



Trumpet's Sound

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ACM NEWS

- We praise the Lord for our new centre in Gyumri
- We praise Him for the new ACM 2018 calendars
- God willing ACM will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2018
- We thank our supporters and sponsors
- We encourage you to sponsor a needy family in 2018
- We encourage you to keep us in your prayers in 2018

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***"For today in the city of David there
has been born for you a Saviour,
who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11)***

It's Christmas season again! The world celebrates Christmas in many ways and colours, Christmas trees, lights, cakes, holidays, shopping, food, Santa. The real reason for the celebration is that some 2000 years ago a babe was born. God was taking the form of a babe, and was laid in a manger. This is not a story but the miracle of GOD.

Have you ever asked the question "Why Lord?" Why did God take the form of a babe? Why did He come, and leave His kingdom behind? Why did He come to this world to suffer and die?

The answer is simple. The world needed a Saviour and Jesus came to save. His only purpose was to save mankind, to save you and me, but what from? "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We all need to be free from our sins and our sinful nature, for we are all guilty having all broken His laws. None of us will be able to face Him one day and say "I have not sinned".

"The wages of sin is death" but Christ paid the price on the cross. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Christmas means Christ has been born. Christ is born means a Saviour has been given.

Do you need a Saviour? Come to Jesus because the door of salvation is open for you today. Jesus still saves and forgive all who come to him. Will you come to Jesus this Christmas?

Yes, we will continue celebrating Christmas until His glorious coming, for there is no greater joy than to know that our sins are forgiven.

Have a blessed Christmas and a joyous new year.

HK

The blessing of being the second (1)

In the Bible we often read about God's choices. For example, God chose Abraham and the nation of Israel. From Jacob's twelve sons He chose Levi. In the New Testament, God chose Mary and Joseph, the 12 apostles, and later Paul of Tarsus; the list goes on. The question that I want to draw our attention to is this: When God chooses someone else, does that mean that He has rejected us? Does that mean that He has no blessing (or less) for you and me? After all, we all want to be used by God, don't we?

Please read Acts 1:21-26, particularly verses 21-23.

Before I consider the Bible passage, let me tell you a story from my childhood. I had a classmate who played soccer well. Playing soccer was a special joy for me, and I thought myself a real player. I always wanted to be in his team, because he always won. But one day he did not choose me. It's clear why; I was just running after the ball. It was a terrible day for me, so terrible that I still remember it.

The feeling of being rejected, being a "reserve player" or being the second is very painful. We always love to be first. We get mad when people do not choose us, especially when we think we are ready and can do the job. But what do we do when the one who did not choose us was not a fellow man, but God Himself? What do we do when God chooses someone else for Christian service and tells us that we are second? We tend to give our fellow man a dirty eye when he does not choose us and we start gossiping, grumbling... But with God, we are totally ineffective!

I was a kid and grew up, but I could not get rid of the accompanying feelings of being rejected: depression, suspicion and mistrust of God and men, bitterness, envy, and so on. Familiar feelings? If we are sincere, we will admit they are.

In our Bible passage we see that God chose Matthias to be among the eleven apostles. In Acts 1:21-22, Peter pointed out the conditions

for the candidates for the position and from those who were gathered (about 120 people), two men came forth, Matthias and Joseph who was called Justus. They did not come forward by themselves, considering themselves worthy to take the new position; the Bible says that the people selected them (v 23). We know from the story that after praying and casting lots, Matthias was chosen. So, we conclude that God chose Matthias and rejected Justus.

How should Justus feel? Did he have to cover his face, when he saw that he was not chosen? What would you do? What would I do? After all, he complied with all the conditions (vv 21, 22). So why did the Lord not choose him for this position? If I were in his place, perhaps I would start thinking "What a shame for me. I am in an awkward situation before all, both the 11 apostles and the 120".

- I wonder what people will say about me when they reach home
- The apostles will think that I have secret, unconfessed sin in my life
- I am not worthy, God does not trust me anymore
- Probably Matthias is better than me, more deserving
- Perhaps I start missing meetings, and change direction when I see Matthias coming

All these thoughts are certainly wrong. It is a mistake to think that God chose Matthias and rejected Justus. The right thinking is this: God chose Matthias and did not choose Justus – he was not rejected.

When God does not choose us for a specific service, that does not mean that we are no longer fit for Him, or that He does not appreciate us, trust us less, or that our blessing will be less than that of the one who was selected. Justus should think that if God hasn't chosen him He has in mind something else for him, something good, both for him and the church.

Whose blessings will be greater? The blessings of the evangelist, who goes after the lost souls or the blessings of the pastor, who has taken the responsibility of the spiritual nourishment of those converted souls? The answer is found in Paul's writings. He says:

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted (evangelising), Apollos watered (pastoring), but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Corinthians 3.5-8).

Whose blessings will be greater? Rewards are according to our labours, and not according our office. And this is a key principle we all need to be constantly reminded about.

In the next article, we will look into the lives of Joshua and Caleb, Andrew and Peter to see that being the second does not necessarily mean that we are forgotten by God.

*Vartan Sarkissian
(To be continued)*

Timeless quotes

“Beware of manufacturing a God of your own: a God who is all mercy, but not just; a God who is all love, but not holy; a God who has a heaven for everybody, but a hell for none; a God who can allow good and bad to be side by side in time, but will make no distinction between good and bad in eternity. Such a God is an idol of your own, as truly an idol as any snake or crocodile in an Egyptian temple. The hands of your own fancy and sentimentality have made him. He is not the God of the Bible, and beside the God of the Bible there is no God at all.”

J. C. Ryle

"It is a masterpiece of the devil to make us believe that children cannot understand religion. Would Christ have made a child the standard of faith if He had known that it was not capable of understanding His words?"

D. L. Moody

Are you growing? (1)

2 Peter 1:1-15

The words of this passage are those of an old man who knows that he will soon die. What could be so important that Peter, by the Holy Spirit, is going to gather and process from a lifetime of experience? There is one final message he hopes will be remembered even after he has gone. Peter can look back to his early days as a tough fisherman on the Sea of Galilee.

- *His first meeting with Jesus on the shore of Galilee*
- *The fear of that storm*
- *The awesome wonder of the transfiguration*
- *The night he betrayed Jesus and made the terrible discovery about himself that he was not as strong as he thought*
- *The early morning when he went past John into the empty tomb*
- *The great day of Pentecost when he preached and saw thousands come to Christ*
- *The explosion of the early church*

From all that he has seen and experienced of life in his walk with God, what will he choose as his most important final message? Peter addresses spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is a bit like physical growth. Have you ever noticed how children seem keen to grow up? As a child, growing up seemed to me to be a door to profound change, new freedom and authority that I could only dream about at the time. And that is how Peter wants us to see spiritual growth. It is a door to profound change, new freedom, and authority that we do not have now. Spiritual growth says to us, "There's more and it's better!" There is a huge difference between knowing about God and knowing God. We all begin with second hand knowledge. Someone comes and tells us about God. So we know about Him. But it is only as we actually act on that knowledge that we come to know God. There is evidence in verse 1 that Peter was overwhelmed and changed by his growth through knowing God. He says faith is precious.

This is an incredible admission by Peter. He had begun life as a bigoted racist. From a child, he had been taught that Jews were superior to all other people and were really the only race that God was very interested in. At the time of Christ it was common for a Rabbi to teach that if a wall fell on top of some people, one need only clear away enough rubble to see whether the injured were Jews or not. If they are not Jews, they could be left there.

Even after he was filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter had the hardest time accepting the idea that God could possibly love and save a Gentile. In the book of Acts, God gave Peter a special vision to show him that He loved Gentiles. Peter didn't want to preach the gospel to them. Because of his prejudice, Peter found it hard to even eat a meal with Gentile Christians. At one time he would only do it when there were no other Jews around. Paul rebuked him severely for this in Galatians 2:11. But see how Peter has grown. Even to Gentiles he says, "Your faith is as precious as mine."

Growth involves profound change not just in our behaviour, but at the deepest level of our inhibitions and prejudices. That kind of change is evidence of real spiritual growth that comes from truly knowing Christ. What causes this kind of growth? His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him. "He has given us His great and precious promises" (verse 4). God has already given us everything we need to make us more like Him. God has empowered us for growth, for the adventure of sharing in God's nature, and to escape futility.

This is where spiritual growth differs from physical growth. Anyone who lives a certain number of years will experience growth from childhood to maturity. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that simply living a certain number of years will make you grow spiritually. It is possible to be physically old, but still spiritually a child. Peter, as an old man, was still talking about growing and learning. Growing and learning are two things that keep your inner life youthful. My definition of an old person, is not someone who has lived a long time, but someone who has stopped growing and learning. There is few things as sad as a Christian who has no ambition to grow, but who lives on past blessings without expecting future ones.

To be continued

The angels and the shepherds

Read Luke 2:7-20

Not only did the birth of the Lord Jesus take place in very humble circumstances, but the announcement of His birth was different from what one would have expected for a redeemer king. The announcement of His birth was to shepherds, not to the leading figures in government, religion and society.

What is the significance of this? In contemporary Judaism, shepherds were among the lowest in society. At the bottom were the tax collectors and prostitutes (politely called 'sinners') but shepherds were only just above them. They were not allowed into the temple, presumably because of the smells associated with their work. Yet it was to the despised of society that the Lord Jesus came – He who would later be despised and rejected by men. This is a reminder of the truth Mary expressed in her song. The Lord filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. The people of the world have their different categories of who is important; God does not favour proud people who will not bow before Him.

Zechariah and Mary had been terrified or troubled when they saw an angel. The shepherds were no different. One can imagine their consternation when the night sky lit up and an angel stood before them. He, however, had the same message of encouragement: do not be afraid. The reason was that on that day the Saviour had been born in the city of David.

What are the important points about the angel's message to the shepherds? First, his message was good news or gospel. The verbal form of the word gospel was used to announce the birth of a son to the emperor. But this was far greater good news. This was actually the King Himself! A Saviour had been born who was Christ the Lord. The angel was emphasising three truths. The babe was to be the Saviour; He would save the people from their sins. He was the Christ or Messiah – the anointed one of God. He is Lord – He is God.

After the angel gave his message, a host of angels joined to praise God. Their song was "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men". Some modern translations suggest this should be "good will to men on whom His pleasure rests". However, there is good reason to preserve the old words. The coming of the Christ was the means by which good will comes to those who believe. And one day, there will be peace on earth and glory will be given to God in the highest.

The shepherds also learned about the lowly circumstances of His birth. Did they wonder about the announcement being made to them? When they were told He would be lying in a manger, did they ask why He was born in a stable? Why was the Christ not born into a higher strata of society? We may ask if it would have been better for Jesus to have been born in a palace. No. The birth in a stable serves to emphasise the greatness of the step taken by the Lord Jesus. He who was rich, became poor. Because He became so poor, He understands the needs and circumstances of all mankind and is able to minister to everyone's needs.

After the shepherds heard the angel's message they decided to go to Bethlehem. The angel had spoken about the city of David rather than Bethlehem; the shepherds did not need to be told it was Bethlehem!

The shepherds saw the child and did two things. They spread the story of what they had heard and seen. They praised God for all they saw and heard because what had happened was exactly what the angel had told them. We may wonder who took any notice. As shepherds they would have had a limited circle of friends. Even so, they were able to spread the news widely and people marvelled at the things the shepherds told them.

The question we should be asking is "To whom does God speak?" We must realise that God does not act according to the social values of the day. Shepherds may have been despised by the temple leaders, but it was they who received the message of the coming of the Saviour. He certainly did not reveal Himself to the religious and political leaders

of the day. It is the same today. To those who are lowly in heart, the Saviour brings His message of peace and good will.

Are we ready to listen to the voice of God? First we need to realise our nothingness before God. Then we will realise that it is to the humble that God speaks. He will bring His message to those who want to hear Him.

Don Stormer

Bethlehem, God's solution to our crises

What do you associate with each of these places: Gettysburg, New York, Las Vegas, Hiroshima, Hollywood, London, Salt Lake City, Paris, Yosemite, and Bethlehem? For most of us, each name arouses particular connotations, connections and feelings.

You may say that Bethlehem was the birth place of Jesus Christ. But what did the word "Bethlehem" mean to those who lived before Christ was born?

Let's look at what the Old Testament says about Bethlehem, a town about 10 km south of Jerusalem. Both towns are on a north-south range of hard limestone hills rising midway between the Mediterranean coast and the Jordan rift valley. Bethlehem is 775 metres above sea level, 30 metres higher than Jerusalem. It was previously known as Ephrath(ah), a name that refers to that area of Judea (Genesis 35:19; 48:7, Ruth 1:2; 4:11; Micah 5:2).

A family crisis

About 1300 BC, Elimelech and his wife Naomi lived in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1). Because of a famine in Israel, Elimelech's family migrated to Moab, south-east of the Dead Sea. In Moab, Naomi's husband and two sons died. She was left alone and destitute. It was a family crisis. It looked like the end of the family line. So she decided to return

to Bethlehem, her husband's home town. Her daughter-in-law Ruth, went with her. Now we have two destitute women, one of them a foreigner.

God provided a solution to this crisis when Boaz let Ruth glean in the barley fields, by gathering stalks of grain left behind by the harvesters. So they had food to eat. But they were helped even more when Boaz married Ruth. This preserved the family name and the family property through Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer. Also, both women were sustained in the long term. Naomi was cared for in her old age and she had a grandson called Obed whose grandson was David.

So at Bethlehem God provided a solution to a family crisis.

A national crisis

This family lived in Bethlehem for the next few hundred years. Because the Israelites hadn't driven out all the inhabitants of Canaan, they faced constant opposition from the Philistines who lived on the coastal plain. During the reign of the first king, Saul, a national crisis arose. The Philistine army penetrated into Israelite territory and was gathered in the valley of Elah. And they had a giant called Goliath who terrorised the Israelites. Because the valley of Elah extends from the coastal plain eastwards towards Bethlehem, this threatened Bethlehem and after that Jerusalem (1 Sam. 17).

God provided a solution when David killed Goliath with a stone. David lived in Bethlehem where he was a shepherd. He was sent to the valley of Elah by his father to take provisions for his brothers in the Israelite army. When their hero was killed, the Philistines turned and ran back to Gath. David saved his nation from the enemy and became a national hero. So from Bethlehem, God provided a solution to a national crisis.

Another national crisis arose soon afterwards when Saul changed from being a godly king to an evil tyrant. God provided another solution when he sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint David privately to be the next king (1 Sam. 16:1-13). So at Bethlehem, God once again provided a solution to a national crisis. Later David was publicly anointed as king of the tribe of Judah and king of the whole nation (2 Samuel

2:1-4; 5:1-5). David established the kingdom of Israel. He was the most famous person to live in Bethlehem.

Next, in the 7th century BC, Micah predicted that the Jewish Messiah would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). This was known by the Jewish religious leaders after the birth of Christ, because it was in their Scriptures (Matthew 2:4-6). Also some of the Jews thought that the Messiah would be a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:3-4; Isaiah 9:7) born at Bethlehem (John 7:42). So it's not surprising that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which was called the "town of David" (Luke 2:4, 11 NIV) because David lived here before he became the king. Jesus was also a descendant of David (Luke 4:23, 31; Romans 1:3).

But although Jesus was the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, His mission was to the whole world.

God provided a solution for mankind when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and later died in Jerusalem for the sin of mankind and rose again to give new life to all who put their faith and trust in Him. Jesus is the source of peace with God (Luke 2:14). When Jesus was born at Bethlehem, it was the beginning of His mission on earth to demonstrate God's love and give up His life to free us from the penalty and power of sin. He came for everyone. His coming was welcomed by lowly shepherds and the wealthy Magi. The shepherds were Jews and the Magi were Gentiles.

So from Bethlehem, God provided a solution to a global crisis.

Our crisis

What about us? You may think, I'm not destitute like Naomi and Ruth, or threatened like the nation of Israel. But what about ignoring the God who created our universe to whom we owe so much?

This Christmas, let's recognise our personal crisis and accept God's solution that was revealed at Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. Let's celebrate by praising Him as the shepherds did (Luke 2:20), and worshipping Jesus like the Magi (Matthew 2:11).

George Hawke
(www.georgesjournal.net)

Why a vision?

(Habakkuk 2:2-4)

The Lord's reply came in the vision

Habakkuk waited on the Lord until he received an answer to his painful questions (Habakkuk 2:1). The Lord's reply came in the vision introduced in Habakkuk 2:2-3; this provides a true perspective on history and gives the Divine promise about its outcome. This answer does not resolve all the painful questions, but it does teach God's people the way of covenant life here and now (2:3-4). God's ways culminate in real life for the faithful, but woe and death for arrogant sinners (2:4). The Lord's presence in His temple affirms His lordship over history and assures us that God's valid claim to the whole world will be universally acknowledged (Habakkuk 2:14, 20; Isaiah 45:21-25; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). The wicked take paths that lead to death. The righteous by faith take a path that leads to life. This distinction is a comfort to Habakkuk and to all God's children.

The just

In contrast to the proud, the just will be truly preserved through his faith in God. This is the heart of God's message through Habakkuk.

By faith

In this context, the Hebrew word denotes steadfast confidence in the Lord, a trust that perseveres. In the midst of a land filled with wickedness (1:2-4) and subject to the wrath of God, the Lord promises that a righteous remnant in Judah will trust in the God who remembers mercy in His wrath (3:2). The Epistle to the Hebrews recalls the words of Genesis 15:6 and applies them to Habakkuk's situation. By faith, Abraham waited patiently for the fulfilment of God's promises (Hebrews 6:15), and now Habakkuk and the remnant must also wait patiently (3:16).

Faith as the pattern of life

Faith is not a one-time act, but a way of life. The true believer, declared righteous by God, will persevere in faith as the pattern of his life

(Colossians 1:22-23; Hebrews 3:12-14). Only the perspective of faith, obedient trust in God, provides for meaningful existence in the world during the present period, between the “already” of initial fulfilment of God’s promises and the “not yet” of their final realisation.

The Cross of Jesus Christ

The cross of Jesus Christ and the final judgment are fulfilments of God’s revelation. Like Habakkuk, the Apostle Paul affirmed that true life was only possible in a relationship of total dependence on the Lord. Such dependence, based on the faithfulness of our God, transforms our existence in this world, filling our lives with joy in the certainty of God’s faithfulness to His promises (Habakkuk 2:3; 3:17-19).

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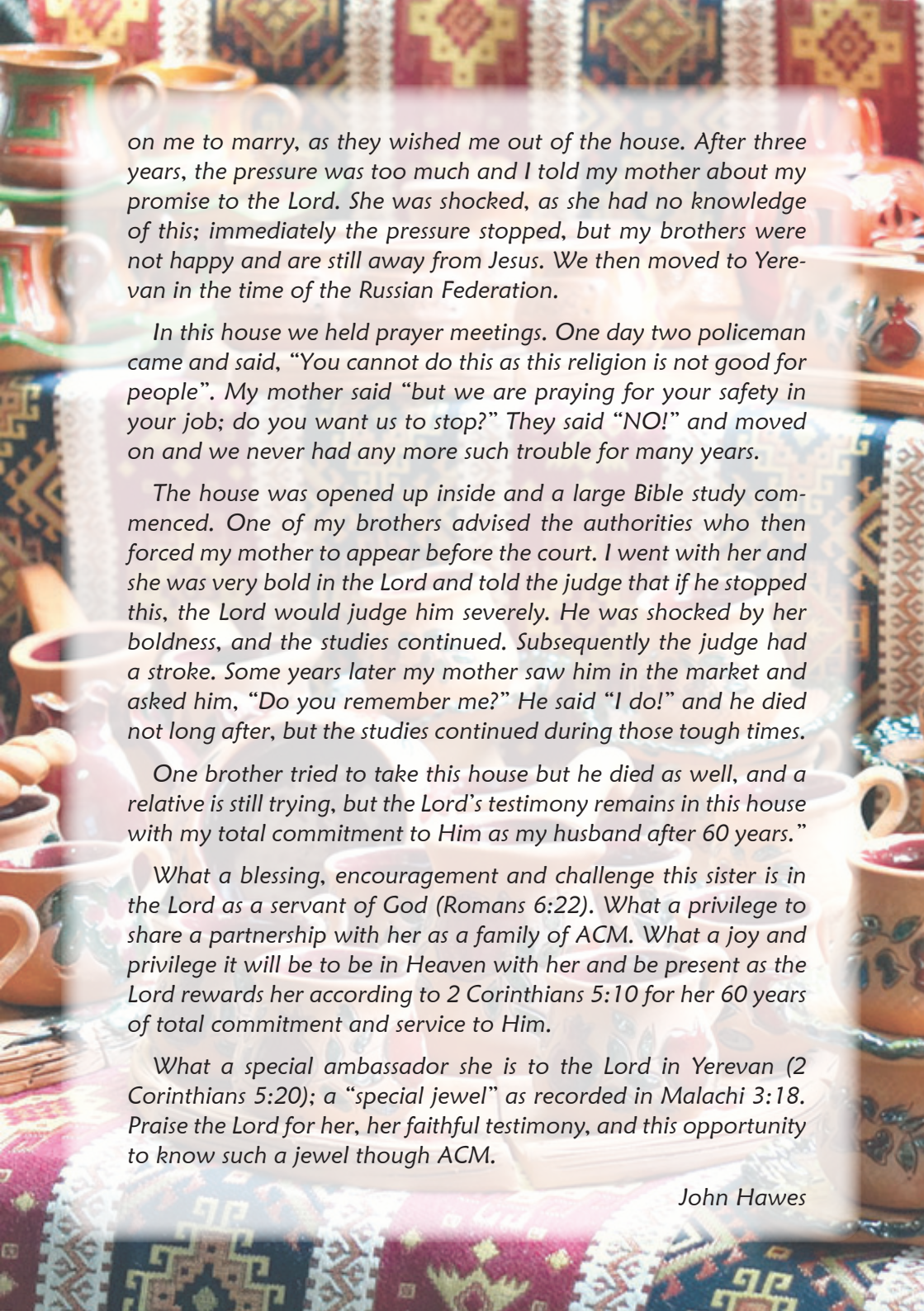
“In returning and rest shall ye be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” (Isaiah 30:15)

During the recent ACM visits to families in October 2017, we were blessed by a beaming sister who has lived in the same house for about 60 years, maintaining a joyful commitment to the Lord through that time. This sister has significant health issues but is a joy to the Lord, her church and those who visit and have fellowship with her and help her daily in her difficulties.

Her testimony is a significant one.

“I was born to godly parents and my father was a leader in a church in Lebanon. I committed to the Lord early, but my three brothers did not have the same love for Jesus. Becoming a teenager, I had a dream whereby the Lord told me that I was to be married to Him and no other, and I promised the Lord that I would do so all my life.

With the support of my mother, my brothers put enormous pressure



on me to marry, as they wished me out of the house. After three years, the pressure was too much and I told my mother about my promise to the Lord. She was shocked, as she had no knowledge of this; immediately the pressure stopped, but my brothers were not happy and are still away from Jesus. We then moved to Yerevan in the time of the Russian Federation.

In this house we held prayer meetings. One day two policeman came and said, "You cannot do this as this religion is not good for people". My mother said "but we are praying for your safety in your job; do you want us to stop?" They said "NO!" and moved on and we never had any more such trouble for many years.

The house was opened up inside and a large Bible study commenced. One of my brothers advised the authorities who then forced my mother to appear before the court. I went with her and she was very bold in the Lord and told the judge that if he stopped this, the Lord would judge him severely. He was shocked by her boldness, and the studies continued. Subsequently the judge had a stroke. Some years later my mother saw him in the market and asked him, "Do you remember me?" He said "I do!" and he died not long after, but the studies continued during those tough times.

One brother tried to take this house but he died as well, and a relative is still trying, but the Lord's testimony remains in this house with my total commitment to Him as my husband after 60 years."

What a blessing, encouragement and challenge this sister is in the Lord as a servant of God (Romans 6:22). What a privilege to share a partnership with her as a family of ACM. What a joy and privilege it will be to be in Heaven with her and be present as the Lord rewards her according to 2 Corinthians 5:10 for her 60 years of total commitment and service to Him.

What a special ambassador she is to the Lord in Yerevan (2 Corinthians 5:20); a "special jewel" as recorded in Malachi 3:18. Praise the Lord for her, her faithful testimony, and this opportunity to know such a jewel though ACM.

John Hawes