



# Trumpet's Sound

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**"Trumpet's Sound"** is a bi-monthly publication of the Armenian Evangelical Brethren Church in Sydney, Australia.

Editor - Pastor Harry Hratsh Kiujian

**Contact Address:**

ACM AUSTRALIA  
PO BOX 1593,  
CHATSWOOD NSW 2057  
EMAIL: hkiujian@acmaust.org  
URL: www.acmaust.org



**Prayer points**

- We thank the Father for all His goodness
- We thank Him for His mercy and goodness to our country and our people
- Pray for those who reach out to the poor and the broken hearted
- Pray that God will bless the widows and orphans
- Pray for healing for the sick and wounded
- Pray for God's blessing on ACM's workers and work
- Pray for blessing for the mission team visiting in July from USA

**In this issue...**

**Something is missing . . . . . 3**  
*Pastor Harry Kiujian*

**A trilogy of Psalms (2) . . . . . 4**  
*Don Stormer*

**Prayers of Elijah (2) . . . . . 7**  
*Rex Dearlove*

**Rules and relationship . . . . . 10**  
*Neil Buckman*

**Surprises in the life of faith . . . 12**  
*Dr Czeslaw Bassara*

**The Good Shepherd . . . . . 15**  
*Pastor Harry Kiujian*

Cover photo: Armenian rose, August 2007

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## **Something is missing**

**A**s we look at the world today, we can see that something is missing but many do not know what. Is it the pandemic that has caused this situation, or is it that we have lost our peace somewhere? No. It is love; we have lost our love for God.

Many singers sing beautifully about love (Love is in the air... Burning love... Where is love?) but do they really know about love? Where does it come from? Who gives it to us?

The Bible is the only book that teaches this clearly. God is love. God is not merely loving. In His whole being, He is love. He alone loves in the completeness and perfection of love. Love comes from God. He is the source, love pours out of God's heart; we do not need to look into anything else, or anyone else. He is the one who loved us when we were sinners, He is the one who sent us His Son to die for our salvation.

God, the most powerful being ever, the one who created the universe, loves you personally. Try to wrap your mind around that. He loves you — not just people in general, but you in particular. He cares about your life and wants to be part of it. Even if you have spent your whole life running from God or have done things you regret, He still loves you and wants to have a relationship with you.

God's love is unconditional and infinite — far, far beyond what even the best of people are capable of. God commands those who follow Him to love one another.

### **What does the Bible say?**

How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. Psalm 36:7

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

*Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7*

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20*

*How do I obtain this love? Come to Jesus in repentance and ask Him to fill your heart with His love. Love takes all the fear away and restores us in Jesus.*

*Do not look just around wondering what is missing. Realise that you need Jesus in your life.*

HK

## ***A trilogy of Psalms (2)***

### ***Psalm 23: the Psalm of the Shepherd***

**T**he tone of this psalm is completely different from the sombre note of Psalm 22. This is not a man pursued by his enemies, but someone who thinks of the way the Lord tenderly cares for him. The psalmist is being cared for in the same way a shepherd cares for his sheep.

David began with confidence that the Lord was his shepherd. It is good for us if we can say “the Lord is my shepherd”. We need one who is able to care for us in every situation of life. If the Lord is our shepherd, we lack nothing. He provides us with all that is needed for life and godliness.

The shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures. But how do we make a sheep lie down? Sheep will only lie down if they are fully at peace. Not only must the flock be well fed, but there must be no threats from outside, no rivalry within the flock, and no disease to endanger their general health.

We are also led by still waters. Sheep will not drink from moving water and so a caring shepherd ensures that the flock is suitably cared

*for. Our shepherd restores our souls and leads us in paths of righteousness. He only takes us to places which are good for us.*

*Because the shepherd is with us we fear no evil. Even in the valley of the shadow of death, He is there. And we remind ourselves that for Christians death is not a dark valley. It is the valley of the shadow; if there is a shadow there must be a light so that a shadow is cast.*

*The Shepherd protects and cares for us with His rod and staff. An eastern shepherd used his rod against any enemies trying to attack the sheep. He used the staff or crook to rescue any sheep which were in trouble and in this way bring them comfort.*

*We find we are supplied with all we need. Even in the presence of our enemies we are supplied with all we need. Our heads are anointed with oil and our cups overflow.*

*The psalmist looks ahead in confidence knowing that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. All wanderings will be over and we will be home at last.*

*There is one very important question for us. Do we know this shepherd? Do we have personal contact with the one who is able to care for us in every situation of life?*

### **Psalm 24: the Psalm of the Sovereign**

*The tone or mood of the psalm is different again; here is the sound of triumph. God is victorious over all. The earth and everything in it, as well as its inhabitants, belong to Him. David thinks of the world God has created, and acknowledges the greatness of the Creator.*

*However, thinking of the greatness of the Creator leads to the question of who can stand in the presence of so majestic a person. Who can approach one who is so holy?*

*Who may ascend to where the Lord is or stand His holy place? Who dares approach this majestic God? David lists four characteristics of the person who may come before Him.*

- *He has clean hands; his deeds are upright. We think of Joseph's brothers who acted together to get rid of him. Years later their deed came back to haunt them.*
- *He has a pure heart; his motives cannot be questioned. This had not always been true of David. When there was no way to hide his sin he planned the death of Uriah the Hittite.*
- *He is not an idolater; he worships the Lord God only. That the Israelites turned to idolatry so soon after they were released from the bondage of Egypt revealed that their hearts were not right with God.*
- *He tells the truth; he does not swear deceitfully and there is no hypocrisy in him. One naturally thinks of Jacob deceiving his father in order to gain the blessing. But God changed Jacob. Or we may think of David telling the priest Ahimelech that he was on urgent business for the king when in fact he was escaping for his life.*

*David tells us these are the people who receive the Lord's blessing and righteousness from the God of his salvation. They are the ones who seek the Lord's face.*

### **The triumphant entry**

*There was an occasion when the Lord entered the gates of His city on a donkey. Here the psalmist looks ahead to a far greater entry.*

*Normally one bows his head in the presence of a majestic person, but here the gates are to stand tall. The King is entering. Who is this King?*

- *He is the King of glory. On earth He veiled His glory except to those who by faith recognised that He was the Messiah.*
- *He is strong and mighty. He is the all-powerful one before whom every knee shall bow. None shall be able to resist Him.*
- *He is mighty in battle. The Lord Jesus entered into battle on the cross and defeated the one who held people in bondage because of their fear of death.*

- *He is the Lord of hosts. He has armies at His disposal so extensive that they cannot be numbered. He is the ruler of the universe.*

*As we ponder the greatness of the king, we can only bow in worship that He has granted to those who believe the privilege of ascending into His holy hill.*

*May I ask again? Have you bowed in submission to the King of kings?*

*Don Stormer*

## **Prayers of Elijah (2)**

### **1 Kings 16-18**

#### **Honest prayer**

*Elijah had challenged a rebellious nation and then fled in fear from one woman, Jezebel. He ran for his life into the far south to Beersheba. Here he left his servant, went a day's journey out into the desert, and sat under the scant shade of a broom tree, a small kind of tree that doesn't give much shade.*

*"I have had enough Lord, take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Can you now see why Elijah was ordinary like us? He plunged from the hilltop of triumph to the valley of depression. The last few days had been filled with emotional stress; there was fear and there was physical exhaustion. Why did he feel this despair? "No better than my ancestors" was his thought. He had come to a point in his life where he made a discovery about himself. He wasn't as strong as he thought he was. In that low moment Elijah prayed. This prayer tells us much about Elijah's relationship with God. Would you be able to pray a prayer like this? "God, I've had it. Life has just got too painful and too complicated. I thought I was on top but now everything has gone hopelessly wrong again, there is just no way forward. I feel rotten!" Do you think God would get angry at you if you prayed like this and write you off?*

*This brings us to one of the most fundamental principles of prayer and our relationship with God. Honesty.*

*Those who know God, know that His love is rugged. They also know He hates lies.*

- *If you feel bad, don't tell Him you feel great. Tell Him you feel bad.*
- *If you feel worried, don't tell Him you are quietly trusting His faithfulness. Tell Him you are worried.*
- *If you are sad, don't tell Him you are rejoicing. Tell Him you feel sad.*
- *If you feel He has let you down, tell Him you feel as if He has let you down.*

*This is honest, authentic prayer. Tell God what is going on inside you. He can take it. Every important transaction between you and God will begin with honesty. From that moment of truth, you will begin to move forward.*

*Job raged to God about how he felt, and it was the beginning of God showing him a way forward. David, in Psalm 73, complained about God seeming to be unfair and it was the beginning of new insight about God's ways. Christ's cry about being forsaken was followed by the resurrection. Elijah's prayer of despair was the beginning of a whole new phase of his life. God answered Elijah's prayer to die with a resounding "No!" This is the miracle of prayer. God does not give us everything we ask for, because often we ask for things that later on we would regret if they were granted.*

*A nine-year old boy may think that a .22 rifle would be a great idea for a birthday present. But a wise father would look at it quite differently. At the time the boy may not understand, but when he grows up, he will be grateful that his father's wisdom prevented him from shooting himself or someone else.*

*God answered Elijah's honest prayer with His answer and not Elijah's answer. God sent an angel to feed Elijah. This gives a wonderful*



*insight into the way God feels about us when we are at low points in our lives. There had been a time once before when Elijah was in a deserted place. He was hungry and God used ravens to bring food for him. But now Elijah is really low. He is at a spiritual rock bottom. How does God feel about that? God doesn't write him off and give him less attention, He gives Elijah more attention.*

*The lower Elijah was, the more loving and powerful attention he received from God. Elijah's honest prayer about how he really felt, was the beginning of a new process of healing and strengthening in his journey. The principle of honest prayer is vital if you want to move into a truly meaningful prayer experience with God.*

### **Listening prayer**

*Elijah had been told to go into the mountains and into the presence of the Lord. He has now travelled into the Sinai desert and is on Horeb, the Sinai range of mountains where God first gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. A great wind, an earthquake, and a fire occurred here, but God was not in these. God was not found in the spectacular things; he came in a gentle whisper. If God speaks in a gentle whisper, what does that say to those who want to hear Him? They had better be quiet and listen attentively.*

*Can you see the marvellous healing and changing process that took place in Elijah's life as he discovered what listening prayer is? Look at Elijah's words. They pour out of him in a breathless rush. He is saying that the whole nation has gone to the dogs. Everything has gone wrong. He is the only one left and now they are trying to kill him. Once again, we see Elijah being honest. In this prayer God asked Elijah a question. The questions of God always uncover deep things in the soul. "What are you doing here Elijah?" It was a question about where Elijah was and how he got there. When we lay aside our concerns, be still, and listen to God, He will direct our attention to our inner selves.*

*In your life right now, where are you and how did you get there? What choices and fears have led or driven you to where you are now? In prayer God made Elijah think about himself. He quietly listened to God and reflected on where he was. Elijah uncovered how the direc-*

tion of his life had been dominated and driven by fear. This fear was changed into a new perspective when Elijah saw the whole situation in a new light. He saw a good God doing great things and that he was part of that plan.

*In the pressure of this age, I see many driven people in our churches. Driven by fear, anxiety, anger or guilt. They are so busy running. They don't stop and listen to God. They are far too busy chopping wood to stop and sharpen the axe. Often, they don't realise how desperately driven and out of control their lives are. They go to church and read the Bible and wonder why God does not seem to touch them in real ways.*

*Learn to pray honestly and authentically, and listen to God. This will allow Him to give you insight about what is really going on in your life. In those times of deep communion, God begins to transform the "drivenness" and fear into a new perspective. He shows how wonderfully under control he has everything. And like Elijah you will discover your part in that great plan.*

*Begin where you are, open your heart and pray as you truly are, not as you think you ought to be. In the adventure of prayer, you will discover that God is much better than you ever imagined.*

Rex Dearlove

## **Rules and Relationship**

**S**ome Christians see their lives as little more than keeping rules. They regard a moral life as sufficient, and so they have some rules which, without discomfort or difficulty, they follow, may I say, religiously. They don't drink, don't smoke, don't swear and they are careful with money – careful to earn it and to keep it. But such a life fails on two counts: first, because a merely moral life is not a spiritual life, and second, because they are not living out of a relationship with the Lord, but only following rules. Anyone should be able to see that such a life is no more than a poor, and deadly, imitation of our high calling. Rules are never a substitute for relationship.

However, we know that personal discipline is very profitable for a Christian, and it necessarily requires some rules we set for ourselves. They might be positive or negative – “I will do this” or “I won’t do that”. Either way, they are rules, and there is a danger hovering around them.

The danger is that your peace with God ceases to be through the Lord Jesus and your performance becomes the ground of your peace. If you do well, then you feel right with God and blessed, but if you slip up or relax a little, your peace vanishes. And when you think like that, any discipline becomes hard and God seems more like an unfeeling taskmaster than your Heavenly Father.

So, to be kept from this error, we must cling almost fanatically to the glorious gospel of Christ, where our merits are shown to be utterly worthless and His sacrifice to be everything. By that sacrifice alone are we reconciled to God, now and always – never by our performance or virtue. Full, perfect and eternal reconciliation was won through the blood of His cross and the incomprehensible power of His resurrection and it’s our relationship with Him, through faith, that is our secure foundation and our full salvation.

So why is there a need for personal discipline at all? Because our salvation is not yet complete – we are still looking forward to the promised resurrection of the body when the Lord returns. In the meantime, we have three enemies to contend with: the world that continues to reject Christ, the devil who seeks to destroy His work, and our own sinful nature that would rather be God than worship Him. Personal discipline is simply our choosing to swim against the current in order to learn, to grow and to serve the Lord. No-one can live a spiritual life without this type of discipline. Paul speaks of athletes and soldiers in his letter to Timothy. At that time few believers would have doubted the need for focus and discipline.

However, one important question remains – what does a spiritual life look like, and what does it feel like?

The Lord Jesus is Himself the perfect example of a spiritual life. If you are told that a certain type of behaviour is of the Spirit, simply ask if it

would become the Lord Jesus to behave in that way. The Scripture is clear, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6). We have seen the Man from Heaven, and that settles the matter.

Does a spiritual person feel very holy and pure? No! Unlike the Lord, we have a corrupt and sinful nature that we must deal with daily to ensure that sin does not "reign in our mortal body" (Romans 6:12). As you go on learning to walk in the Spirit you become even more aware of your corruption, not less so. However, at the same time, you will learn to live free from its degrading influence, so you will love more freely and more selflessly. Other people will experience more of Christ in your life, but you won't feel Christ-like at all. Nevertheless, you will know His peace and you will increasingly rejoice in Him. Your cup will run over, goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life, and you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Neil Buckman

## **Surprises in the life of faith**

### **The prophecy of Habakkuk**

**H**abakkuk is a book of surprises! Life is full of surprises. Some of them are good, some are bad. Walking with God is a life of surprises.

#### **1. Habakkuk's name**

A person's name was a part of his identity. In Hebrew Habakkuk means "to embrace" and points out closeness to God. In Assyrian ham-bakuku is a plant, probably "cucumber", something which shows the influence of the pagan Assyrian culture.

God deals with names. In the Bible we have 41 genealogies, and they show that names are important to God. Sometimes God changed names.

The reference in 1:1 to Habakkuk as “the prophet” may imply that he was well known. He was a true prophet with a burning zeal for the glory of the Lord. His burden or oracle is remarkable in that it is not, in the first place, a word directed to the people, but an answer to the prophet’s own painful questions.

## **2. Time of Habakkuk**

Objective evidence for dating Habakkuk’s prophetic activity is provided by 1:6. The reference to the Chaldeans, or Neo-Babylonians, as the threatening new world power, indicates a period after the collapse of the Assyrian Empire (BC 612–605) but before the Chaldean armies of Nebuchadnezzar II captured Jerusalem, and deported the young king Jehoiachin to Babylon in BC 597 (2 Kings 24:8-17). Habakkuk apparently ministered during Jehoiakim’s reign (BC 609–598) and was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah.

An important event during this period was the battle of Carchemish in BC 605, when Pharaoh Necho II and his Egyptian army, who had come to assist the Assyrians against Babylon, were soundly defeated by Nebuchadnezzar II. Soon afterward, Judah also, like the other previously independent kingdoms of Syro-Palestine, became subject to the powerful Neo-Babylonians. Habakkuk’s inspired vision may therefore be dated to the period between BC 605 and 600 when the Babylonians became the dominant force on the international scene, mercilessly sweeping aside all opposition (1:5-17).

This time of international threat coincided with a period of increasing moral and spiritual deterioration in Judah. The evil reign of Jehoiakim formed a sad contrast to that of his father, the good king Josiah (Jeremiah 22:13-19; 26:20-23). Josiah had instituted spiritual reforms in Judah (2 Kings 22:23). He abolished the idolatrous practices of his father Amon (2 Kings 21:20-22) and his grandfather Manasseh (2 Kings 21:11-13). As they flouted the covenant laws, the people of Judah increasingly lost their unique character (1:2-4).

Habakkuk questions God’s silence and apparent lack of punishment (1:1-2) to purge His people, but the sovereign God was still on His throne.

### **3. Habakkuk's ministry – dialogue with God**

*Prophets were not only inspired preachers of divine messages to the people of God; they also shared the Lord's burden for His broken world and His profound worry for His people. In this respect, Habakkuk very much resembles Jeremiah. However, even more so than with Jeremiah, Habakkuk's dialogue with God and his continual prayers (2:1-2; 3:2, 16) take the place of prophetic preaching as the heart of the message.*

*Habakkuk, a man with a very strong passion for the honour of God (1:12; 3:3), experienced a deep spiritual crisis because of the Lord's seeming lack of interest to the terrible spiritual situation of His people (1:2-4). The absence of covenant life and obedience was dangerous to the people of God, but even more it was a refusal of the covenant with the Lord and an affront to Him. Since only Divine involvement could change this deadly situation, Habakkuk was determined in his request to the heavenly Judge, even when it seemed to be hopeless (1:2).*

*In response, the Lord revealed that the Chaldeans now appearing on the scene (1:6) would be His instruments of judgment. This treatment seemed even worse than the illness and only added to the prophet's pain (1:12-17). How could the holy God, who cannot endure wrong (1:13), make use of such wicked people to fulfill His purposes? God's reply, that He was sending the Chaldeans to judge Judah (1:5-11), created an even greater theological dilemma for Habakkuk. Why did not God cleanse His people and reinstate their righteousness.*

*Certain that the events of history were not determined by blind chance but by the righteous and holy God of Israel, Habakkuk waited on the Lord until he received an answer to his hurting questions (2:1). The Lord's reply came in the vision introduced in 2:2, 3, which provides a correct perspective on history and gives the Divine guarantee about its outcome. This answer does not resolve all the painful questions, but it does instruct God's people about the way of covenant life in the here and now (2:3, 4). That way is to persevere in hope, waiting with confidence for the fulfillment of the Lord's unfailing promise. Although God's ways may be not understood, His purposes are consistent. They culminate in real life for the faithful, but woe and death for*

the self-sufficient and arrogant (2:4). The Lord's presence in His temple affirms His lordship over history and assures us that in the end, His genuine claim to the whole world will be universally recognised (2:14, 20; Isaiah 45:21-25; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

The revelation of the Lord's sovereignty over history transforms Habakkuk's objection into a hymn of joy (3:2-20). Instead of passively waiting for Divine intervention, he now prayed positively that the Lord would act in harmony with the deeds and qualities He displayed in the Exodus and at Sinai. Anticipating the future, Habakkuk in his prayer celebrated the Lord's coming (3:3-7), His judgment against nature and the nations (3:8-12), and His triumph over all opposition (3:13-15). From this perspective of faith, even the threat of severe calamity could not stop Habakkuk's overwhelming joy in expectation of the coming salvation, a salvation guaranteed by the Lord's faithfulness to Himself and to His revelation (3:17-19).

Dr Czeslaw Bassara

## **The Good Shepherd**

***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11)***

**T**hese are very important words! No one other than our Lord Jesus could speak them! These words of Christ mean He is my Good Shepherd. He is the One who directs my life, He is my Leader, He is my protector! "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." What a wonderful Saviour He is that He was ready – and willing – to give His life for me. The Lord Jesus does not just make a promise; He died on the cross for my sins in order that I might live. Today I live for Christ with the great hope and joy that wherever He is, I will be too. We have a wonderful assurance. And if you have this same faith in Christ, you are also blessed.

*I recall a visit to my homeland several years ago when I decided*

to find a shepherd and ask him two questions. We drove a long way without finding one. My time in Armenia was almost over but I praise the Lord that I saw a shepherd on a hill during my last days there. I asked the driver to stop, and I started to climb the hill. The poor shepherd was looking to see why someone was hurrying to him. What was he going to ask? I went to him and said, "I have two questions for you about the Bible". First, Jesus says: "I am the good shepherd". I asked him, "Are you a good shepherd? What makes you a good shepherd?" The poor man looked at me and thought for a moment. He took my question very seriously and said: "I am a good shepherd". I asked, "What makes you a good shepherd?" He replied: "Look, all these sheep in the flock are not mine. Some of them are my neighbour's. But I care for them all equally. That's why I think that I am a good shepherd". I said I was glad to meet a good shepherd like him. But I said "I have a second question. The Lord Jesus says, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep'. Does this mean that the Lord is saying that if you want to be called a good shepherd you need to lay your life for the sheep?" This shepherd became silent for a moment. He thought seriously and then started to laugh. He said: "No, no, I will never lay my life for these sheep".

And I praise the Lord saying: "Lord Jesus, You are the only Good Shepherd!" My friend, this Shepherd laid down His life for you so that you may live. This Shepherd shed His blood for the sins of sinful men and women. When you reject the Lord Jesus you reject the wonderful work He has done, you reject the blood He has shed and by doing that you say that His atoning blood cannot cleanse you. My friend, if you make that decision, you will die in your sins. But if you accept the truth and come to Jesus saying: "Lord Jesus, you are my Shepherd, I will only follow You and listen to Your voice, I will only walk in Your paths and will graze only in Your pastures", then you will taste His salvation, you will have eternal life with Christ. You will have the joy that the Lord Jesus gives in filling your heart. You will inherit the joy of salvation.

Come! Come to the Good Shepherd! Come and sit by His feet and taste the love Christ has for you! The Lord bless you and help us all to know how great, how wide and deep the love of the Lord is for us.