



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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In this issue...

Sweet smelling aroma of Christ 3

Pastor Harry Kiujian

Elderly people and God 4

Vartan Sarkissian

Abraham at ninety-nine 5

Don Stormer

People of the Word? 9

Rex Dearlove

A testimony 11

Vicken Khachadourian

Failure isn't final (3) 12

George Hawke

From the ministry field 15

Ashot Gyurjyan

Cover photo: "Armenian organic grapes",
Photo by ACM team 2018.

Prayer points for ACM ministry in Armenia

- Praise the Lord for all His goodness and mercy.
- Give thanks to the Lord for supplying the much needed funds to ship Container #21.
- Give thanks for brother Don's visit to Eastern Europe and his safe return home.
- Pray that the Word which was preached will change lives.
- Pray for our needy families.
- Pray that a number of medical needs will be met.
- Pray for mission team which will visit Armenia in June.
- Pray for wisdom and safety for our co-workers.

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who donate out of the generosity of their hearts.*

Sweet smelling aroma of Christ

“For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing” (2 Cor. 2:15).

My mind has been searching to know what the sweet aroma of Christ is, and how believers may become that aroma.

There are many ways to describe Christ's glory and beauty but one of the most outstanding in the scripture is that of a sweet smelling aroma. “Christ has loved us and has given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Ephesians 5:2).

We read a lot in the Old Testament about the aroma of the sacrifices which was pleasing to the Lord. Our Lord Jesus became the sacrifice and was the aroma for God. Since God loves the aroma of the sacrifice of Christ, He also loves having it spread through the world. “We are the aroma of Christ to God.”

Whenever Christ crucified is preached, that message is an aroma pleasing to God. Because they proclaim the message to the whole world, Christians may indeed be “the aroma of Christ to God” among the nations. Today, the aroma of Christ continues to spread throughout the world. Whenever the gospel is preached many come to the Lord as a sweet smelling aroma of His grace.

Yes the fragrance of Christ is the most desirable aroma. He gave His life on the cross and was sacrificed for the sins of the world. God's wrath was satisfied through the sacrifice of Christ. He smells the same aroma through all who come to be saved by Him.

What are we doing today? What kind of aroma is diffused through us? Is Christ alive in our lives? Do people see and smell His aroma in us.

May our loving Lord Jesus brighten our lives. May his words, deeds, mind and aroma live in us so that others may see and glorify our heavenly Father in heaven.

H K

Elderly people and God

Dear elderly brothers and sisters, let me ask you what you long for this year? Do you expect the Lord's second coming or that you will be going to Him? From eternity past, even before everything was made, God made provision for a ministry for you to fulfil. The Bible teaches this in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them".

When God created us He did not forget to plan the last years of our lives. He certainly wants to see us active in His kingdom. The psalmist sang: "They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green" (Psalm 92:14).

It is remarkable that God did not neglect elderly men in the narrative of His Son's first advent. He used four elderly people: Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna the prophetess.

Old age often means physical weakness, a declining memory, limited abilities, health problems... Yes it's true that Jesus chose 12 young followers, but He did not reject Peter's mother-in-law's service; she was certainly older than Peter and He. Even today He does not reject anybody's service which is done in His name, regardless of age and ability.

God gave John the vision of Revelation in his old age, even though many of us would think it would have been better to give such a vision to a younger person. We might think that remembering the details of such visions requires a younger mind and memory than the mind and memory of someone nearly 100 years old. Perhaps God chose John because the other apostles were already martyred. Even so, this does not alter the fact that God uses older people in a special way. He has a plan for us even in the last years of our earthly lives. The question is, do we fulfil His plan or do we just dream of a happy, painless, carefree life?

Often the effectiveness of a church is measured by the percentage of young people in it. If the majority are elderly, some say it's a weak and declining church, but the fact is, the majority of people around the globe who dedicate their income to God's work and prayer are elderly pensioners.

Let's also remember that the spirit does not age. The human body and everything else ages, but we know that even though our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we will yet receive a home from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Corinthians 5:1).

We should never be afraid of old age. Rather, we should fear to be "unemployed" in God's work. We should be afraid of laziness, gossip, pride, self-centeredness, but not of such things as physical limitations or illness.

Perhaps you say to the Lord as the psalmist did: "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent" (Psalm 71: 9). But the Lord answers "Even to your old age I am he, and to grey hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (Isaiah 46:4).

Old age is not the stage of passiveness but, on the contrary, it is a period of specific activity. Not everyone reaches old age. According to God's Word, long days are a blessing from the Lord. Let not only the young men of the Church, but the elderly too, serve the Lord to the extent of their power and spiritual gifts.

Vartan Sarkissian

Abraham at ninety-nine

Read Genesis 17

The Scriptures pass over a period of 13 years before there is another record about God speaking to Abraham. When He speaks He has great promises for Abraham and his descendants.

We may wonder how much we should read into a 13 year silence. We know that Abraham and Sarah had taken the solution of their childlessness into their own hands and in so doing had moved away from God's will for them. Abraham and Sarah had tried to accomplish a family for themselves in their own way; they had not sought the Lord's will before Abraham took Hagar as a wife. It is possibly relevant to note that God waited until it was clear to everyone that Abraham and Sarah could not solve their problem by their own efforts; only then did He take action. By that time they were well beyond the age when they could expect to begin a family of their own.

A lesson in patient waiting is one we all need. We pray for something and want the answer immediately. Or we believe God has promised us something and we want it at once. We like to get things we want done, and to be active in doing them. But the problem is that sometimes God expects us to wait before He gives us what we have asked for. Perhaps He intends that we learn more patience. Or perhaps He is teaching us to trust Him more and rely on ourselves much less. Other aspects of our character may indeed need to be developed before He gives us what we have asked.

The Lord appeared to Abraham when he was 99 years old with a message in four parts:

- *I am God Almighty.* God was revealing Himself to Abraham in a new way. When he met Melchizedek, Abraham learned that God is God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth. Now he learns that God is El Shaddai, the Almighty all-powerful God.

A greater revelation of God is important for us all. We must not be satisfied with the little we already know. But even more, we need to know God in a close relationship. Before He went to the cross the Lord prayed for those who would receive eternal life that they would know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent. It is our responsibility and, above all, our joy to know God better.

- *Walk before me, and be blameless.* The implication is that Abraham was not acting blamelessly in taking Hagar as a wife. He

and Sarah were not to attempt their own solution to life's problems and create havoc in their lives as well as in the lives of others. The second verb has been translated as "and you will be blameless". This is a consequence of obeying the command to walk before God – to live consciously in the presence of the Lord.

The question is how we can be blameless. Some translations have "walk before me and be perfect". This is an impossible task! God was not expecting that Abraham would be sinless. But he was expecting Abraham to depend on Him and not try to solve life's problems in his own way.

- *I will make my covenant between me and you. In spite of his failure, God still cared for Abraham and confirmed the covenant He had already made with him. And it was God who made the covenant.*

As we think of ourselves, we realise the unlimited blessings that come to us through our Lord Jesus and the covenant He established in His own death at Calvary. The basis of the covenant has been established in His death; we enter the blessing of it by faith.

- *I will multiply you exceedingly. The promise originally made in Ur of the Chaldees still stood; God will always keep His promise.*

God's promises are unfailing. At that time Abraham led what was a very small family. In addition to himself there was Sarah and Ishmael. To most people the idea of being multiplied exceedingly would have been in the realm of the imagination. No matter how impossible a situation may appear to us, it is our responsibility to believe that when God makes a promise, He has the ability to do as He has said and He will be faithful to His word.

When Abraham heard the voice of the Lord, he did the only thing he could do in the presence of the Almighty; he fell on his face. God continued His message to Abraham. He had already made a covenant with Abraham; now the Lord reaffirmed it by saying that His covenant was with Abraham and that he would be the father of a mul-

titute of nations, a truth that meant God was changing Abraham's name from Abram to Abraham. Exalted father was changed to father of many nations. One cannot help wondering how this change was accepted by the people living in the area. Did they treat it as something ridiculous? What would they think of a man with only one son – Ishmael – who was renamed father of many nations when he was nearly 100 years old?

God reiterated the promises that He had already made to Abraham over 13 years earlier and gave Abraham what is called the sign of the covenant. God had made an unconditional covenant with Abraham and now Abraham was being asked to do something.

The instruction that God gave Abraham was that every male in his household was to be circumcised. Those already in his household were to be circumcised, anyone he purchased to serve him had to be circumcised and, from that time on, any male child was to be circumcised when he was eight days old.

We may ask what the relationship is between this instruction and the covenant made earlier. This was not a new covenant. God was still the one who promised to give the land to Abraham. This was still unconditional. But Abraham was to show that he accepted the sovereignty of God and would live under His direction. He was not to live how he liked but he was to show that he belonged to the one true God.

As we think about this, we realise that it is the same with us. The work of salvation is entirely the work of God. There is nothing we did or could do. And it is God who will preserve us until we are in the presence of the Lord Jesus. But that does not mean that we can live as we like. This was the message of the Lord Jesus to His disciples when they were with Him in the upper room: Abide in Me.

Don Stormer



People of the Word?

A startling fact was revealed in an informal survey of Christians some time ago. Several hundred believers were asked how many minutes a week they spent reading the Bible for their own personal benefit. The average time turned out to be nine minutes a week. "I have treasured the words... more than my daily bread" (Job 23:12). Job described God's words as being more valuable than his daily bread but it seems that a great many of us are getting along without them. I wonder why that is.

It made me think about our claim to be "people of the Word". It also made me think about an institution in the Middle East that trains Islamic religious leaders. Before entry to the college, an applicant must have already memorised the entire Koran word perfect. The Koran is roughly the length of the New Testament.

We assert that our churches and our lives are built on the teaching of the Bible. I find it thrilling to meet young adults passionately engaging with God's Word in a way that is not merely educational but life-changing, and I do frequently meet such people. However, I am puzzled why it seems harder to find mature adults who, like Job, feel they could not survive without a rich involvement in God's Word. While I have the highest regard for the role of public preaching, I am convinced that anyone whose sole biblical input comes from the Sunday morning sermon is in trouble. It is essential, but far from enough. In Psalm 19 David described God's Word as his source of joy, guidance and sustenance. He felt a profound hunger for it. My question is "Why do I sometimes feel more driven to God's Word by a sense of Christian duty than drawn to it by my hunger to know Him better?" Jesus said that our spiritual life can only be sustained by "every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

As people who are trying to survive in a broken world and who can only be sustained by God, surely we must feel the pain of hunger for God and His Word. If we are in fact starving, why don't we feel

it? Are we so malnourished that we are beyond feeling the pangs of hunger? Perhaps we lose that hunger when we lose sight of our true need and are deceived by the illusion that we are really doing quite well. If we view the Bible as essentially good teaching about how we should behave and we feel that our behaviour is quite acceptable by local standards, then our sense of need for God's Word will feel much less pressing. We think we know it all.

The writer of Hebrews described God's Word as a sword that pierces deeply into the soul and "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 2:12). I believe this means that God's Word addresses not only what we do but why we do it. It requires that we think honestly and deeply not just about what we do, but who we really are inside. That can be frightening even for the most mature Christian. In our retreat from the pain of this healing encounter with truth we can try to tame God's Word. We can reduce it to nothing more than a fascinating doctrinal treatise or a source book for sermons and devotional thoughts. It is only the people ruthlessly seeking truth about themselves and about God who will honestly expose themselves to this sword that cuts deeply in order that it may heal deeply.

I am sure that as you become older as a Christian your need for this transforming process increases rather than decreases. As God's Word begins to cut down through those illusions of the soul that we try to live by, then we begin to discover how wonderful God really is and sense the true mystery of His love. And that takes more than nine minutes a week!

Rex Dearlove

Timeless quote

"I charge every reader of this message to ask himself frequently what the Bible is to him. Is it a Bible in which you have found nothing more than good moral precepts and sound advice? Or is it a Bible in which you have found Christ? Is it a Bible in which Christ is all? If not, I tell you plainly, you have hitherto used your Bible to very little purpose. You are like a man who studies the solar system, and leaves out in his studies the sun, which is the centre of all. It is no wonder if you find your Bible a dull book!"

J. C. Ryle

A testimony

In the spring of 1995, the Dean of the faculty of Biology in the Yerevan State Medical University called me to his office for almost an hour's talk at the end of his duty hours. He was about 60 by then. It wasn't easy for me to stand and confront a research scientist who was raised in the atheism of the Soviet Union; he had denied the existence of God throughout his life. He didn't teach me biology, but he had heard that in one of the biology classes there was a believer in God. He was strict and authoritarian but at the same time he had a fragile personality and was curious to listen for a while. I still remember how he struggled with his beliefs, supposedly supported by scientific findings, that humans are derived from apes – something based on Darwin's evolutionism. During his probing questions, I realised he was in a grey zone searching for something, but he never dared to call it the truth. It seemed he was too shy to disclose his need in front of others. I still remember his facial expressions telling me something about an inner confusion. He opened a book and showed me how apes were developed to humans through an act of evolution and then I heard him saying: "Now, I'm listening to you, boy. Prove me that there is God". I cannot now honestly remember all that I told him about God and His creation but I cannot forget the way he asked me his interesting questions which popped up every time I told him something about the truth for which he was so thirsty. At some certain times, I felt I was talking to a child with a lot of unanswered questions. It was very difficult to present the truth of an incarnate Son because this gentleman did not believe that God existed in the first place. But grace always wins. I could tell the full truth of a Creator God to a fallen human like him: the love of God in Christ, the truth about the Cross, and the hope Christ could give him through His resurrection. I didn't even realise that I was exercising the apologetics of my faith in Christ against his unbelief. At the end, he looked at me with an honest smile, and said: "Boy, I could not succeed in persuading you, and you didn't succeed in persuading me". I remember his last words to me "Live long, boy".

As I approached his office door, I felt in my heart that the message had been delivered to him on that sunny, pleasant day. The message was left on his conscience, right in the centre of his moral sense. I have prayed for him since I saw him that afternoon. Today, as I was searching for him on the internet, I learned that he passed to eternity in 2014 aged 77. This means that God granted him another 17 years after I witnessed to him for Christ. I hope he was wise and accepted the Lord Jesus as his personal Saviour and Lord before closing his eyes on earth. His name was Professor Sos Sisagian; a memorial plaque hangs on the building where he lived in one of the streets of Yerevan.

Vicken Khachadourian

Failure isn't final

Part 3

Peter had a Galilean accent that was conspicuous in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:73). And he was recognized by a relative of Malchus who had seen Peter cut off Malchus' ear (John 18:26). But he still denied knowing Jesus.

And this happened after Peter promised never to disown Jesus. After the last supper Jesus told His disciples that they would all fall away. He said:

"It is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Peter declared, *"Even if all fall away, I will not."*

"Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

But Peter insisted emphatically, *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."* And all the others said the same. Mark 14:27-31

And Peter had said earlier, *"I will lay down my life for you [Jesus]"* (John 13:37). But instead of being bold before the Jewish leaders in the

Sanhedrin (as Jesus was), he couldn't even stand up for Jesus before a servant girl!

Peter wasn't the only disciple who failed at this time. After Jesus was arrested, they all deserted Him and fled (Mark 14:27, 50). John was the only other disciple at the trial and crucifixion (John 18:15-16; 19:26-27). They were the only disciples who followed Jesus to the courtyard of the house of the high priest. And Peter wasn't a coward; he had tried to cut off the head of Malchus! Peter's denial was when his faith faltered, but it didn't completely fail – because Jesus had prayed that his “faith may not fail” (Luke 22:32). But his faith was momentarily overshadowed by his tiredness (he had been up all night) and his doubts and fears (Jesus' case looked hopeless). He was afraid and exhausted. He found it difficult to be the odd man out. And he was unprepared to be questioned by a servant girl.

This incident illustrates human weakness and the danger of self-confidence. Even mature believers are prone to failure. Especially when they face unexpected trials and temptations. And self-confidence can lead to humiliation.

So Peter failed when he denied knowing Jesus. He did what he said he would never do. He cracked under pressure, and in a crisis he lost his courage. They were moments of disloyalty.

Peter discriminated against Gentiles

Peter was a Jew, and he was the first to bring salvation to the Gentiles when he visited Cornelius. However, later he was influenced by legalistic Jewish Christians to discriminate against Gentiles. Paul wrote

When Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, ‘You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it,

then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?' Gal. 2:11-14

Paul's argument continues to the end of Galatians 2. Paul emphasised that salvation was through faith in Christ and not through keeping some Jewish customs. As all believers are unified in Jesus Christ, cultural or national differences shouldn't affect their fellowship. Peter must have responded well to Paul's rebuke because he referred to "our dear brother Paul" (2 Peter 3:15) in one of his letters.

Peter contributed to racial divisions within the church. He had been mixing freely with Gentiles, but when some Jews arrived from Jerusalem who insisted that circumcision was required for believers in Christ, Peter began avoiding the uncircumcised Gentile believers. Paul called Peter a hypocrite for following the Judaisers. But because of Paul's bold confrontation, the behaviour was corrected and Peter went on to serve God in unity amongst all races and nations.

This incident shows us that even mature Christians can lapse into sinful behaviour. But Peter failed when he discriminated against Gentiles.

Peter's failures

Peter was a follower of Jesus and he failed big-time. He was corrected by God, Jesus, and Paul! We have looked at seven instances where Peter failed. It was a habit of his. He failed when he misunderstood Jesus. Peter failed when he sinned. His main sin was self-confidence. His failures and sins had painful consequences.

One October, David Reynolds led for most of the Bathurst 1000 car race. But when he spun the rear tyres at a pit stop, he was given a penalty that moved him to seventh place. This failure had a consequence.

When Paul reminded the Christians of when the Israelites failed in Old Testament times, he said, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). He didn't want them to repeat Israel's mistakes. This is a warning to the self-confident like Peter; a warning that spiritual pride often leads to a spiritual fall, to spiritual failure. It's a warning to those who think they are spiritually strong. For example, Elijah had a great victory over the prophets of Baal, but soon afterwards he was running away from Queen Jezebel.

From the ministry field

By God's guidance we moved to Gyumri and have been living there with our daughter for six months. We moved to Gyumri to join the ACM team and serve there. Our ministry encompasses the Shirak and Lori provinces, particularly the cities of Gyumri, Vanadzor and the village of Horom. Of course, the ministry existed before we came here, but living in Gyumri makes the ministry run more easily and efficiently. Before our arrival, brothers and sisters talked about the ministry and the spiritual and physical needs of the people here. But when I saw the work and met some families, I understood the importance of this ministry and I am still learning the lifestyle and spiritual needs of these families. We praise God for all the ministries and the blessings we enjoy. The Lord blessed us with co-workers Vache and his wife Manoush. We also have sister Astghik who serves among the children in Vanadzor. My wife Hasmik helps in the sisters' ministries and works closely with women. Together we do the Lord's work.

We have Bible study groups in Gyumri and Vanadzor, which are being joined by new people. We visit families, encouraging them, getting acquainted with their needs, and inviting them to attend our Bible studies. I am very happy to tell you that during our service in Gyumri, four people have repented and have given their hearts to the Lord Jesus. Particularly, I want to share about Arzuman, who is the father-in-law of one of our sisters. We learned that Arzuman was ill with cancer and doctors had told his relatives to take him home. We prayed with brother Vache and visited him in the village of Jajur. We talked with him about the Good News of the Gospel and encouraged him to repent and confess his sins to the Lord. Arzuman believed in Jesus, confessed his sins and accepted Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. The next day, we learned that Arzuman peacefully went to be with his Lord. How good the Lord was in reaching out Arzuman.

The Lord gave us ACM families to take care of them and help them grow spiritually and be established in Christ. We pray for new ministries, especially for ministry among the youth and the ladies. We visit

families in Gyumri and Vanadzor, providing financial and material aid (food parcels). We see their needs, their contented hearts and their prayers and thanksgiving to God for all the blessings and the people who stand behind this ministry.

In our ministry we also have difficulties. Many hearts are hardened against the Gospel, and many are busy earning their daily living. Shirak province is considered to be the poorest in Armenia. There are still many families who do not have their own homes and are even in need of their daily bread. That is why we praise God that such families are included in ACM and I have personally seen their thankfulness for the help they receive. We also see the great work ACM is doing by providing medical assistance for these families.

Please pray for our ministry and for the team. We need the Lord's strength, wisdom and guidance. We thank God for all the ministries, blessings, resources, the ACM team, helpers and prayers.

Ashot Gyurjyan



From left to right: Vartan, Don Stormer, Vache, Ashot