



Trumpet's Sound

51th year, Australia

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

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Cover photo: Selected

Prayer points for ACM ministry in Armenia

- Please pray for the Bible study groups in Sevahogh, Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor
- Pray for the sick and for the urgent medical help they need
- Pray for the many poor families in need of support
- Pray for the funds needed to ship our next container
- Pray for the safety of our co-workers and their families

The costs of the publication are covered by the gifts of believers, who donate out of the generosity of their hearts.

Thus far the Lord has been with us

Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12)

Can we take a stone and do the same? We remember the Lord's goodness to us. Many started last year but are not here today. Many started with health but ended with sicknesses. Many started with wealth but ended with big losses.

For the believer every circumstance we go through is permitted by God. Statistics from last year show 300 natural disasters, fire, drought, rain, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. There was a total of over \$40 billion in damages. There were 5000 dead and 22 million people who lost houses.

Thus far the LORD has helped us

We look back over the past year and know that at times we made mistakes. At times we had no input at all. But whatever happened, as believers we need to give thanks in all things. We must look at things from God's perspective and ask what we can learn from this. Can I see God's hand in it? Was it for my growth in Christ?

Remember, Israel walked for 40 years with the cloud by day and fire by night but all failed in their walk. Remember also Moses' words "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here" (Exodus 33:15).

How should we believers enter the New Year?

1. By trusting in the Lord

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there (Acts 20:22). Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead (Philippians 3:13).

2. By examining self

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139: 23-24).

3. By changing our way

If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever (Jeremiah 7:5-7).

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God-this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

4. By making new decisions

If you wander off the road to the right or the left, you will hear His voice behind you saying, "Here is the road. Follow it" (Isaiah 30:21).

Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105).

5. By hoping in Jesus

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

Praise be to the God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

H. K.

Offering up Isaac

Read Genesis 22

The sacrifice of Isaac on an altar is one of the best known stories in the life of Abraham. It is also the event in Abraham's life which shows the greatest development of his faith.

The story begins with an indefinite measure of time: "after these things". We do not know exactly when, but it was after Isaac had grown to being a lad who was able to reason what was happening. God appeared to Abraham to test him by asking him to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which He would show him.

God described Isaac as Abraham's only son whom he loved. What does this mean? There is a deep significance in Isaac being called Abraham's only son. We know that Abraham had other sons; much has been said about Ishmael, and in chapter 25 we read about his sons by Keturah. However, Isaac had a special place in Abraham's life; he was the "only son".

What thoughts went through Abraham's mind when God asked him to offer his only son? He had waited years for the birth of Isaac. God had told him that the promises would be fulfilled through Isaac. But Isaac was still not married – he had no children through whom the promise would be made real. Now, if Abraham offered his only son as a sacrifice, what would happen to all the promises God had made?

However, there was no delay in Abraham's obedience. There is no suggestion that Abraham questioned God or had any doubts about what he should do. Simply the next morning Abraham rose early, saddled his donkey and, with two servants and Isaac, set off with all that was needed for the sacrifice – the wood, the fire and the knife.

We would like to know what thoughts went through Sarah's mind as the small group left. If we are wondering about Abraham's thoughts we are not left long in doubt. We listen to him as he speaks to his ser-

vants on the third day. He has seen the place where God wanted him to go and he said to the two servants. "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go yonder. We will worship, and come back to you." There was no doubt in Abraham's mind what would happen. He and Isaac would return to where they left the servants.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us how Abraham reasoned.

"By faith, Abraham, being tested, offered up Isaac. Yes, he who had gladly received the promises was offering up his one and only son; even he to whom it was said, "your offspring will be accounted as from Isaac"; concluding that God is able to raise up even from the dead. Figuratively speaking, he also did receive him back from the dead" (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Abraham and Isaac began the climb to the place where God had told Abraham to go. At some point along the journey Isaac asked his question. He could see the wood and the fire, but they did not have a lamb for the sacrifice. "Where was the lamb for the sacrifice?" (The question tells us, almost incidentally, that Isaac was familiar with the practice of sacrifice. As we have seen before, Abraham's life was characterised by a tent and an altar.) In reply Abraham said that God would provide for Himself a lamb for the burnt offering.

Abraham's answer to Isaac has been understood in more than one way. The way Abraham's answer is usually understood is that God would provide a lamb for the sacrifice, which He did with the ram which was caught by its horns in a thicket. In this way God provided for Himself a lamb. But the passage may also be read as God will provide Himself as the lamb. In this we are not merely thinking about what happened that day, but we are looking ahead to the time when God came in the person of Jesus Christ and provided Himself as the Lamb of God.

This is what John the Baptist preached. As he saw the Lord Jesus walking by, he said "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". John the Baptist, like all Israelites was familiar with the sacrificial system in which the people brought a lamb to make atonement for their sin. The sin of the Israelite could be covered because an innocent victim had paid the penalty of the sinner.

In this there is important spiritual truth. The wages of sin is death. The penalty of sin is death. I could die for my sins but the result would be eternal death – eternal separation from the presence of God. But it is possible for someone else to pay the penalty for me, provided that person has no sins of his own that need atonement. And this is where that thought of the Lord Jesus being the Lamb of God is important. He is the Lamb of God who has carried the sin of the world.

Substitution is a truth that is illustrated by the events on Mount Moriah. A substitute was found for Isaac; a ram was offered in his place. We deserved eternal death but the Lamb of God became our substitute. We go free through faith in the Lord Jesus.

As Abraham took the knife to slay Isaac, the Angel of the Lord called from heaven, saying “Abraham, Abraham”. The double use of a person’s name is not common and indicates that urgent attention was essential. A similar situation is seen when God addressed Jacob (Genesis 46:2, Moses, Samuel and Saul (Acts 9:4)). When Abraham replied, the Angel said “Don’t lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me”. Abraham was found to be fully obedient to the Lord.

We may want to know more about the Angel (or angel) of the Lord. Who was He? Initially we may think of an angel, but then He speaks as God – “... you have not withheld your only son from Me”. This indicates the distinction of the divine persons. This is the one who appeared to Abraham as he was sitting in the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day. Many of the appearances of the Lord Jesus in Old Testament times were as the Angel of the Lord.

Why was Abraham put to this test? God knew beforehand the strength of Abraham’s faith. But Abraham did not know! This was evidence to Abraham of the strength of his faith. And it is important evidence for us. If Abraham had not been tested in this way, we would never have learned the strength of his faith. As it is, we have an example of a very strong faith.

We look back over this incident aware that Abraham did not know that God would not allow him to kill Isaac. Not knowing what was ahead, Abraham trusted the God who had made the promises about what was to happen through Isaac. He knew that God had said that his descendants would come through him and if God were to keep His promise He would have to raise Isaac from the dead. God had made a promise and Abraham had no doubts that God would be faithful to what He had said. All that Abraham had to do was to trust God and obey Him. God would do the rest.

This is faith at its greatest. To the human mind the command which God gave to Abraham appears to be completely illogical. But if God commands, He has His reasons for asking us to follow a certain path-way or course of action. We trust Him and leave the outcome in His hands. In the path of faith we do not know what lies ahead. We only know that God is in control and that the future is known unto Him.

Don Stormer

The Golden rule

Matthew 7:7-12

In Matthew 7:7, Jesus summarises the Sermon on the Mount. He began His sermon when He went up on the mountain to teach the people (Matthew 5:1-2). He outlined the standard by which His followers should live, beginning with the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) before talking about murder, adultery, divorce, revenge, enemies, and heavenly treasures. Finally, in Matthew 7:1-6, Jesus taught us to accurately and righteously discern and judge people. To live up to this standard is not just difficult; it is impossible if God does not help us do it. Jesus knows that it is not possible for man to live up to this standard in his own strength.

For that reason, Jesus also taught us to ask the Father for help so that we may live up to that standard. If you and I ask, seek, and

knock, God has promised that He will help us and give us the ability, strength, and will to do so (Matthew 7:8). People have often misinterpreted this passage. Jesus is not teaching here to ask anything from God, and expect He will give it to us. God is not Santa Claus to whom we write a letter so that He will give us whatever we ask Him to give (car, house, spouse, job...). This passage is specifically teaching us to pray for spiritual things, namely the ability to live up to God's standards in our lives as Christians (see Luke 11:13). And it is the Holy Spirit who will help, guide, teach, and remind us what we need to do to live up to God's standard that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Luke's parallel passage clarifies the emphasis found in Matthew's Gospel.

However, even then, there are some conditions in order to receive. First, in order to receive these spiritual blessings – the ability to live up to God's standard – one must be in a relationship with God (Father and son relationship, Matthew 7:11). It is only by receiving Christ that a person can be in that relationship and call God his Heavenly Father (John 1:12). In order to receive, one must ask, but only the child can ask his/her Heavenly Father.

Another condition for receiving spiritual blessings is asking, which is the emphasis in this passage. That is why Jesus gave the example of earthly fathers giving things to their children when they ask. Similarly, we are commanded to ask our Heavenly Father for spiritual blessings. In fact, the most important things we ask our Heavenly Father for are spiritual things. This is the reason why Jesus also taught, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). Apostles also taught this: James 1:5 (spiritual wisdom); Ephesians 1:16-19 (spiritual discernment and the enlightenment of the eyes of the heart); Colossians 1:9-10 (filled with the knowledge of God); Romans 10:1 (to save people); 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (for people in government); Ephesians 6:19 (preach boldly).

A third condition to receive spiritual blessings is seeking. Prayer alone, or asking alone, is not enough to receive spiritual things from our Heavenly Father. We must ask, meaning to pray, but we must also seek. We must seek His will, His instructions, commandments, the knowledge that God has allowed us to have, which can only be from

the Word of God (2 Peter 3:18; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16). We will not have spiritual blessings if we do not spend time in the Bible.

One last condition to receive spiritual blessings from God is knocking. We need to ask (pray) and seek (study the Bible), but we must also knock. Knocking indicates the seriousness in our desire for spiritual blessings. Knocking is the determination and consistency of asking the Father without ceasing to bless us with spiritual blessings. This reveals that God is the priority in our lives and, above all, that we desire spiritual blessings (Luke 11:5-13). When these conditions have been met, our Heavenly Father will give what we need (Matthew 7:11).

Finally, Jesus condenses the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), including the command to ask, seek, and knock for spiritual blessings into one verse: Matthew 7:12. In other words, Jesus is saying if we desire to live up to God's standard, and ask God to help us in it, we will be able to live by the principle in this verse, that of doing to others as we want others do to us.

There is a similar concept and philosophy in many cultures and religions including Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The difference is that their philosophy is expressed negatively, "What you do not want others do to you, do not do to them," or "What you hate, do not do to others". Since we do not like people to cause us evil, to hate us, to hurt us, then we ought not to do it to others. In other words, as long as a person is not actively causing others harm, or wishing evil upon them, or even rejoicing when evil happens upon others, he is fulfilling that law.

However, what Jesus taught was very different. It is not enough that we do not hurt others, or even wish them evil, or laugh and rejoice when evil happens to them. It is not enough that we do not judge someone unrighteously. What Jesus taught was different from what they had learned, "You have heard.... But I say to you...". And what Jesus taught was that we don't sit back and think to ourselves "I am godly because I am not harming anyone, hurting anyone, causing evil on anyone, or even rejoicing when evil happens to anyone." Jesus said if we are not actively doing good, we are not fulfilling God's commandment (Matthew 7:12).

It is also important to notice that if we have true love, we will do good whether others do good or not. We need to do good not just when others do good. Doing good does not depend on others' actions, but upon my desire of how I want to be treated, even if others do not do so. God is the ultimate example of this. He did not send His Son because people were good and did something for Him. He gave His Son even though man could not have given Him anything. A true Christian must live by this standard – the golden rule! Are we active? Are you taking the initiative to do good? It is not enough to not do bad. If we are not actively doing good, we are not fulfilling the golden rule. We are not obeying God's commandment!

Raffi Chaparian

A missionary heart

In February 1896 James Kirk left Owaka, in South Otago, New Zealand, for Argentina. He travelled the first leg of his journey on a bicycle. I mention this curious detail not as a piece of historical trivia, but rather because it leads to an interesting reflection. What kind of person would, with a minimum of fanfare one sunny morning, get on his bicycle and set out for Argentina? It would have to be a person who was not afraid of small beginnings. It would be a person who was not intimidated by large tasks and who believed that ordinary people who knew God could actually make a difference.

This truth that God can use ordinary people, was one of the essential ingredients that over the past one hundred years, has led hundreds of other men and women from New Zealand (and other countries) to follow in the steps of James Kirk and serve God in many different ways in dozens of countries around the world. Their lives are not stories of effortless, trouble-free progress towards inevitable success. There have been difficulties, mistakes, crushing discouragements, despair and sacrifice as well as joys and successes. As we see the very human side of many missionary heroes we are reminded of Paul's comment to the

Corinthians, that this treasure of the gospel of God's love is carried, "in very ordinary jars of clay" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

In this very sophisticated world we live in, we need to remember James Kirk, an ordinary man who set out on his bicycle for Argentina and ask the question "What kind of person does God use?" This is an important question. Is accumulating knowledge, developing new techniques and finding clever answers to old problems the essence of serving God? These are obviously important but there is something much more basic. Just after the resurrection Christ asked Peter a question that can pierce us to the core of our souls. "Do you truly love Me?" (John 21:15).

Christ did not ask, "Will you serve me?" but "Do you truly love me?" That is what He wants to know. Peter answered a rather tentative, but honest "Yes", and only then did Christ commission him to service with the words, "Feed My sheep" (John 21:17).

God uses the person who loves Jesus. The question, "Do I love Jesus?" is one that makes us look not at what we have achieved but at who we are. If we do not feel ourselves firstly loved unconditionally and without limit by God, the motive for Christian service becomes corrupted. Those who serve like this will feel driven and accepted to the extent they are successful; eventually they find themselves running on empty. However if we can even tentatively reply like Peter, "Yes Lord, You know that I love You", we will hear His voice saying, "Feed My sheep". We are people God can use.

Whether we look back 100 years or further into the 21st century, the issues are the same. Underneath the useful skills and technology available to the church still lies the deep question of Jesus that comes before all questions of service, "Do you love Me?" James Kirk answered "Yes".

Those who God will use in the 21st century will be those who can answer "Yes" to that deep question, "Do you truly love Me?"

Rex Dearlove

Until Jesus returns

The attacks that took place in New York on September 11, 2001 were rated by most Americans as being the most important historical event in their lifetime. And according to *TheRichest.com*, the most important historical events that changed the modern world forever are the French Revolution, World War I, the Soviet socialist revolution, World War II, and European colonialism.

Christians believe that the most important event in the world's history is the death of Jesus Christ. At the Lord's supper they remember why Christ did what He did.

In 1 Corinthians Paul describes what happened at the last supper where Jesus told His disciples to eat the bread and drink from the cup in remembrance of Him (1 Cor. 11:23-25). Then Paul says,

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

"For" shows a reason Christians repeat the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. This is new revelation beyond the Gospels. The reason is to "proclaim the Lord's death". The Greek verb "kataggello" means to proclaim, announce, or declare. Paul used the same verb to describe preaching the good news (gospel) about Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:1; 9:14). It's in the present active indicative showing that the declaring is an ongoing process. It's a proclamation of a physical death that provides forgiveness. It took the physical death of the body of Christ to save their souls. Participation in the Lord's Supper is like a visible sermon where believers proclaim (announce, or declare) the Lord's death to one another.

"Whenever" shows that believers are to repeat the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. The Greek adverb "hosakis" means as often as, as many times as or whenever. It seems clear from Paul's visit to Troas in Acts 20:7 that the practice of the early church was to meet on the first day of the week to remember the Lord. But this was not just for

the early church as the church is said to do it until Jesus Christ returns. That's why believers often do it each Sunday morning. It's a good way to start the week.

"You eat this bread and drink this cup", describes the two visual aids used in the Lord's Supper to "proclaim the Lord's death". The bread symbolizes His body and the cup of wine symbolizes His blood (death). The bread represents the person of Christ, and the blood the work of Christ.

"Until He comes" says how long believers are to repeat the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. The Lord's Supper is more than a memorial celebration of Christ's body and blood (death); it's an anticipation of seeing Him again. They are to do it until He comes again to take them to heaven. This resurrection and transformation of believers could occur at any moment. Are you ready for it? In the meantime they repeat the Lord's Supper on a regular basis and wait for Christ's return.

Our calendars are dated according to Christ's birth, which we remember at Christmas. But His birth was the necessary precursor to His death, which believers remember at the Lord's Supper.

When believers take the bread and wine they are declaring the importance of Christ's death. It's important because God saves people only by means of Christ's death (1 Cor. 1:18). They are proclaiming that Christ's sacrificial death provides forgiveness and peace with God. They recall His suffering and death and the blessings and benefits which come from His death and resurrection. And they offer thanks and praise for all that God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

That's the best way to remember the most important event in the world's history.

George Hawke



Jesus heals the sick

As Jesus travelled throughout the land, He healed the sick. The news of these miracles was told in the villages and towns around. So people brought to Him those who were crippled and blind and deaf, and many others who were sick, and Jesus healed them all.

In our western society seeing a doctor and getting a prescription is a simple thing, but in poor countries it is devastating to see how villagers react to sickness.

Each day our co-workers visit our poor families to encourage them in Christ, supply them with financial support or food, make sure the children are safe and healthy, and the family is in harmony.

One time when they visited a needy house, they noticed that the toddler was sick in bed. They asked the mother how long he had been sick and she said it was about a week. Immediately our worker took them in his car to a doctor some distance away. The doctor was angered by the mother's neglect when he learned that the toddler had been in this condition for over a week. If she had delayed another day the toddler would have died.

Questions come to mind. Was she careless? Didn't she love her child? Was this a deliberate act to allow the little one to die?

In the distant villages in Armenia, there is very harsh poverty. There is very little money and a lack of food. Some mothers are not mentally strong because of these conditions. Doctors and medication cost money. There is no transport. And a single young mother with four children just does not know any doctors.

Every day we get calls for urgent doctor's visits, medication needs, and help in transport. People need a scan or a blood test or some other test. Ongoing medication for high blood pressure, cholesterol or diabetes are needs we are not able to reject.

Gretel is in her sixties and suffers from diabetes. Doctors had amputated two of her toes but the bleeding started again and would not stop. The wound was so big and just did not look right. Immediately we took her to a specialist who advised us to use the prescribed medication together with a daily injection. A nurse would come each day to dress the wound. If this care did not start immediately they might need to amputate her leg. We thank you for your support and prayers. It has been three months since this happened and now her wound has almost healed. You should see the smile on Gretel's face as she gives thanks to the Lord and to all who helped financially for her recovery.

With your help ACM is committed to assist the poor and the needy in times of need. If you wish to help please mark your donation "for medical needs". May God bless you.

H. K.

