be part of the glorious renewal of all things! Grab hold of His love and be transformed by suffering, to enter into His eternal kingdom as a refined and holy vessel. Dare to believe His motive of love and His unchanging character Who drove Him to the pain of Calvary, so we can be eternally saved by His wondrous grace! - Adapted from "God so Loved", J Sidlow Baxter, Zondervan Publishing House, 1975.

# OVERCOMING GRACE IS YOURS

Is there a Christian heart not grief-stricken by the situation in Israel? We weep and sorrow for all the innocent victims as if they were our very own. Loved ones returning from more than 500 days in captivity as hostages, some in coffins, and those still alive, harrowed by what they have been through. How many lives have been destroyed because of that evil day of October 7, 2023?

In the midst of, and in spite of all the heart-wrenching perplexities playing out in the world around us, Jesus is whispering to you today: *"Let not your heart be troubled,"* My child (John 14:27).

Let us not forget that we are living in the shadow of a reality yet to come. Light and darkness are battling it out for the souls of men and I doubt it's ever been more clear than in these present times. The weight of decision rests with

us: darkness or light. Jesus, however, made it easier when He said: *"I am the light of the world"* (John 8:12). When light fills your way you walk in safety. Fearful thoughts that torture us in the dark of night vanish like mist when the day breaks. The constant presence of a Guide Who is the Light gives us the assurance that *"a new day will dawn on us from above because our God is loving and merciful"* (Luke 1:78-79).

What we need most now is to keenly focus on the Christ Who was once born in Bethlehem, the One Who came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10); the One Who came to restore what was broken, to reconcile lost and wandering hearts to the Father heart of God.

We know that life will not continue the way it is. Soon, loved ones, all

tears will be wiped, all broken hearts mended, and all lost sheep restored to the fold. In the meantime, in spite of the present turmoil, *"Be strong and let your hearts take courage, all you who wait for and confidently expect the Lord"* (Psalm 31:24).

Even though we feel and in truth are helpless to do great things to rectify the shambles around us, focus your heart fully and unwaveringly on Him Who will certainly restore things at the right time. Remember His words to Paul, which He also is addressing to you today: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

His power at your disposal. Jesus is saying to you, right now, *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let*



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*your hearts be troubled or afraid"* (John 14:27).

- Helen du Plessis

## MEDELYE

Wanneer jy selfbehep net op jou eie belange gefokus is, is dit maklik om mense in nood mis te kyk en geen besorgdheid te toon nie. Of soms is jy net te oorweldig deur jou eie stryd om ander se nood raak te sien. Wanneer jy egter jou lewe aan Christus toevertrou en in Sy voetspore volg, verander jou gesindheid.

*"Toe Jesus na die baie mense kyk, het Hy ontroerd geraak oor hulle seerkry en weerloosheid. Hulle was soos skape sonder 'n wagter wat na hulle omsien. Daarop sê Hy vir Sy dissipels: 'Die oes is groot, maar die werkers wat dit moet insamel, is so bitter min. Hierdie oes is die Here s'n. Vra Hom dan om werkers vir Sy oesland te voorsien'"* (Matt. 9:36-38 NLV).

Jesus was ontroerd deur mense wat weerloos was. Die stres van die lewe het hulle afgemat en die laste wat hulle gedra het, was swaar. Hulle was mense met geen rigting, geen fokus, geen doelwitte in die lewe nie. Wat was Christus se reaksie? Omdat die behoefte so groot was, het Hy vir sy dissipels gesê om te bid dat God 'werkers vir Sy oesland voorsien.'

'n Mens kry net soveel tyd om 'n oes in te samel, anders verloor jy dit. Moenie die punt wat Jesus maak, of die dringendheid daarvan, misloop nie. Jy is geroep om medelye teenoor die mense rond-

om jou wat moeg en weerloos is, te bewys en elke geleentheid om hulle na Jesus toe te bring, aan te gryp. Bid dat Jesus hierdie selfde medelye in jou hart sal wek, en ook aan jou die kapasiteit sal gee om iets vir 'n ander te doen.

'n Man wat nie kon loop nie, het by die tempelhekke gesit en bedel. Dag na dag het die skare verby hom geloop, maar nie Petrus en Johannes nie (Handelinge 3:1-11). Hulle het wel nie geld gehad om vir hom 'n finansiële bydrae te kon maak nie, maar hulle het hom iets veel beter gegee. In geloof het hulle vir hom gebid en hy is genees. Meer nog, hy het die geleentheid tot saligheid verkry. Ons het hierdie wonderlike skat wat ons met mense kan en moet deel. Meer as tydelike verligting van nood, kan ons met die Here meewerk om mense se diepe geestelike nood aan te spreek. Ons kan hulle heenwys na die Een wat alle behoeftes kan vervul deur Sy oorfloedige krag en genade.

Wanneer jy skielik deur 'n behoefte, waar jy telkemale al verbygeloop het, ontroer word, is God besig om in jou hart te werk en vir jou te sê om betrokke te raak en iets daaraan te doen. Bid dan die Here van oes om jou gewillig te maak, te bekragtig, en die deernis te gee wat nodig is om in Sy koninkryk te arbei. Wees 'n gewillige kanaal. Vertrou dat Hy sal ingryp en die oorwinning sal bring!

- Bob en Debby Gass, verwerk.

## The Value of Trials



*"And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren'"* (Luke 22:31-32).

Do you remember Peter, when My Son told him that He would pray for him because Satan desired to sift him? Now, I answered that prayer, but I did not remove the temptation or the assault upon him. I did, however, answer the prayer by giving Peter the grace to overcome.

It is important that My children learn to persevere and overcome that which the enemy throws at them. That struggle and what they learn from it becomes the strength of the message that they will be able to impart to others. It's like the struggle of My butterfly to free itself from the cocoon. That very struggle strengthens him to allow him to fly once he breaks free. If I were to cut the cocoon, he would die because he would not have the strength to fly.

James said it well: *"Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience"* (James 1:3). Learn from these valuable trials, My child. They will teach you profitable lessons for your benefit and the benefit of others.

- Os Hillman



# Unchanging

*“Jesus Christ is [eternally changeless, always] the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8 AMP).*

In an ever-changing, always-moving, constantly-shifting world, we can count on the unchanging nature of God. He is always the same: stable and trustworthy.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the author of Hebrews said it like this: *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8 NLT).*

A title for the three distinct parts, or “Persons,” of God is the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son - Jesus Christ - is the reflection of the Father, Who never changes.

When you unpack the stunning mystery that is God made flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ, you'll notice that He said audacious things like: *“I and the Father are One,” (John 10:30) “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,”*

(John 14:9) and, *“Now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began” (John 17:5).* It is clear that He claimed divinity. And He revealed the unchanging nature of God's character.

John described Jesus as the Word: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).* He has been there from eternity, and His days will never come to an end.

God said of Himself, *“I the Lord do not change...” (Malachi 3:6)* This unchanging quality is called the immutability of God. From generation to generation, God is the immovable rock where we can firmly plant our faith. He is the solid rock upon which we can build our lives.

God cannot lie. He cannot be unjust. He's always good. He's always faithful. He's fully perfect. He's self-sufficient. He's continuously steady and constant, enduring and everlasting. This



should fill us with a deep sense of security and safety!

If your world has been rocked, or if everything around you seems to be shifting, or if it's challenging to tell what is solid rock and what is shifting sand, you can trust in, count on, and place your hope in Jesus. He's not only your righteous Saviour, but He's also your unchanging God!

**Prayer:** Jesus, the world may change - but You won't. You don't unexpectedly change Your mind or leave us. You give us a consistent example to follow because you are trustworthy and worth following. So please help us to look to You as we go about our daily lives. Help us to follow the example You set. Amen.

- Selected

## Laat Ons Opkyk en Opstaan

**O**ns almal is moeg vir slegte nuus. Tog is dit fataal om ons koppe in die sand te druk. Laat my dus toe om met julle te deel wat swaar op my hart lê en na my mening die toekoms van ons land wesenlik raak.

Ek dink vandag aan die meer as 500 000 vroue wat jaarliks in ons land verkrag word, asook die gesinne van die duisende mense wat vermoor word. Oor die kinders praat ek nie eers nie. Ek dink aan die mense in ons landbougemeenskap wat in vrees gaan slaap om vermoor te word. Hulle het almal name soos Tannie Koba Odendaal van Vredendal. Ek dink aan die nuusberig wat onlangs uitgegaan het dat meer as 75% van swartmense in die land witmense nie vertrou nie. Ek is onseker oor wat die persentasie andersom is. Hoe op dees aarde bou jy die toekoms sonder vertroue, en wat moet gedoen word om dit reg te stel?

Ek lê wakker as ek 'n land sien waar konstruktiewe leierskap afwesig is. Ek ys as ek dink wat sal gebeur as die ekonomie verder inkrimp, werkloosheid en armoede verhoog en die frustrasievlakke van armes, wat reeds

hemelhoog is, ontplof.

Ek dink oor afwesige vaders en gesinne wat uitmekaarspat, die korrupsie wat ons elke jaar miljardde kos, ons tanende produksie en voedselproduksie. Ek raak moedeloos as ek die groeiende gaping tussen rykes en armes sien. Ek weet egter dat daar beslis nie 'n groepie mense is wat dit sit en beplan nie. Dit is die gevolg van diep sisteemfoute in ons samelewing wat nie aangespreek word nie.

Ek raak moedeloos oor die ideologiese strydgesprekke tussen die sosialiste/kommuniste (vakbonde) en die kapitaliste (bevoorregtes) wat uiterste posisies oor die toekoms inneem. Die geskiedenis wys tog duidelik dat nie een van hierdie posisies in sy ekstreme vorm ons uit die moeilikheid gehelp het nie. Ek wonder hoekom die leiers so sloer om 'n ekonomiese Kodesa van die grond af te kry. Teen dié tyd is jy dalk reg vir 'n anti-depressant.

Indien wel, maak dan jou oë oop vir die wonderlike ruimtes en natuurskoon in ons land. Dink na oor die feit dat ons weliswaar onbeholpe maar tog 'n unieke



voorbeeld aan die wêreld gestel het oor hoe eenheid en versoening kan lyk.

**Sien die miljoene goeie mense raak wat orals, elke dag, hul eie persoonlike stryd teen die bese voer en stukkie vir stukkie hul deel doen om van ons land 'n beter plek te maak.**

**Luister weer fyn na die beloftes van 'n genadige God wat die toekoms in Sy hande hou, veral vir diegene wat bly opkyk in verwagting dat hierdie goeie God, te midde van gebrokenheid en ellende, sal triomfeer. Hy sê**

immers: *“Ek weet wat Ek vir julle beplan het. Ek beplan voorspoed vir julle, nie teëspoed nie. Ek wil hê dat julle hoop vir die toekoms moet hê” (Jer. 29:11).*

En mag ons intussen die wysheid en moed kry om op gepaste wyse as burgerlike samelewing op te staan en te protesteer teen dit wat ons kinders se toekoms kan bedreig.

*“Ek hoop op U, Here. U sal antwoord, Here my God” (Ps. 38:16).*

- Braam Hanekom, Hoop vir 'n Tyd soos Hierdie, CUM, 2015.

# DIE UITGESTREKTE HAND

**N**a die dood van Salomo het daar skeuring in die Ryk van Israel gekom. Sy seun Rehabeam het koningskap behou oor twee stamme, nl. Juda en Benjamin, terwyl Jeróbeam koning geword het oor die tien ander stamme.

Jeróbeam het afgode ingevoer en tempels en altare vir die afgode gebou. Hy het ook sy eie priesters aangestel. Dit was 'n groot fout wat hy gemaak het, want toe het die volk afvallig geraak van die HERE, die God van Israel. God het toe 'n profeet gestuur om teen die altaar en afgode te profeteer.

Ons lees: *"En net toe die koning die woord van die man van God hoor wat hy teen die altaar in Bet-el uitgeroep het, steek Jeróbeam sy hand uit bo van die altaar af en sê: Gryp hom! Maar sy hand wat hy teen hom uitgesteek het, het styf geword, sodat hy dit nie weer kon terugtrek nie"* (1 Konings 13:4 OV). Die Nuwe Vertaling lees ook: *"het styf geword,"* terwyl die King James Version lees: *"withered"* en die New King James: *"dried up."*

Die Hebreeuse woord *yabesh* hou die betekenis in van "opgedroog" of "verdor". Dit wil dus voorkom asof die koning se hand wat hy uitgestrek het na die profeet om sê dat hulle hom moet gryp en heel waarskynlik doodmaak, heeltemal opgedroog het sodat sy arm styf geword het en hy met uitgestrekte hand gestaan het. 'n Uitgestrekte hand, amper soos 'n "monument", maar nie 'n mooi monument nie, wat

daarvan getuig dat hy God se man leed wou aandoen en die onskuldige skuldig wou verklaar.

Toe die koning sy dilemma besef, het hy die profeet gesmeek om vir hom te bid. Hy sou hom egter nie bekeer nie, maar wou net sy genesing ontvang en die funksie van sy hand en arm terughê.

Nou was dit die profeet se beurt om die man wat hom wou doodmaak, te vergewe, want daarsonder sou daar geen herstel wees nie. Hy kon omgedraai en weggegaan het, maar wat sou dan van die koning met die uitgestrekte hand geword het? Hoe sou hy vir die res van sy lewe daarmee kon saamleef? Hoe sou hy dit kon hanteer as al die mense hom gedurig so moes sien, met die wete dat hy die man van God skade wou aandoen?

Die uitgestrekte hand sou nie slegs 'n "monument" of teken van die koning se hardvogtigheid gewees het nie, maar ook van die profeet se onvergewensgesindheid. Sou dit nie tot skande van albei gewees het nie? Sou albei nie daarna met letsels deur die lewe gegaan het nie?

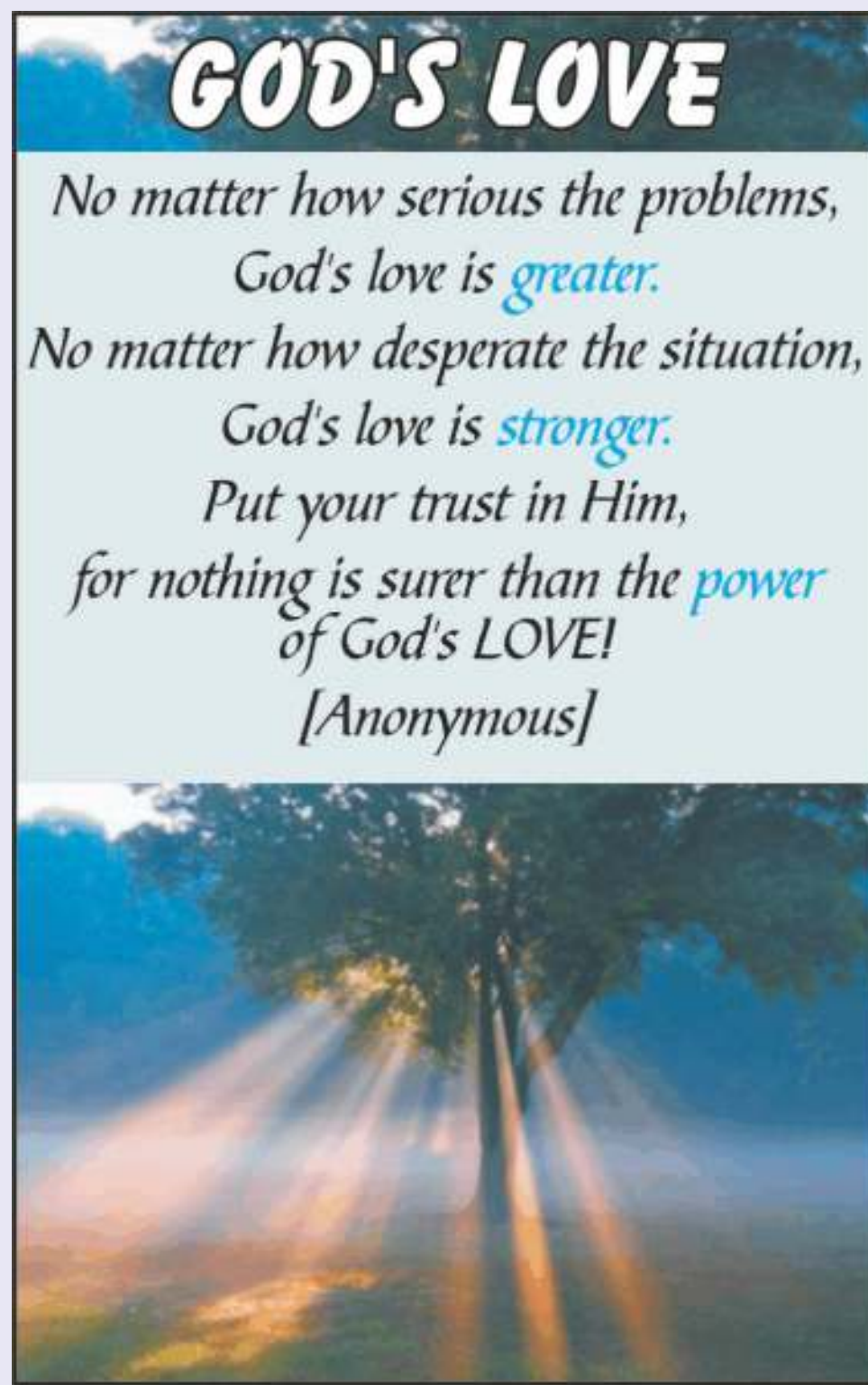
Gelukkig het *"die man van God die aangesig van die HERE om genade gesmeek, sodat die hand van die koning tot hom teruggekeer het en dit soos tevore was"* (1 Konings 13:6(b)).

Die uitgestrekte hand... Indien dit in elkeen van ons se lewe so 'n opsigtelike werklikheid

moes wees elke keer wanneer ons hardvogtig of wraaksugtig of onvergewensgesind sou optree, sou ons 'n lewende advertensie word van hoe dit binne-in ons hart lyk!

ons van ons eie "uitgestrekte hand" te verlos, maar ook om die persoon te vergewe en vry te spreek wat met "uitgestrekte hand" na ons toe staan om ons leed aan te doen!

Laat ons die Here smee om ©Dr. JJ Venter



**GOD'S LOVE**

*No matter how serious the problems,  
God's love is **greater**.*

*No matter how desperate the situation,  
God's love is **stronger**.*

*Put your trust in Him,  
for nothing is surer than the **power**  
of God's LOVE!*

*[Anonymous]*

Jer. 20:11

★★★ **B&B** *Vit die Hand*

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