

Trumpet's Sound

55th year, Australia

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

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Cover photo: Wooden staircase of outdoor home vintage style, Khndzoresk, Armenia.

Prayer points

- Pray for our troubled world
- Pray for Lebanon and the many families in our care
- Ask the Lord to reach out to the many in distress and fear
- Help us to reach out with food and fresh water
- Pray for Armenia and the many elderly people in our care
- Thank the Father for His care for our lost humanity
- Pray that we will reach the children and the youth with the gospel

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Standing firm

To stand firm, we need a solid foundation. That foundation is our Lord Jesus Christ. We put our hope and our faith in Him and take all of our strength from Him for He will never fail us. Think of these truths:

- Jesus answered, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6)
- *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 2:5)
- They replied, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household”* (Acts 16:31)

Yes, it is only through Jesus that we enter His gates; no other religion or god could ever save us. We must come to Him in repentance and, like the prodigal son cry out, *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be your son”* (Luke 15:21). We know that the father saw his son from a distance and rushed towards him, hugged him, and joyfully cried on his shoulders, saying *“You were lost but now you are found”*.

God the Father provides the solid foundation we all need to stand steadfastly. Only Jesus can forgive, only Jesus can heal, only Jesus can save.

HK



“The yearning to know what cannot be known, to comprehend the incomprehensible, to touch and taste the unapproachable, arises from the image of God in the nature of man. Deep calleth unto deep, and though polluted and landlocked by the mighty disaster theologians call the Fall, the soul senses its origin and longs to return to its source.”

— A.W. Tozer

Come, Lord Jesus

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)

In just three words, John, the beloved apostle, has expressed his heart. After all he had seen, from his first vision of the Lord among the lampstands, to the outpouring of wrath and to the final vision of the bride and the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, this was John's exclamation and all his desire, "Come, Lord Jesus!".

It was not presumption. John was not telling the Lord when to come. Of that day and hour, appointed by the Father, even the Son Himself did not know during His earthly humiliation. John could not know when "the fullness of the Gentiles" would come in, nor when the door to salvation would finally close. Nor was John unfeeling towards the multitudes still in darkness and in sin, without hope and without Christ. No, he was trusting in the God of the whole earth, the judge of all, that He would do right.

It is his desire that shines forth from these words, his great longing for the Lord. And seeing this, it is our responsibility to allow the Word of God to be a mirror to our own souls. Can we all join John, and with an earnest and sincere heart cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus!"?

I expect you may have heard, as I have, people saying that they don't want the Lord to come just yet. (Perhaps you might even have felt that way at some time yourself.) Different reasons are usually given, but often it is simply because they do not feel ready for His coming. For others it may be that they value some passing worldly pleasure more than being face to face with the Saviour. But whatever the reason given, we know that having John's heart and desire is a sure sign of good spiritual health, and that gives us reason and opportunity to reflect on our own spiritual condition.

There are two reasons why people may not feel ready to immediately welcome the coming of the Lord.

The first is because they are not trusting solely in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, in His death and resurrection, but are instead including some part of their own works or imagined merits as the ground for their acceptance by God. We have no merits that commend us to God, and no good works will ever be sufficient to open heaven's door to us. The only solid ground is faith in the risen Saviour, whose abundant grace and amazing love bring lasting peace to our hearts.

The second reason people may not be ready to welcome the Lord is because they have allowed their conscience to be troubled by sin. John wrote that if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8). Yes, but he also wrote that if we confess our sin then the Lord will both forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). When our conscience is troubled, we must act and not allow the problem of doubting the power of Christ's blood and the truth of the God's Word to continue. We must quickly confess our sins and regain our peace before the Lord.

We grieve to see the darkness in men's hearts and the suffering it brings. We cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus!". We yearn to be set free from our own sinful nature and to rest in the sunshine of His glory with all the saints. Above all, we long to see His face, the Saviour, the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, the Bridegroom.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Neil Buckman



"Sometimes I go to God and say, "God, if Thou dost never answer another prayer while I live on this earth, I will still worship Thee as long as I live and in the ages to come for what Thou hast done already. God's already put me so far in debt that if I were to live one million millenniums I couldn't pay Him for what He's done for me."

— A.W. Tozer

Jonah: a man with a misplaced passion

Jonah was a prophet who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel after the time of Elijah and Elisha. One of his prophecies is mentioned as being fulfilled during the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25). If we know more about Jonah than about some other prophets, it is because his message was closely linked with his life.

When we think of Jonah we think of a man sent by God to preach to Nineveh, warning the people of coming judgment. Jonah disobeyed God, going the opposite direction. Given a second opportunity, Jonah obeyed, but he was far from happy about the outcome of his preaching. When the people repented, God acted according to His nature and forgave. Jonah had to learn an important lesson: God is a compassionate God who delights in mercy. In a sense then, Jonah is the message in his own prophecy. But what is the background to this story?

Assyria had been the major world power for some time but was in a period of temporary decline during the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah. This was partly because of internal struggles and partly because of pressure from the nations to the north of Assyria. However, this was only a temporary setback. In a very few years Assyria would return to the centre of the world stage and again defeat many of the surrounding nations. The Assyrians were a very brutal and cruel power and the people they conquered suffered very heavily. Jonah, as a patriotic Israelite, would have gained pleasure from seeing the setbacks Assyria received. Because of their harsh cruelty the Assyrians had few, if any, supporters. For Jonah to be told to go with a message of warning to Nineveh was more than he could handle.

Jonah's task

God gave Jonah the task of warning Nineveh of God's judgment which was about to fall on the city. Jonah's reaction was to get as far from Nineveh as possible. He had no intention of taking God's warn-

ing to Nineveh because he knew that if the people repented God would relent in the punishment He planned for the city. Since Assyria was the natural enemy at this time, the last thing Jonah wanted to see was God being merciful to the Assyrians. From a human view point, Jonah's reaction was natural. The cruelty of the Assyrians was proverbial and all nations feared the consequences of losing a war with them. But whether this is a good attitude for a prophet of the Lord to adopt is another matter!

Jonah's disobedience meant that, instead of going to Nineveh as instructed, he went in the opposite direction; he went west instead of north-east. He was specifically fleeing from the presence of the Lord. He had not learned the truth of Psalm 139:7 where the psalmist asked where he could go from God's presence. In his attempt to run away from the Lord, Jonah went to Joppa, found a ship going to Tarshish, and paid the fare before joining the ship.

This is the first indication we are given of Jonah's thinking. Because he thought he could escape from the presence of the Lord, he disobeyed God's command. That disobedience and Jonah's subsequent actions are set in contrast to a God who acts in sovereign power. Jonah's disobedience was also something the pagan sailors could not understand; they were afraid when they learned that Jonah was fleeing from the Lord.

In confessing that he feared Yahweh, the God of heaven, Jonah showed himself in a very poor light before the sailors. One can imagine their fear. They would have been afraid to do anything they thought would displease their gods, but here was someone who was disobeying the maker of heaven and earth.

When Jonah was cast into the sea he prayed. Chapter 2 records Jonah's prayer from the depths of the sea as well as reflections after his deliverance. He acknowledged that God had heard him from the belly of Sheol and had delivered him. In his distress he called on the Lord and made his vows to Him. As we read his prayer we wonder why it is that we do not call on the Lord earlier rather than wait until we are in deep trouble before we pray.

When Jonah was instructed a second time to go to Nineveh he obeyed and he witnessed one of the greatest revivals in history. People from the king on his throne to the lowliest citizens turned to the Lord in genuine repentance. But Jonah was far from happy. He did not want to see the Lord show mercy to any of the Assyrians. He complained to the Lord about His grace and mercy and His loving-kindness. He then sat under a shelter he made to see what would happen to the city.

It was there that the Lord taught Jonah some very important lessons. Jonah became very angry when a plant that gave him shade was attacked by a worm and withered. God's comment was that Jonah had pity for a plant that he had not made. Was it not right that God had pity on people whom He had made? We would expect Him to have a far greater concern for those He had made than Jonah had for something he had not made.

What are the continuing lessons for us?

- When do we pray? Jonah did not pray for guidance when he went to Joppa. It was only when he was in deep trouble that he prayed from the belly of the fish. Do we wait until we are in difficulties before we turn to God for help?
- How readily do we accept the Lord's will in our lives or in the lives of others? We pray Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven but do we mean it?
- How do we react when God blesses people we think do not deserve mercy?

Don Stormer



“An infinite God can give all of Himself to each of His children. He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of Himself as fully as if there were no others.”

— A.W. Tozer

The Fruit of the Spirit is Goodness

According to Cremer's New Testament lexicon, goodness is "the quality of the man who is ruled by and aims at what is good – moral worth". Thus it is more comprehensive than kindness., and includes such qualities as integrity and honesty.

The above definition calls to mind the words of Micah 6:8, where the Spirit has analysed for us what is good. *"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"* Goodness, then, is a threefold cord, consisting of uprightness, kindness and humility.

Goodness in the Scriptures is more than natural charm or pleasantness. The good man of the Bible is not the same as the good fellow of the world, but he is a man of principle and character. He is more anxious to maintain a good conscience than his popularity. George Muller was surely a good man, and in an address given on his 90th birthday he said that for 69 years and 10 months he had been a happy man. That he attributed to two things, and the first was that he had maintained a good conscience, not wilfully going on in a course he knew to be contrary to the mind of God. The second was his love for the Scriptures.

This, then, is an important element in goodness. When the Lord cleansed the Temple or denounced the Pharisees, He may not have been gentle, but He was just as good as when He took the children in His arms.

The second element in goodness, namely, kindness, was the subject of the last article. However, we should notice that, without kindness, goodness is incomplete. Sometimes, in fact, goodness and righteousness are contrasted, e.g. in Romans 5:7, *"For scarcely righteous for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."* Plainly in this verse the righteous man is

thoroughly honest, but also hard and exacting, while the good man is generous and merciful.

Let us notice also that in the New Testament there are about 30 references to good works. It seems a pity that there has been so much controversy concerning faith and works, because it has obscured from many the tremendous importance of good works in the Christian life. Ponder a few of these references. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16); Dorcas *"was full of good works"* (Acts 9:36); *"that ye may abound in every good work"* (2 Corinthians 9:18); *"created in Christ Jesus unto good works"* (Ephesians 2:10); *"being fruitful in every good work"* (Colossians 1:10); *"that women be adorned with good works"* (1 Timothy 2:10); *"if she have diligently followed every good work"* (1 Timothy 5:10); *"thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:17); *"shewing thyself a pattern of good works"* (Titus 2:7); *"a peculiar people zealous of good works"* (Titus 2:14); *"I will that thou affirm constantly that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works"* (Titus 3:8); *"God make you perfect in every good work"* (Hebrews 13:21).

Let us not take the edge off these exhortations by saying that they are fulfilled by preaching the Gospel. They have the widest application, and refer 'especially to common acts of kindness and love: visiting the sick, relieving the oppressed, ministering to the necessities of the saints. We must follow the steps of Him who went about doing good (Acts 10:38).

Henry Varley's daughter wrote his biography. She related many things concerning his evangelistic campaigns and power as a preacher. However, she paid him no higher tribute than when she wrote that he was commonly regarded as a good man, but how good he really was, only those who knew him intimately realised.

The third element in goodness is humility. A proud man cannot be a good man. In the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 the Lord gives us a picture of the good man according to the standard of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the first three blessings speak of self-emptying with a view to the divine filling.

One of the few men in the New Testament called a good man was Barnabas, and a marked characteristic was his humility. He was sent by the Church of Jerusalem to Antioch, where a work of grace had been done. It would have been natural for Barnabas to be critical of a work in which he and his colleagues had had no part, but we are told, *"When he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith"* (Acts 11:23-24). The next verse relates that he then departed to Tarsus to seek Saul. He evidently believed that Saul was the man needed at Antioch, and he was quite willing to take the lower place himself, for he was a humble man.

The Scriptures speak of God as the sole fountain of goodness. *"Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God"* (Matthew 19:17). The same Scriptures represent man as naturally devoid of goodness. *"In my flesh dwelleth no good thing"* (Romans 7:18). *"For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not"* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Yet again we are told that it will only be those that have done good who will share in the resurrection of life (John 5:29). How is the discrepancy reconciled? Simply by the fact that the fruit of the Spirit is goodness. An old moralist (Epictetus) once wrote: *"If you wish to be good, first believe that you are bad. That is what the sinner does who comes to the Saviour. In the light of the Cross he realises his own sinfulness, but by the power of the Divine Spirit a new righteousness is wrought in the heart."*

When Sir Walter Scott was dying, he said to his son-in-law: *"Lockart, my dear, be a good man"*. That is a far better ambition than to be learned, eloquent, rich, or famous. When Robert Chapman was a young man he said that many were able to preach Christ, but his aim was to live Christ. The result was that his life was one of the most fragrant in modern times.

God help us all to produce in our lives the fruit of the Spirit, which is goodness.

Tom Carson

Repentance - turning around to follow the true God (2)

New Testament examples of repentance

Jesus told a parable about a son who selfishly demanded his inheritance which the father gave him (Luke 15:11-24). Then he went to a distant country and wasted it on wild living. Finding himself destitute and in a severe famine, he hired himself out to a pig farmer. As the pigs were eating better than him, he decided to return to his father and beg to be allowed to serve as a hired servant on the estate. His father welcomed him back home. The son said to him, *“Father, I have sinned against both heaven [God] and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son”*. When we sin, it is against God, even though we think it is harmless. But the father said to his servants, *“Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.”* So they began to celebrate.

The son turned around from his wild living to return to his father. He was convicted of his need to change the direction of his life. He confessed his failures and mistakes (sins) to his father and turned around to come home (repentance). God is like the father in the parable. We are like the son who chose to go his own way. But where are we now? Are we still distant from God – like being in the far country? Are you spiritually dead? Are you lost? If that is your case, consider your situation. If nothing changes things will get worse. You will face God’s judgment. Why not follow the example of the son by confessing your failures and mistakes (sins) to God and turning around to trust Him? Then He will offer you forgiveness and you will be reconciled to God. Earlier in this chapter it says that the angels rejoice when a sinner turns around (repents) to follow God (Luke 15:7, 10).

Zacchaeus was a corrupt chief tax collector. Although he was

wealthy, when he met Jesus Zacchaeus was convicted of his sinfulness and he confessed to God and repented by making restitution to those he had cheated. He said, *"I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"* (Luke 19:8). That's an example of turning around and going in the opposite direction.

When Saul the Pharisee turned around to follow Jesus at Damascus there was a radical change in his life. Before this he was a zealous Jew (Acts 22:3) who strongly opposed Christianity (Galatians 1, Philippians 3, Acts 9:22, 26). He saw this as a threat to the Jewish faith. He was the best Pharisee of his time (Philippians 3:4–6; Galatians 1:13–14). He approved of the stoning to death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 8:1). He made murderous threats against believers, persecuted them and imprisoned them (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-5; 22:4-5). He wanted to stop them spreading the good news about Jesus. He thought it was bad news because he believed Jesus was a liar.

After his conversion Paul spread the good news about Jesus to Jews and Gentiles in countries around the Mediterranean Sea, and established and built up congregations of believers. As an apostle, he received direct revelations from God. He wrote letters which are now in the Bible and he trained leaders for the early church. After Jesus, Paul was the most important person in the history of Christianity. Because of his Christian faith. As he turned around 180 degrees to follow Jesus, Paul was an excellent example of repentance. There was a radical change in his life.

There are two kinds of turning around to follow God (repentance) in the New Testament: positional repentance which leads to eternal positional forgiveness, and relational repentance which leads to temporal relational forgiveness.

Positional repentance

Because everyone has inherited a rebellious nature from Adam and Eve, positionally everyone is separate from God. And because of their rebellion (sin), they deserve God's judgment (Romans 1:18). But the good news in the Bible is that people can be reconciled with God.

God told Abraham, “*all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*” (Genesis 12:3). And the Old Testament prophets predicted that a Messiah would come to deliver and rule over the Jews. Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and partially fulfilled what prophets like Isaiah declared. The rest will be fulfilled when He returns in great power and glory.

Failures (sins) can be forgiven. Jesus paid the penalty for these by dying for His people. It was a vicarious substitutionary payment of the penalty of our failure (sin). He took God’s punishment on the failures (sins) of humanity. Consequently, believers are welcomed into God’s presence, which was illustrated by the curtain in the temple being torn in two (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke. 23:45).

Paul said, “*I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus*” (Acts 20:21). Conversion equals repentance plus faith (trust) in Christ’s work. Two responses are required. To repent – a change mind about your failures (sin). And to trust that Christ’s sacrificial death paid the penalty for your failures (sin).

Faith is to trust in Jesus, to believe in Him, to rely on Him alone for salvation. Genuine faith in Jesus implies repentance (Romans 6:1-6). Those who truly love and trust Jesus as Saviour will turn away from failures (sin) and keep His commands and follow Him (1 John 5:3).

Repentance is such an important aspect of conversion that it is often stressed rather than saving faith (Luke 15:7; Acts 11:18). This is called positional repentance and positional forgiveness because Christ has paid the penalty for all a believer’s failures (sins). It happens once and doesn’t need to be repeated.

Failure (sin) separates us from God and puts us under His judgment, and if we do nothing about this separation and judgment, the result is final and hell is our ultimate destiny. The first step to fix the problem is to be convicted of our failure (sin). It involves recognising it. We may feel guilty or sorry. If so the next step is to confess our failure (sin) to God. It means admitting that we are wrong. The next step is repentance, which is a change of behaviour where our change of attitude is shown in our actions. It’s like doing a U-turn in a car to

go in the opposite direction. Then God promises to forgive all our failures (sins), in the past, the present and the future. Peter preached, “Repent ... and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19). God is a judge of all those who have never trusted in Him. This positional forgiveness removes the barrier to heaven. This happens when an unbeliever comes to faith in Christ. If we acknowledge our failures (sinfulness) and believe that Jesus paid the penalty for us, then we are viewed as God’s children. Jesus died for all our failures and weaknesses (sins). Have you experienced this kind of forgiveness? If not, why not start following the Lord by confessing your failures (sins) and trusting Christ as Saviour? After our failures (sins) have been dealt with, we have peace with God and are reconciled to God. And heaven is our ultimate destiny, where all our failures (sins) are forgotten.

George Hawke
(To be continued...)

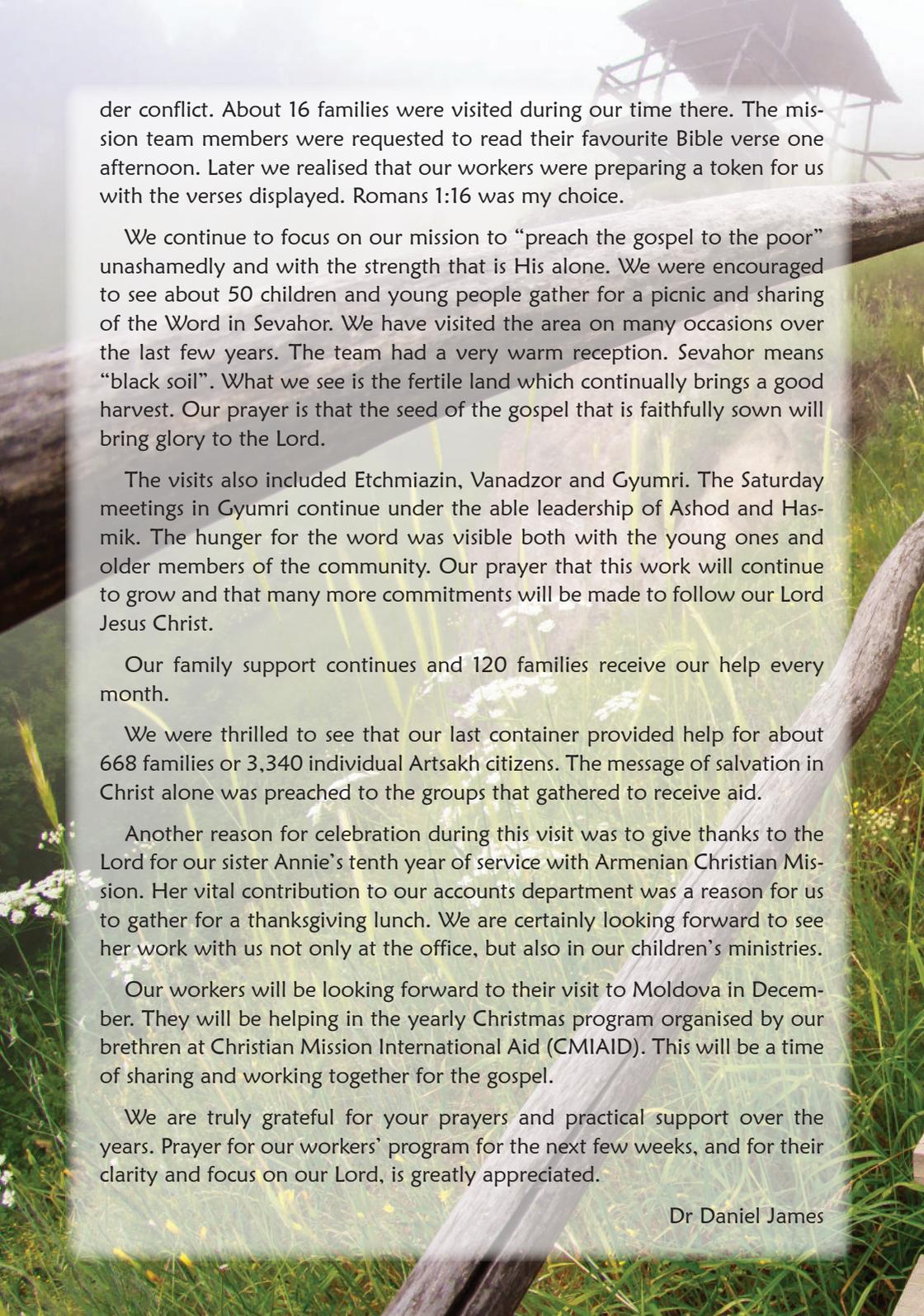
Mission with the Gospel

By His grace, the 2024 mission trip to Armenia went smoothly. I, together with Hratsh and Clara (Sydney), Edmon (Almelo, Netherlands) and Ezequiel (Valencia, Spain) were deeply enriched and blessed during our two week stay which began 30 August.

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The team members were invited to share the Word and to have fellowship with the local churches who have been very supportive of our ministry in Armenia for several years. We are grateful to the many interpreters who accompanied the non-Armenian speakers in our team on many occasions.

One emphasis we had this time was to spend more time visiting not only the families, but our workers and volunteers who continue to serve the Lord tirelessly, especially during the difficult times we had during the recent bor-



der conflict. About 16 families were visited during our time there. The mission team members were requested to read their favourite Bible verse one afternoon. Later we realised that our workers were preparing a token for us with the verses displayed. Romans 1:16 was my choice.

We continue to focus on our mission to “preach the gospel to the poor” unashamedly and with the strength that is His alone. We were encouraged to see about 50 children and young people gather for a picnic and sharing of the Word in Sevahor. We have visited the area on many occasions over the last few years. The team had a very warm reception. Sevahor means “black soil”. What we see is the fertile land which continually brings a good harvest. Our prayer is that the seed of the gospel that is faithfully sown will bring glory to the Lord.

The visits also included Etchmiazin, Vanadzor and Gyumri. The Saturday meetings in Gyumri continue under the able leadership of Ashod and Hasmik. The hunger for the word was visible both with the young ones and older members of the community. Our prayer that this work will continue to grow and that many more commitments will be made to follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our family support continues and 120 families receive our help every month.

We were thrilled to see that our last container provided help for about 668 families or 3,340 individual Artsakh citizens. The message of salvation in Christ alone was preached to the groups that gathered to receive aid.

Another reason for celebration during this visit was to give thanks to the Lord for our sister Annie’s tenth year of service with Armenian Christian Mission. Her vital contribution to our accounts department was a reason for us to gather for a thanksgiving lunch. We are certainly looking forward to see her work with us not only at the office, but also in our children’s ministries.

Our workers will be looking forward to their visit to Moldova in December. They will be helping in the yearly Christmas program organised by our brethren at Christian Mission International Aid (CMIAID). This will be a time of sharing and working together for the gospel.

We are truly grateful for your prayers and practical support over the years. Prayer for our workers’ program for the next few weeks, and for their clarity and focus on our Lord, is greatly appreciated.

Dr Daniel James