



# Trumpet's Sound

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Editor - Pastor Harry Hratsh Kiujuan

**Contact Address:**

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



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Cover photo: ACM mission team distributing food, 2016

**Praise/Prayer points**

- We give thanks to the Lord for all His goodness.
- Please pray for our workers: for safety and wisdom for Martun, Angela, Haygouhi, Annie, Ashot and Hasmig, and for their children.
- Pray for our new family support project for Lebanon.
- Pray for the Zoom meetings and daily devotions in Armenia.
- Pray for Gretel and for the healing of her amputated toes.
- Pray for Gayane whose recent double stroke has left her paralysed on one side. Her blind husband is all alone in the house.

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

## **Are you full to the brim?**

**T**he world was watching when the Olympic flame was being lit during the Sydney 2000 opening ceremony – but the historic moment was close to being a humiliating failure. The sacred flame, which had travelled all the way from Olympia in Greece, could have snuffed out while more than two billion people watched.

The night before the ceremony, secret rehearsals were underway to make sure the show went off without a hitch.

One of the senior executives said “You’ve got to top up the gas bottles”. The guys with the bottles said, “Oh there is a tonne of gas”. But the executive said “Top it up! Do not take any risks, fill it to the brim”.

But the day after the opening ceremony, an inspection of the gas bottles showed how close organisers had come to being an international embarrassment. They were completely empty and had been running on vapour at the last minute.

Matthew 25:1-13 talks about five virgins whose oil ran out. My question is, how are we with our spiritual lives? Are we low or are we full to the brim?

Life with the pandemic can take us to new places we are not used to, with fear, uncertainty, no work, no progress, and nothing to do. Are we going to fall asleep spiritually like the virgins and not be ready for the Lord’s coming?

### **God’s Word comes to encourage us**

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come (Mark 13:33).

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming (1 Peter 1:13).

## **Be filled to the brim**

*We need to keep alert by praying, reading the Word, meditating, keeping our minds away from evil, praying and encouraging each other, for soon and very soon we are going to see the King.*

*Do not be complacent with your salvation. There are many around you in need of the gospel. Get up and be diligent in serving the Lord by taking the good news of salvation to your many lost friends.*

HK

## ***Trials in our lives***

### ***James 1***

**T**here is a common myth in our society. It is the idea that simply living a long time inevitably makes you very good, wise and mature. Or simply being a Christian a long time makes you a mature Christian. Do you think that is true? James wrote this letter to people who had been Christians for some time but were still not mature.

One of the first marks of maturity is the way we look at the things that happen to us in our lives, especially those events that cause us pain of some sort or other. This was especially relevant to the Christians to whom James was writing as they were beginning to experience the horrors of persecution under the Roman emperors Nero, Vespasian and Domitian. But we don't have to suffer violent persecution to relate to what James is talking about.

“Whenever you face trials of many kinds...” (verse 2). You and I are included here. It says whenever you face trials of many kinds. This word whenever makes it feel as if James is expecting us to have trials. He doesn't say, “If you are one of the unfortunate few who have trials”. No. What he says is more like, “When your turn for trial comes around” This is a hard fact for us to face. It requires growing up. There are people who hope that they will be able to tiptoe through life without anything going wrong. They think that obeying God and doing all the right things will escape this reality.

*It is interesting to see people's reaction when a family faces a crisis. Maybe their children rebel against God or maybe there is sickness or bereavement. How often do you hear people ask, "Where did we go wrong?" Do you know what lies behind that question? It is the idea that if you manage life all right, nothing will go wrong. If they can find the reason why things went wrong, they will avoid that mistake so that it will not happen to them.*

*Very bad things do happen to very good people. The book of Job was written to show that. Job was a good man and yet it all went wrong for him. Maturity means realising that we are broken people living in a broken world and so we shouldn't be too surprised if things go wrong. Accepting this reality will make you compassionate to people who face trials. You won't be looking for reasons to blame them. It will also prepare you for when your trial comes. Trials don't just happen to a tiny handful of unfortunate people who somehow have not quite got life figured out. When things go wrong, that is about normal. Seeing that, is a mark of maturity.*

*Trials happen to everyone. Suffering is something more than just a problem to be solved. Most of us view trials and suffering rather like getting a stone in your shoe when you are walking down the road. What do you do? Like any problem, you solve it. You stop, get the stone out of your shoe and then continue your walk. That is the way we tend to view trials and difficulties to be solved. Either you solve it and get on with your life or you don't. Of course when we suffer, we want to solve the suffering and it is right that we should try to do this. Our first question is always, "How can I solve this problem or escape this pain?" Even Christ asked that in Gethsemane. But not all problems are solvable. Any mature person knows that.*

*God wants to move us on to a much richer question, "How can this experience bring me closer to God?" When you begin to ask this question in your trial, you are beginning to actually make discernible movement toward maturity. Without this perspective, verses 2 and 3 look very strange, don't they? "Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials..." Joy? When the shepherds in the fields heard the angels singing of the birth of Christ they had joy. I can understand that. But*

*this sounds bizarre! Do you mean I should have joy like that when I face suffering? Well, strange but true, that is what James is saying. How can one have joy in hard times? Because we know something: "That the testing of your faith brings perseverance... so that you may be mature and complete" (verses 3-4). You will be brought closer to bring mature, to be more like Christ. Suffering is not just a problem to be solved. It is more than that. It is intended to be a transforming experience from the hand of God.*

*What we have been thinking about is a theology of suffering. It is an explanation about suffering. It is not pastoral counselling for people in the middle of their suffering. There is a huge difference.*

*If you go to a bereaved family of a very sick person and say to them in the midst of their incredible pain, "Look, you should be rejoicing. This experience is going make you a better person of you." They will probably want to hit you and you deserve it. You don't give theology to people in pain. What does the Bible say you do when someone is weeping in the midst of their pain? You weep with them (Romans 12:15). You lovingly walk with them in the pain and share in the pain as best you can. You don't try to say they shouldn't feel that way. You certainly do not dump theological explanations on them. Romans 8:28 "All things work together", has often been used here, but it can bring great pain to people already suffering. That is like arriving at the scene of a terrible road accident, crawling inside one of the wrecked cars and giving the injured and bleeding driver a copy of a road code!*

*This teaching is to help you thatch your roof before the storm. What does a Christian under the pressure of a trial really need? James says we need wisdom. This wisdom turns our trials from being stumbling blocks into stepping stones. Wisdom is not a substitute for experiencing hard times. It is what God gives you in the hard times. The wisdom that helps us come to terms with, and finally even rejoice in the hard experiences we have had, is something that God gives over periods of months and years.*

*"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because he will receive the crown of life..." (verse 12). Blessed and happy, spiritually*

*prosperous and to be envied, is the person who perseveres and receives the crown of life. This verse tells us of God's extravagant boundless generosity. The Bible tells us that eternal life is a free gift. When we have received that gift of life and have lived by it, we are then given a crown of life. God gives us a gift and then rewards us on top of that for how we have received the gift.*

*Trials are not meaningless and futile. The story of our life, even when it is sad and painful, is really the subplot of God's much bigger story which has a happy ending that often seems hard to see through our tears. James says that we know we are becoming mature when even occasionally we can see glimpses of that glory in the ordinary events of our lives. For glory is where God is taking us.*

*Rex Dearlove*

## ***Worshipping God and idols at Bethel (2)***

**A**fter the kingdom of Israel was split into two kingdoms on the death of King Solomon (931 BC), Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel, made two golden calves (1 Kings 12:28-33) and set one up in Bethel, and the other in Dan in the far north of his kingdom. This was to stop the people of Israel going to worship in the temple in Jerusalem. But a prophet from Judah visited the idol at Bethel and prophesied that it and the other pagan shrines in the kingdom would eventually be destroyed by King Josiah of Judah (1 Kings 13:1-6, 32).

During the days of Elijah and Elisha, companies of prophets were located at Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal (2 Kings 2:3, 5; 4:28). So there were still people following God although the kings were ungodly.

Bethel is next mentioned in connection with the eleventh king of Israel, Jehu who reigned from 842-815 BC. Despite his killing of the prophets of Baal and destruction of their temple, it is said that Jehu

continued to tolerate the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan (2 Kings 10:29). Throughout the books of Kings, the kings of Israel are condemned for repeating the idolatrous "sin of Jeroboam" in failing to stop idol worship at Bethel.

The prophets denounced Israel's sin of idolatry at Bethel (Amos 3:14; 4:4; Hosea 10:15; 13:1-3) and predicted their punishment which was destruction by the Assyrians (Hosea 10:15). This idolatry brought "shame" on the kingdom of Israel (Jeremiah 48:13). They were told to "seek the Lord and live" and "do not seek Bethel" (Amos 5:5-6). Amos persisted even though he was intimidated by the priest of Bethel who said, "Don't prophesy anymore in Bethel" (Amos 7:13). And the Judeans were warned not go to Bethel because of the idolatry there (Hosea 4:15).

Because of the idolatry of the Israelites, they were invaded and taken into exile by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:7-23). The shrine at Bethel apparently avoided destruction in the Assyrian invasions of the kingdom of Israel in 740 BC and 722 BC, but was finally completely destroyed (2 Kings 23:15-20) by king Josiah of Judah who reigned from 640-609 BC.

What about us? An idol can be anything that gets our attention instead of God getting our attention. What are the "golden calves" in our lives?

## **Worshipping both God and idols**

When the Assyrians took the Israelites into exile, they brought people from other nations to occupy the kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 17:24-41). Because these people didn't worship the Lord, God sent lions to kill some of them. After they appealed to the king of Assyria, one of the priests was sent back to live in Bethel to teach the people how to worship the Lord. But the people of each nationality continued to worship their national gods. They made idols and set up shrines for them. Even child sacrifice was practised.

The Bible says, "They worshiped the Lord, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. They worshiped the Lord, but they also served their



own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought... Even while these people were worshiping the Lord, they were serving their idols” (2 Kings 17:32-33, 41).

So they were worshipping both the God of Israel and their own gods! That's syncretism – mixed religion. It's breaking the first commandment given to the Israelites (Exodus 20:3).

What about us? If we claim to worship God, are there any other idols in our life as well?

## **Discussion**

As the main religious centre of the northern kingdom, Bethel was an important town in the religious history of ancient Israel. Bethel started well because it was where people worshipped God across hundreds of years between Jacob and Solomon (until 930 BC), but it ended badly because of the gross idolatry and syncretism over about 300 years from Jeroboam to Josiah (930 BC to 640 BC).

Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus after following Him for three years. And Joshua Harris and Marty Sampson have walked away from their Christian faith. Our culture is pluralistic, sceptical, individualised, personalised, and syncretised. Jesus predicted that in future, “Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12 NLT). But genuine faith endures (Matthew 24:13; Hebrews 3:14; James 1:12). So, don't give up. Endure and persevere in the Christian faith. The Bible says that Jesus Christ is returning to resurrect and transform all believers and take them to heaven, “Do not throw away your confidence [in God]; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere [keep trusting God] so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised [after the rapture]” (Hebrews 10:35–36).

## **Lessons for us**

Let's follow the good start at Bethel by trusting in God and by continuing to worship Him. But let's not follow Bethel's bad finish by allowing anything to come between us and God.

George Hawke

## **Psalm 6**

### **Read Psalm 6**

**F**or some reason, the early church named seven of the Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143) "Penitential Psalms". However, the first of these psalms really does not contain any confession of sin or prayer for forgiveness. This is really the prayer of a man who senses his weakness and limitations and looks to the Lord for deliverance. He is rewarded in that the Lord hears him and answers his prayer.

The first part of the psalm (1-7) is a prayer for healing and deliverance and the second part (8-10) expresses David's confidence that God would answer his prayer.

The psalm opens with a request that the Lord not rebuke him in His anger or chasten him in His displeasure. David was conscious that if God acted in judgment there was nothing he could plead to lighten the punishment he deserved. He therefore appealed to God on the basis of His mercy. He asked for the Lord's healing.

We have no idea what problems the psalmist was experiencing. In the previous psalm he was concerned with the problems associated with the many evil people who surrounded him. There is a hint in verse 8 that he was troubled by workers of iniquity, but this aspect of his troubles is not strongly emphasised in this psalm.

In many ways, it is good that we do not know the psalmist's problems, because this enables us to apply the truth to our particular situations. Whatever our circumstances or difficulties, we can come before the Lord in prayer and seek His mercy.

Even so, there is a sense of urgency with the psalmist. He has been waiting for some time for the Lord to assist him. So he asks, in effect, how long it will be before the Lord comes to his aid. However, we need to wait patiently for the Lord. This is the message of Psalm 37:7: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret because of him who prospers in the way." There may be good reason why the

*Lord wants us to wait. At the very least, it deepens our dependence on Him; our faith is strengthened.*

*The psalmist appeals to the Lord for deliverance. This is necessary in this life because in the grave there is no memory of the Lord. As we think of this we realise that not only must our requests be granted in this life but we must also give God thanks for all His kindnesses before we go to the grave. Are we as thankful to the Lord as we should be for all His unfailing love?*

*We are given some understanding of the extent of the psalmist's difficulties. His problem weighed him down spiritually and emotionally. The activities of his enemies were prematurely aging him. We picture a man gripped by deep depression. But he has done the right thing. He has gone with all his problems to the Lord and unburdened his heart to Him.*

*The psalmist does come to an end of his problems. He realises that the Lord has heard his weeping and his supplication. It is good to grasp this truth. The Lord hears us when we call on Him. The psalmist took the only wise course of action; he went to the Lord in prayer and laid out every detail before Him.*

*Unfortunately a belief lurks within us that we have the ability to handle our own problems. Alternatively we think that we can get the assistance we need by seeking professional help. Now there may be times when it is good to talk about our problems with a wise Christian counsellor, but we should first and foremost seek the Lord's help.*

*In the strength of his renewed strength the psalmist commands the workers of iniquity to depart from him. He has learned to trust in the Lord and he can leave the fate of those who opposed him in the Lord's hands.*

*We all have our troubles. Let us not try to handle them in our own strength. May we turn in prayer to the Lord, telling Him our needs (even though He knows them already!) and seek His guidance for our daily living.*

*Don Stormer*

## Repentance

*“I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:20-21)*

*Paul frequently distils into a few words great and important truths, and he has certainly done it in this farewell address to the elders from Ephesus.*

*“Repentance towards God” was the first part of his apostolic message, he said, and the second, “faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”. Simple enough, but also wonderfully profound.*

*Throughout the centuries since Paul, the Christian message has been pushed and pulled in all directions, sometimes grossly exaggerated, sometimes indistinguishable from the world from which it is to save us. In some places a culture grew up where the entire population was seen as Christian, but the truly faithful believers were viciously persecuted. Today we have the prosperity version of the gospel, where God is seen as a useful means to gain wealth and comfort. Some people seek a form of individual “spirituality” through the Christian message, stripped first, of course, of anything that offends the modern secular mind or current cultural fashions.*

*But many people in churches simply do not know the gospel. They have some knowledge of the Bible and of the events described in it, but it seems distant and largely unconnected with their life. While they say that they believe it, no change results, no emotion is stirred, and no zeal produced. It is, to them, neither something to live for, nor to live by.*

*Paul’s message began with repentance – something much more than reciting a little prayer that begins, “Dear God, I know that I am a sinner...”. To repent means to turn, to turn away from sin and sins, and to turn to the Saviour Himself. We may not see the full extent of*

*what that means at the beginning, but repentance does not end at the beginning, it begins there and continues through the rest of our life.*

*Repentance is not regret or disappointment that we are not better than we hoped or thought we were. Repentance involves recognising the grievous nature of the pride and the deliberate rebellion against God which is revealed by our sins. Soon we realise that sins come from a sinner, and that our separation from God is not only because of what we have done, but even more so because of what we are. This is a painful but necessary realisation. In repentance we not only turn away from what we have done, but also from what, in our deepest nature, we essentially are.*

*This may sound rather extreme, but it is the reason the Lord Jesus died for us. He gave His life because of our sin, but not just for our sins. We are also, by the grace and working of God, united with Christ in His death and with Him in His resurrection, in order that we may learn to walk in "newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). This is a full and complete salvation.*

*Where there is no true repentance, we find people unconnected to the Lord in heart and mind. Their faith, if we can call it that, is little more than a hobby or an opportunity for some social engagement. They are not His disciples, and therefore, sadly, not Christian at all.*

*Paul's message was "repentance toward God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ". Through faith in the Lord Jesus we find perfect forgiveness and life that is eternal. In this life, through on-going repentance and faith, we are called to continue until, face to face, we meet Him who has loved us with such great and everlasting love.*

*Neil Buckman*

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**"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, knowing that in the LORD your labor is not in vain."**

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

## Eternity

**I**n a mother's womb were two babies. One asked the other: "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later."

"Nonsense" said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?"

The second said, "I don't know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now."

The first replied, "That is absurd. Walking is impossible. And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous! The umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. But the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded."

The second insisted, "Well I think there is something and maybe it's different from what it is here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore."

The first replied, "Nonsense. And moreover if there is life, then why has no one has ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere."

"Well, I don't know," said the second, "but certainly we will meet Mother and she will take care of us."

The first replied "Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That's laughable. If Mother exists then where is she now?"

The second said, "she is all around us. We are surrounded by her. We are of her. It is in her that we live. Without her this world would not and could not exist." Said the first: "Well I don't see her, so it is only logical that she doesn't exist." To which the second replied, "Sometimes, when you're in silence and you focus and you really lis-

ten, you can perceive her presence, and you can hear her loving voice, calling down from above.”

Selected

## ***Working in the field***

**S**erving the poor, facing their pain and suffering, is not easy unless our calling is from the Lord.

*We thank the Lord for our dedicated staff. We fully understand their situation and pray for them and encourage them daily, counselling them at the same time.*

*They try to visit all our needy families once or twice each month, distributing support and food, counselling, praying and encouraging them in Christ.*

*Some of them join us on Zoom as we run special meetings for them. We also give them daily devotions in the Armenian language.*

*Some of the common needs are not just finance or food. Medication tops the list, putting a big financial burden on us. Other needs include hospitalisation, home care, counselling families as well as rebellious teenagers and children.*

*Teens as young as 16 years of age are getting married so the family will be free from the financial burden. Tertiary education fees is another serious need.*

*Benik and Gayane are married with no children, living in an old apartment building on the third level. Gayane is a wonderful believer. Benik is blind in both eyes, and Gayane takes care of him full time. She herself is blind in one eye the other is only 50% good. This makes things very difficult for her. But seeing the joy that she has in Christ as she sings and recites her poems for Jesus makes us praise Him more and more.*

*Last week's news was not good as Benik rang Ashot our co-worker to inform him that Gayane has had a double stroke and is in hospital half paralysed from head to toe and that he was in need of financial support so that the hospital would take care for her.*



*We have attached a photo of Benik and Gayane. Please pray for Benik for safety as is he all by himself in his apartment. Pray for Gayane for the Lord to touch her and make her well again. Pray for Ashot and Hasmig who will continue visiting her and encouraging her in Christ.*

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