



Trumpet's Sound

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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: "Yerevan Cascade", Photo by ACM team 2018.



Prayer points for ACM ministry in Armenia

- We are thankful for the July mission team and its many blessings
- Pray for the many sick and some who have major operations
- Pray for our next edition of Trumpet's Sound as it celebrates its 50th anniversary
- Pray for the upgrading work on Cornerstone in Gyumri
- Pray for wisdom and strength for all our workers
- Give thanks for the Board and its dedication
- Pray for the safe arrival of our mission team in September

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Meeting God

"Prepare to meet your God." Amos 4:12

Amos had a very strong warning to the people of his day: "Prepare to meet your God" (Amos 4:12). This is a message for all mankind because one day we will all meet Him face to face.

We think of meeting God in judgment later in this article, but first let us think of other ways to meet Him. At present we can meet God and be welcomed by Him.

1. We come in repentance

The words "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" are very solemn.

I meet many people who tell me they have been baptised as children, they have been Christians for generations, they go to church on Sundays, and they follow all the rituals. They ask why they need to repent. What is this word repentance? They say they have never heard this word.

When I come to realise that the Lord looks at my obedience to His Word, then I know I have broken every command He put in the Bible. I know I need to repent. The Bible is clear: we have all sinned and we all need to repent.

When we repent we find that our God is a gracious God. He has opened a door for our salvation. We are saved by grace and not by our works or deeds. We are saved through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and through the precious blood He shed for us.

2. We come for healing

Matthew (14:14) tells us of an occasion when the Lord went ashore, saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick. Still today, the Lord hasn't changed, and if we need physical and spiritual healing, we may go to Him and cry out "Lord, help me". I

know how many times in my life I had to cry out “Lord, help me” and I have seen His miraculous healing which amazed my doctors. From above, He calls us to meet Him because we are His creation in need of His touch. He is indeed able to help us beyond what we think possible.

3. We come for strength

When things are down, when we are frail, when we are about to give up, when things are dark, where do we go? Are we ready to go to Him, and throw ourselves at His feet? When we feel we have reached the end of our strength and cannot carry our load any longer and we call out for help, we find that time after time Jesus comes to help. We must be able to say as David did in Psalm 121:2: “My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

The amazing thing is that He not only strengthens us, but He provides us with all we need. Solomon wrote: “He brought me into the banqueting house and His banner over me was love”. Come to Him and let Him lead you and cover you with His love.

Prepare to meet your God

This message is important and vital because we will all stand before God's judgment throne. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the LORD, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" So then, all of us will give an account of ourselves to God (Romans 14:10-12). We thought earlier of the need to prepare to meet God: one day we will all meet Him face to face.

We prepare to meet our God because there is coming a day of judgment, a day no one will be able to escape. Adam tried to hide. However, David realised that no matter how hard he tried he could not escape.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. Psalm 139:7-10

The word prepare indicates action. We have to do something to be ready to meet Him. We must turn to Him in repentance and believe.

Let us be encouraged to know that all God's children will gather in His presence to worship the one they love. He is the one who has blessed us with so much, the one who gave His only begotten Son for the salvation of us sinners.

Are you ready for the day of judgment? Are you prepared to meet your God?

HK

Do not judge

Matthew 7:1-6

We have all heard and used these words, "Do not judge!" or "It is not good to judge!" People use them to mean different things or with different intentions or understanding. What does the Bible mean when Jesus said, "Do not judge!"

"Not to judge others" could be the most widely quoted command of Jesus' sayings. Let us look at some ways our society uses it:

- To "not judge" means that you should not conclude that something or someone is wrong
- Some people use this verse to silence their critics, interpreting Jesus' meaning as "You don't have the right to tell me I'm wrong"
- Some interpret "Do not judge" as a condemnation of all negative assessments
- Others think "Do not judge" means we cannot evaluate something as wrong.
- "Do not judge," means that someone should never evaluate or criticise anyone for anything

"Do not judge" has been so widely used that, even in Christian circles, people use it to mean no Christian has the right to pass judgment on anyone's action. In fact, in some circles, it is almost forbidden to

judge others. However, this passage does not mean that at all. The Bible is very clear that a child of God must have the discernment and the ability to judge biblically between what is right and what is wrong!

Even in this passage (verse 6) Jesus talks about us having the ability to judge. We all know that Jesus is not talking about four legged animals, but rather people who are not deserving of our time and effort in teaching, explaining, or telling them what is truth, moral and holy, once they have shown they reject or scorn it and do not want to hear it. How would we know such a person if we are not to judge, or evaluate him?

In the same chapter (verses 15-16), Jesus warns us to be careful of false prophets. Again, how would we know the false if we are not able to discern and know right from wrong, or what is truth and what is a lie? We know them by their fruit. Therefore, we must be able to judge their actions, their words and teaching to know them (Someone has said, "I am not a judge, but a fruit inspector, and I can tell if a fruit is bad!")

The Bible teaches us to make judgments, but righteous judgments with careful discernment (John 7:24b; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13). Because it is biblical to judge, we can and must judge. The Bible's command that we not judge others does not mean there should be no mechanism for dealing with sin. The Bible has a whole book entitled Judges. These judges were raised up by God Himself (Judges 2:18). In the wilderness, Moses judged the people (Exodus 18:13). The modern judicial system, including its judges, is a necessary part of society. The Bible teaches us to be discerning and to judge righteously.

To be able to discern and judge righteously, we must know the whole counsel of God to be able to know right from wrong (Acts 20:27). Then we will know what, according to the Word of God, is sin and what is not (1 Thess. 5:21). In saying, "Do not judge," Jesus was not saying, "Anything goes" or "No one has the right to say that something is wrong." When the Bible says not to judge, it means not to judge outside of the Biblical guidelines and principles. If so, what is judging outside of biblical guidelines and principles?

Superficial judgment is wrong. Passing judgment on someone based solely on appearances is sinful (John 7:24). It is foolish to jump to conclusions before investigating facts (Proverbs 18:13). Simon the Pharisee passed judgment on a woman based on her reputation, but he could not see that the woman had been forgiven. He received Jesus' rebuke for unrighteous judgment (Luke 7:36-50).

Hypocritical judgment is wrong. Jesus' command not to judge others in Matthew 7:1 is preceded by comparisons with hypocrites (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16) and followed by a warning against hypocrisy (Matthew 7:3-5). When we point out the sin of others while we ourselves commit the same sin, we condemn ourselves (Romans 2:1). Jesus is saying we are not to judge or look down on others, and treat them as sinners if we are doing the same thing. To do so is hypocrisy.

Unforgiving judgment is wrong. We are "always to be gentle toward everyone" (Titus 3:2; Galatians 6:1). It is the merciful who are shown mercy (Matthew 5:7). Jesus warned, "In the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matthew 7:2). In other words, we will not be shown mercy and forgiveness if we are not merciful and forgiving. We must be gentle and ready to forgive. This does not mean we ignore sin or wrongdoing or not talk about wrongdoing for the sake of peace and unity. That would defeat righteousness and God's plan for His church to be pure, holy, and blameless (Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Timothy 4:2-3).

Self-righteous judgment is wrong. We are called to humility; "God opposes the proud" (James 4:6). The Pharisee in Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector was confident in his own righteousness and from that proud position judged the tax collector. However, God sees the heart and did not justify the self-righteous Pharisee who thought he was better than other people. He was still in his sins and not forgiven (Luke 18:9-14).

Someone reading this may be very religious like this Pharisee whose appearance was good, attends church regularly and is very well behaved, but is proud, trusting in his self-righteousness, and judging oth-

ers who do not reach his standard. Perhaps the person who relies on his self-righteousness, religious upbringing and behaviour, is like the Pharisee who is not even saved. Yet he judges the person who is saved. God wants you to be humble and not rely on your religion or self-righteousness but receive Christ as your Saviour! Do not judge like the hypocrites but judge righteously! God, who searches and knows the heart, knows the humble, and forgives those who come to Him in humility.

Raffi Chaparian

Moses (2)

Read Exodus 3

4. God is Purposeful

God mostly does His amazing things through His people who are prepared to do what He says. Consider our salvation. Most of us came to be members of God's family because someone was obedient to God's instructions to them. If you ask a person who has decided to trust Jesus is, "Who will have been praying for you?" they can usually tell you because there is always someone. And then there will be the person or people who explained the gospel to you. And so on, until God's Spirit completed His work through His people and you became a new creation in Jesus Christ – a member of God's forever family.

Moses' reaction

What Moses said is predictable. But God came right back at him, with the answer to everything: "I will be with you" (v12). Is that not enough? Do we believe that? David Livingstone, pioneer missionary in Africa, was asked how he survived all the toil, sickness, and hardship of his lonely missionary life in Africa, and he replied "What sustained me was the promise "Look, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). God's unanswerable promise comes to Moses and to us: "I will be with you – always, in every circumstance, pain or pleasure. I will be with you." God reassured Moses by saying

“You will know I am with you when you have brought the people out of Egypt and are worshipping me on this mountain” (v12).

The great revelation

*In verse 13, we come to the **great revelation**. Moses asks what appears at first to be just a practical question. “If I do this, who will I tell the people You are?” See, Moses does not yet know God in a personal way, but God is revealing Himself bit by bit until later in his life Moses speaks with Him “face to face, as a man speaks with his friend” (Deuteronomy 34:10).*

So God tells Moses “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’... This is my name forever”.

This is profound. In the Bible, God has many titles but the name revealed here is different. It is not a title. It tells His people who He really is: “I Am”, or “I am what I am”. It implies, “I am the eternally existing One: I was, I am, and I will be eternally”. He is the basis of all life and everything that exists. What should that mean to us?

This is something Jesus came to tell us. In Jesus, this God came to us in a form we could see and understand – a human form. Jesus came to show us what “I Am” means in our lives. He told us: “I am the bread of life”, “I am the light of the world”, “I am the good shepherd”, “I am the resurrection and the life”. In other words, Jesus shows us that our God is everything that we ever need for this life and the next. But the most important statement is this: “Before Abraham was, I Am” (John 8:58). Nothing could be clearer. Moses was called by “I Am” to save His ancient people, but Jesus was “I Am” come in person to rescue us for all eternity.

The Exodus hope was in the God who always was, always cared, always acted. Our hope is in that same God who revealed Himself to us in Jesus, and who gives us the promise of eternal life and salvation from our bondage to sin, through Jesus. He calls you to come to Him, admit who He is, admit who you are before Him, and accept His new life in exchange for your old life – your old life that, in the end, like Moses’ life in the desert, is going nowhere.

Paul Whiting

Pleading with God

Read Genesis 18:16-33

The visit to the tent in Mamre was over; having enjoyed his hospitality, Abraham's visitors rose to continue their journey. Abraham, ever the good host, went with them to see them on their way. However, there was still something the Lord wanted to discuss with Abraham.

The Lord asked a rhetorical question. Should He hide from Abraham what He was about to do? There were two reasons for the Lord's question. First, Abraham would become a great and mighty nation with all nations being blessed in him. God was going to tell Abraham what was soon to happen to a nation that refused to bow before Him.

Second, God had known him. This is a phrase with a special meaning. Amos 3:2 has been translated in two ways. One is "You only have I known of all the families of the earth". The other is "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth". In other words, when God said He knew Abraham He meant that had a special relationship with him. More specifically, He knew that Abraham would teach and command his household to keep the way of the Lord. Then his descendants would act righteously and with justice so that what God had spoken to Abraham would come to pass.

The Lord was about to reveal to Abraham His intentions for Sodom. The outcry against the city was so great and its sin so serious that He intended to fully investigate what was happening and whether they were actually as bad as the outcry against them suggested. God is a God who investigates fully before passing judgment. He would not condemn the cities of the plain if there was good reason not to pass judgment. Our God does not act on impulse.

The two angels who were with the Lord turned to go to Sodom to investigate the sin of the city and Abraham was left standing with Him. It is a measure of the relationship between Abraham and the Lord that Abraham could remain standing before Him.

One can well imagine Abraham's thoughts as he stood before the Lord. If Sodom was about to be destroyed, what would happen to his nephew? It seems that Abraham was well aware of the sin of the city, but he was concerned about what would happen to any righteous people within the city. Specifically, what would happen to his nephew Lot and his family?

Abraham's question was "Will you consume the righteous with the wicked?" Perhaps Abraham could not imagine that the city was so bad that everyone deserved to be destroyed. Possibly there would be 50 people in the city. Would the Lord destroy 50 righteous people along with the wicked men of Sodom? Surely God would not destroy righteous people along with the wicked! That was unthinkable. Hence Abraham's question: "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

The Lord's reply was unequivocal. If He found 50 righteous within the city, He would spare the whole place for their sake.

One wonders if Abraham realised that he had set the figure too high at 50. He progressively lowered his number of righteous people necessary for God to spare the city from destruction. Throughout the exercise, however, Abraham was conscious of his own insignificance and that he had no right to demand anything from the Almighty. He spoke of himself as dust and ashes. So the number of righteous needed to spare the city was reduced from 50 to 44 to 40 to 30 and to 20. In going from 40 to 30 Abraham asked that the Lord be not angry with him. He repeated this plea when changing from 20 to 10 but added at this point that this would be his last request.

Abraham had lowered the number of righteous he was pleading for to 10 and stopped. We may wonder why. Is it possible that Abraham thought that there had to be at least 10 righteous people in Sodom? We do not know all the details about Lot's family but we do that Lot had a wife and two daughters. We also know that the angels asked Lot about any other family he had in Sodom – sons-in-law, sons, and daughters. He was to get them out of Sodom. We are told that when Lot spoke to his sons-in-law, they thought he was joking. Abraham could have easily imagined that there would be at least 10 righteous in the city.

What are the lessons for us to learn from this story?

- *As we read about Abraham going from 50 to 10, we wonder if he was unsure about what he should be asking for. This is not surprising. Often we do not know what exactly to pray for. This is the message of Romans 8:26. When we do not know what to pray for as we ought to pray, the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us.*
- *God does not rebuke us for asking too much! The comments Abraham made as he progressively lowered the number of righteous from 50 to 10 show that he wondered if he were overstepping the mark of what was allowed. Was he asking God for too much?*
- *Abraham maintained a reverent attitude in making his requests to God. At no stage did he demand anything as he pleaded with the Lord to act mercifully. This was the attitude of the tax collector who went to the temple to pray: he asked that God be merciful to him, a sinner.*
- *Judgment is certain and all in rebellion against a holy God will suffer His righteous wrath. Among those who perished was Lot's wife. One can only assume that her heart was still in Sodom; there had been no true repentance. There is eternal loss for all who do not repent; that is the only prospect for any who do not repent from their sin.*

Was Abraham's prayer answered? Yes, it was. Abraham's initial concern was about the righteous perishing with the wicked; his desire was that the righteous be spared from destruction. He did not know how his prayer would be answered, but it was. This often happens with us. We have a particular concern which we bring to the Lord. We may even ask that He act in a particular manner. But in our finite minds we cannot see the whole picture. We do not know why God is allowing certain thing to happen to us. But He has everything under His authority and looking back we see that God has answered our prayers far beyond what we could have imagined.

Don Stormer

How had God gifted you?

1 Corinthians 12 (part 1)

One of the common pleasures of life is the feeling of satisfaction we get when we have done something well and have enjoyed doing it. It doesn't really matter what that thing was. It could have been planting a row of cabbages, preparing a nice meal, writing an essay, fixing a car or preparing a balance sheet. That sense of satisfaction in having done something well is a very special kind of pleasure. This feeling of pleasure and satisfaction says something about us. It says that we were made in the image of God. It is a tiny reflection of the feeling God had when He created the earth. He looked at it and saw that it was good. God had the pleasure of doing something significant and doing it well. Because we are made in the image of God, we are made with the capacity for that kind of pleasure too.

There is a body of teaching in the Bible that is generally called spiritual gifts. You can read about these in Ephesians 4, Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. The basis of all this teaching is simply this: God has put much more into you than you think. In churches we often see people missing out on that wonderful sense of satisfaction in doing something really worthwhile. They go about thinking they are nobodies who can do nothing. But God says that every Christian is a somebody whom He has significantly gifted in some way.

That is why Paul opens this explanation about spiritual gifts with this amazing statement "About spiritual gifts, I do not want you to be ignorant" (1 Corinthians 12:1). Before we begin thinking about the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, I want to warn you about a curious process that often occurs among people. It is called reaction formation and happens like this: imagine that a group of people takes a particular truth and distorts it in some extreme way. Say, for instance, someone began to talk about nothing but the Holy Spirit, and made all kinds of extreme and unbiblical claims about what the Holy Spirit could do in your life. What does that extreme teaching do to other Christians?

It makes them form a reaction. Often in their reaction against that teaching they go to another extreme, try to ignore the Holy Spirit, and possibly feel quite uncomfortable if the Holy Spirit is even mentioned. Their view of the Holy Spirit becomes based on their reaction to someone else's extreme abuse of that teaching, not on what the Bible actually teaches. We have to be careful that our understanding of truth is based on the Bible.

I fear that we are often in this situation today in our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Some abuse the Holy Spirit by making wild overstated and unscriptural claims about Him, while others are in danger of ignoring the Holy Spirit altogether. The cure to this problem is to go back carefully to the text of the Bible and try to understand what it actually says to us today. The first verse of our reading says "About spiritual gifts, I do not want you to be ignorant". I want you to know how the Holy Spirit gives each of you a special ability for service so you and others can benefit.

The focus and intention of the Holy Spirit is not to glorify Himself, or Christians, or the church. The focus and intention of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus (John 16:14). The gifts that God gives every Christian are not to make us clever or superior; they are to proclaim that Jesus is Lord. He is the one to be glorified, not us. "Jesus is Lord" is a statement of worship. Service flows out of worship. That is the total focus. It is in that light that we continue to read how God has blessed each one of us with some Spirit-given ability for service.

*Rex Dearlove
(to be continued)*



I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps (Psalm 40:1-2).

Suffering

During the course of our lives, we are all likely to experience some form of persecution or hardship. If this has not yet been your lot, then perhaps it soon will be.

Of course, we know that we can expect persecution as soldiers of the cross. Jesus said to His disciples, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." If we are bold witnesses for Christ, then we can expect to suffer for His sake. And we can even rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. When Jesus preached to the multitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, He said: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

So, as followers of Christ, we are prepared for persecution, but what about physical hardship? What if we are plagued by an illness from which we do not seem to recover? What if we sustain an injury which permanently disables us?

Not far from the city centre of Yerevan, Armenia, lives a woman named Zoya who can answer these questions. And not only answer them, but answer them with a smile!

Three years ago, Zoya fell and broke her hip. Ever since then, she has been unable to walk and has been confined to her room, and more often than not, to her bed.

In June 2019, it was my privilege to visit Armenia and to meet her. Even in the few minutes I spent with her in her room, I could sense an optimism and a joy in her demeanour which transcended the condition in which she found herself.

It was obvious to me that Zoya knew the Lord Jesus Christ as her personal Saviour and that she was indwelt by His Holy Spirit. The cheerfulness she exhibited was simply an overflow of the joy of the Lord in her heart. Of course, joy is one of the attributes of the Spirit filled life that Paul describes in Galatians 5 but it was wonderful to see someone who allows the Holy Spirit such free course in her life.



Before the injury which made her an invalid, Zoya loved to drive. Some 30 years ago, she was one of very few women who held a driver's licence and drove on the frenetic streets of Yerevan. She recalled one particu-



lar occasion when she had gone for a drive in the country with a friend. Her friend spotted some particularly pretty flowers on the roadside and asked her to pull over so they could pick a bouquet. Whilst they clambered down to collect the flowers, Zoya lost her footing and slipped, breaking her ankle. Even with this injury, she struggled back to her car, climbed into the driver's seat and drove over 100km to the hospital.

For Zoya, the experience of navigating the streets of Yerevan at the wheel of her car is well and truly in the past. Her day to day realities can all be found within the confines of her room. But she knows the One who gives her a joy and a fulfilment that her circumstances cannot take away. She knows firsthand the truth that the psalmist declared, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand, there are pleasures for evermore."

Stephen Hollow

