

HeartCry

MAGAZINE



THE

TRANSFORMATIVE

POWER OF

THE GOSPEL



UPDATES FROM
PERU, ARGENTINA, ZAMBIA, UGANDA, NEPAL, ISRAEL, AND CANADA

"WHEN ALL THINGS ARE MADE NEW"

BY R.C. SPROUL

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

GREETINGS

The HeartCry Missionary Society has several goals that are widely published and understood—missionary support, literature distribution, training conferences, etc. However, we have another goal that is less mentioned, but that may surpass them all—to tell of the wonderful works of God. In Psalm 19:1-2, David wrote, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.” If creation is declaring the glory of God and displaying the magnificence of His works, how can we be silent about His work of redemption in the lives of the crown of His creation? In Psalm 44, the sons of Korah wrote, “O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us the work that You did in their days, in the days of old. You with Your own hand drove out the nations; then You planted them.” If the fathers in Israel felt compelled to speak to future generations about God’s deliverance of the nation from the bondage of Egypt, how much more should we be compelled to speak to all about God’s deliverance of men and women from the bondage of sin! As Asaph pledged, “We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

The Bible is the only inspired record of God’s works. Furthermore, it is a closed canon—nothing should ever be added to it or taken away from it. Nevertheless, God continues to write His story of redemption, and it is not only our privilege but also our solemn responsibility to proclaim it. Therefore, when you read this magazine and learn of the many wonderful things that God is

doing throughout the world, please do not admire the devotion or wisdom of men; rather, look upward to God and admire His grace and power to work through the limitations of extremely weak human instruments. The Apostle Paul said it best in I Corinthians 1:26-29:

“For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.”

God is great; we are small. He is full of grace; we are in constant need of the grace that His love supplies. He is marching through the world, doing wonders beyond measure. We stumble behind in awe and with grateful admiration. It is with such a spirit that we send to you this edition of the *HeartCry Magazine*. Our hope is that you will be encouraged in your God, offer sacrifices of thanksgiving to Him, and tell others of His wonderful works. As we read in Psalm 107:21-22:

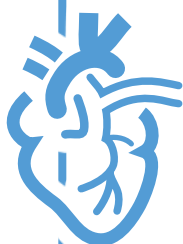
“Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men! Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of His works with joyful singing.”

Your brother,
Paul Washer

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

BY FORREST HITE

What does it mean to say that the gospel is *transformative*? What happens when the gospel enters one's life? This is what I hope to unpack a bit in this article, taking a closer look at the power of this gospel and at some of the types of change it brings. In this issue of the *HeartCry Magazine*, you will read a number of personal testimonies of conversion and gospel transformation; I hope that you will see some of the truths considered in this article echoed in those accounts.



HEART CHANGE

"Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, 'Talitha kum!' (which translated means, 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!'). Immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old." (Mark 5:41-42a)

Apart from the gospel, man's existence is hollow, and his future is hopeless. Furthermore, he is unable to help himself out of his desperate situation. He is dead spiritually, and there is nothing he can do to change himself; in fact, he does not want to change! He hates God and refuses to follow Him.

Even so, his sin places him in the firing line of divine judgment.

But here, when all seems bleak, the gospel speaks a beautiful, hope-inspiring truth: "Christ died that you might live." This is our first consideration—the gospel's power to transform a sinner's heart and give him spiritual life.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ....”
(Ephesians 2:4-5a)

The gospel’s transformation of a sinner’s heart is a transformation from death to life.

There are some striking similarities between the story of Jairus’s daughter in the passage at the beginning of this section and the story of a sinner saved by grace. It may prove helpful to follow the story’s progression:

JESUS ISSUES A COMMAND TO BE OBEYED

Our Lord tells the little girl, “*Kum!*” He commands her to get up; and, to remove any doubt about the word’s vernacular connotation, Mark adds the phrase, “I say to you,” in the translation to clarify its *imperative* nature. Likewise, Jesus gives a clear command to sinners: “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

OBEDIENCE WOULD PROVE BENEFICIAL TO THE RECIPIENT

In the girl’s case, obeying Jesus’ command would give her another opportunity to live. In the sinner’s case, Jesus promises eternal salvation (Mark 8:34-35), “life more abundant and free.”¹

THE RECIPIENT IS UNABLE TO OBEY THE COMMAND

The little girl is instructed to rise from her bed, and doing so would greatly improve her current condition. Nevertheless, she is *naturally incapable* of obeying the command because she is *physically dead*. Similarly, the sinner is instructed to repent and have faith, and doing so would immensely improve his current and future condition. Nevertheless, he is *morally*



“Christ died that you might live.”

incapable of obeying the command because he is *spiritually dead*. He cannot obey, for he will not obey. He is a victim of his own obstinance.

JESUS SUPPLIES THE ABILITY TO OBEY

When Jesus commands the girl to rise, He is in essence telling her to do what she cannot do. However, this is no cruel game on His part, nor is it ignorance of the situation. When the Lord gives her the instruction, He also gives her the ability to follow it. In the same way, when Jesus calls the sinner to repentance and a life of faith, He is telling him to do something he is unable (because he is unwilling) to do. But again, there is no cruelty or ignorance involved here! When the Lord gives him the instruction, He also gives him the ability to follow it.

JESUS’ CALL IS ALWAYS EFFECTUAL

Once Jesus tells Jairus’s daughter to rise, there is no doubt that she will rise. Perhaps there has been some doubt in the minds of some in the room. There was, to be sure, plenty of doubt in the minds of those who have just been escorted from the room. But there is no doubt in our Lord’s mind, nor is there need for any—His command is assuredly going to effect change! In like manner, when our Lord has set His love on a sinner and He calls him from death, there is no doubt that His call will prove effectual in bringing him to life. His command is assuredly going to effect change!

What a wonderful picture this story gives us of our own helpless state and of God’s tender work of salvation! We are dead and unable to help ourselves until God calls us, transforms our hearts, and gives us the ability to follow Him.

¹ Helen Lemmel, “Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus”

LIFE CHANGE



“...and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, ‘Ephphatha!’ that is, ‘Be opened!’ And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly.” (Mark 7:34-35)

Imagine a scenario with me. A man is scheduled to be a guest preacher at a local church. However, when the time comes for him to preach, he is nowhere to be found, and no one is able to contact him. Finally, after many in the congregation have already left, he arrives at the church, his suit neatly pressed and his hair well kempt. Upon seeing him, the pastor who had scheduled his visit voices his growing frustration: “Where have you been? You were supposed to be here more than an hour ago!” The guest nods gravely and replies, “I’m so sorry! On my way here, my car had a flat tire. As I was changing the tire, a lug nut slipped from my hand and rolled into the middle of the highway. Without thinking, I chased after it and then looked up to see a semi-truck going at least a hundred miles per hour barreling toward me. The truck ran me over, and that’s why I’m late.”²

The guest’s excuse is so ludicrous, it is laughable! It is entirely unbelievable that a man could encounter a force as great as a speeding semi-truck and be completely unchanged by it.

To a much greater degree, how unthinkable it is to hold that one could encounter the all-powerful God and be completely unchanged by Him! It is ridiculous to assert that one could experience inward transformation by the gospel of Jesus Christ and yet not see that transformation reflected in his day-to-day life. This leads us to our



“Christ lived that you might die.”

second consideration: the gospel’s power to transform a sinner’s life.

Here the gospel tells us another truth: “Christ lived that you might die.” This may seem on its surface to sound less pleasant than the previous truth, but it is just as important and just as wonderful. Fallen man in an unconverted state simply loves sin. The way he thinks, the way he feels, the things he wants, the things he does—all of him is bent toward sin and away from God. But the gospel turns this on its head, as our former way of living is put to death; we begin to hate sin and to seek to glorify God and live in light of eternity. The *presence* of sin, no doubt, is not totally eradicated this side of glory; but its *power* is well and truly broken! As the Apostle Paul writes, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

When one’s *heart* is transformed by the gospel, his *life* will also inevitably—without exception—be enveloped in change. These two transformations always go hand in hand. They are connected—like two sides of the same coin, as it were. You will never find a man who has been made new in Christ (heart change) yet shows no evidence of this in his daily walk (life change).

² I owe this illustration to Paul Washer

Let's examine some of the ways the gospel changes our lives.

THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS OUR PERCEPTIONS AND THOUGHTS

Prior to the gospel's transformation of our lives, our lot is much like that of the deaf and mute man in the Scripture at the top of this section. Our spiritual ears are closed, unable to understand reality or discern truth from falsehood. Our spiritual tongues are stuck, unable to praise God or give Him the glory He deserves. Indeed, our plight is even more pitiable than this man's, for we are blind as well—our spiritual eyes are shut, unable to see the holiness and grandeur of God as well as our own wickedness and smallness. In short, our condition is the spiritual antithesis to the maxim of the “three wise monkeys”: “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.” Instead, we see no goodness, hear no goodness, and speak no goodness! This sad state naturally leads to an improper way of thinking—a bad worldview. The logic and reason we use is twisted and broken.

When the gospel enters our hearts, however, it is as if Christ says to our eyes, ears, and tongues, “*Ephphatha!*” We begin to be able to see rightly the glory of God, the offensiveness of man, the beauty of Christ's person and work, the fleeting nature of this world, and so much more. We begin to be able to understand and apply truth and to discern lies and unbiblical ideas. We begin to be able truly to praise God for all that He is and all that He does. And this correction of our perceptions leads to an increasingly more biblical way of thinking. We begin to be able to love God with our minds.

THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS OUR AFFECTIONS AND DESIRES

An unconverted man is consumed by a love for sin and for self, and this love motivates his desires. He wants what-

ever he believes will make him happy, whatever will satisfy him—whether wealth, fame, power, acceptance, pleasure, glory, reverence, accolades, or the like.

But when the gospel intervenes, the man's affections are transformed; now his desires are driven by his love for God. He wants what will bring God glory and honor, what will bring himself closer to God, and what will spread God's fame throughout the world. It is his affection for God and his desire to glorify Him that motivates his daily life.

THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS OUR ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES

Once his affections and desires are changed, this transformation will surely leak into the man's actions as well. The things which he once loved to do he now loathes, and the things that once were drudgery or folly to him are now his delight. It is this outward transformation that often seems most extraordinary and can cause the most doubtful of skeptics to wonder at this display of gospel power.

Perhaps, though, the changed man had lived an outwardly “good” life prior to conversion; perhaps his actions could generally be described in a positive light. Even still, this goodness was motivated by his love for himself, which would have been easily revealed if one could have examined his inner attitude. But the gospel can transform even a “white-washed tomb” (Matthew 23:27) as this by converting his *selfish* attitude into a growingly *selfless* one. In such a case, the outward transformation may appear more subtle, but the inward change is just as remarkable. No longer does he walk in a faux obedience because he feels that he must or because it behooves him; now he walks in true obedience because his newly altered perceptions, thoughts, affections, and desires have influenced his attitude.

Before we move on, we should note that this life transformation is an *ongoing process* for the believer. When one's heart is made new, his life—his perceptions, thoughts, affections, desires, actions, attitudes—sees transformation that is *immediate* but also *incomplete*. The believer's life will

continually be marked by change as he matures and grows in his love for the gospel. The more he understands and applies the gospel, the more he will be transformed into the likeness of Christ, who is lovingly and steadfastly molding and perfecting him until His return (Philippians 1:6).



POSITION CHANGE

"And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.'" (Mark 14:36)

When we think about the gospel's transforming power in an individual, we often think only or primarily of the transformation of his heart and life. But there is at least one more change the gospel brings to each believer, which is our third consideration: the gospel's power to transform a sinner's position or status.

The sinner's standing before God is a precarious one. He is a rebel against God, and he refuses to submit to His rightful authority. The sinner is God's enemy; as such, he finds himself in a just but undesirable position—rejected by God and subject to everlasting damnation. Furthermore, he is unable to move himself to a better status, to gain a better standing before God, for he is enslaved by his own sin. His is a situation truly worthy of despair.

But here we receive still more gospel salve: "Christ was rejected that you might be accepted." When the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms the heart and life of a sinner, his hopeless position is transformed into one filled with hope and promise! What an amazing inspiration for joy and peace this is for the believer!



**"Christ was rejected
that you might
be accepted."**

But what exactly changes about our position before almighty God when the gospel's power intervenes? There are at least three parts to this transformation.

We are adopted into God's service.

This is a transformation from **slave of sin** to **bondservant of Christ**. The unconverted sinner is sin's slave and (apart from divine intervention) is content in service to this cruel and loveless master, for he is interested only in fulfilling his own desires. The saint, however, has been transferred into the service of a perfect Master, one who is kind and merciful. His purpose, goal, and joy now is gratefully to serve his Savior. It is in bondage to this Master that man finds true freedom.

We are adopted into God's kingdom.

This is a transformation from **outcast** to **citizen**. The unconverted sinner is *unclean*—undesirable and tainted by sin's stain. He is also *unworthy* of any kindness from God or access to

His blessings. He is wholly outside of God's kingdom and cannot force his way therein. He is completely alone. The saint, however, has become a naturalized (or "supernaturalized") citizen of God's kingdom and is given all the benefits that come with that citizenship (1 Peter 2:9-10).

A modern misconception holds that one needs only to claim that he is a Christian in order to be considered a Christian, akin to one who claims to be a fan of a given sport's team. This concept of a celestial citizenship (Philippians 3:20) helps correct this bad logic. As one who claims citizenship of an earthly nation needs evidence (e.g. a passport) to validate that claim, so one who claims citizenship of a heavenly nation needs evidence to validate that claim. The evidence of heavenly citizenship is *Christlikeness*. Every sinner who has been adopted into God's kingdom (position change) has been made new (heart change) and will show discernable proof (life change). There are no exceptions!

We are adopted into God's family.

This is a transformation from **enemy of God** to **child of God**. This is perhaps the most comforting yet astounding change of all! The unconverted sinner is in every way a natural enemy toward God and is fully opposed by Him. Everything about the sinner is unacceptable to God, for he is essentially contrary to God's very nature. There is no mutual enjoyment over which

they can bond, no commonality to bridge the gap between them, no hint of goodness in man to lift him toward God, and no imperfection in God to lower Him toward man. They are in every way at odds with each other. Based on the imputation of Christ's perfectly acceptable righteousness to his account, however, the saint is taken from this position and brought into the very family of God—adopted as His son, with all the blessings that come with being His heir!

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15)

Notice that the word the apostle uses here to describe God's relationship toward us is the same that Christ uses in Gethsemane in the Scripture at the beginning of this section: *Abba*.

The spotless Son of God in deep anguish called upon God as His *Abba*; and now some from the very race who put that divine Lamb to death, all of whom were His hate-filled enemies, have the same right and privilege to call God by the very same name and to enjoy fellowship with Him as their true Father—as their *Abba*! What grace and mercy is here seen—we are sons and daughters of the Most High God! What comfort and joy this brings! What humility and gratitude this stirs! What love and devotion this elicits!

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness...." – Ezekiel 36:26-29a



WORLD CHANGE

"At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" (Mark 15:34)

The verse above describes arguably the rawest moment in the Bible. The blameless man Jesus—He who knew no sin—bears the weight of all the sin of His people and suffers its penalty, which He did not merit, as He hangs upon a cursed tree. This One reaches out in this moment of sharpest pain, greatest sorrow, deepest distress, and lowest loneliness. He looks for the One with whom He has enjoyed perfect communion for all of His eternal existence, in whose constant delight He had enjoyed the bliss of eternity past and in whose constant presence He has spent His days on earth. He cries out in excruciation to this One most beloved of Him. And He receives nothing—no reprieve, no vindication, no comfort, no encouragement, no help, no hope, no answer. Nothing. The One who has earned none of the wrath that is upon Him, who deserves only the highest honor, is left in this unimaginable, horrifying misery. He is alone. Utterly and hauntingly alone.

It is in this bitterest of moments that the gospel whispers the sweetest of truths: "Christ was forsaken that you might be cherished."

*The One who knew nothing but
unbroken fellowship
With holy God
Was wholly Godforsaken.
And why?
So the same could never again
be said of you.*

Why would the righteous and holy One willingly take on this indescribable level of suffering? Because He was



**"Christ was forsaken
that you might be
cherished."**

purchasing a people, redeeming a remnant for Himself. He took the place of His bride so that she would never have to experience such aloneness. He bore this misery so that He could glorify Himself and His Father through His Church. "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5) is His promise to her, but it could only be realized if a suitable Substitute was forsaken in her place. And so He was, and in that sacrificial act, the echo of His promise to His people resounded anew:

*"For Zion's sake I will not keep
silent,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will
not keep quiet,
Until her righteousness goes
forth like brightness,
And her salvation like a torch
that is burning...."*

*"It will no longer be said to
you, 'Forsaken,'
Nor to your land will it any
longer be said, 'Desolate';
But you will be called, 'My
delight is in her,'
And your land, 'Married';
For the Lord delights in you,
And to Him your land will be
married." (Isaiah 62:1, 4)*

God's people will never have need to cry to God, "*Lama sabachtani?*" because Christ took that forsakenness

upon Himself in our stead. Here in this passage from Isaiah we see the gospel's goal: to redeem a people for God's own delight. Christ's design is to rescue His bride from darkness, to shape her into loveliness, to dwell with her, and to enjoy her for eternity.

In this endeavor, the power of the gospel can often be seen in brilliant displays. While we typically associate gospel transformation with its effect on individuals, we should not overlook its power to bring about change on a larger scale. This brings us to a brief look at our final consideration: the gospel's power to transform the world. Is this not what we long to see? Is this not why we “go or send,” why we seek to spread the good news of Jesus Christ across the globe?

As Christ labors to bring His Church to Himself by the power of His gospel, that power will inevitably show itself in individuals as well as groups of people. As Christ gathers His bride, the Church will see transformation of both minor and major scale. The gospel's purpose is to rescue, and its power is not limited by those who need salvation!

This is why an open antagonist to Christ can be transformed into one

who “turned the world upside down” for Christ and whose inspired letters have edified the Church for millennia.³ This is why the penned words of an obscure German monk can spark a Reformation that shakes Europe (and beyond) and whose effects are still seen today.⁴ This is why savage tribes in South America can see radical transformation when individuals selflessly forgive their evils and dedicate their lives to sharing the gospel with them.⁵

This is why the faithfulness of an elderly Nepali woman can impact a whole village of pagans and cause them to gaze in wonder and be attentive to the gospel.⁶ This is why what once was one of the most notorious bars in all of Zambia can become the gathering place of a fellowship of believers who seek to honor God.⁷ This is why we do not despair when we read of the vast need among French-speaking Canadians, instead lifting them up in prayer to our Father with the knowledge that He can transform that people group.⁸

Why? Because the gospel has power to change individuals, families, villages, cities, tribes, nations, and even entire cultures for the glory of God and the benefit of His bride.

³ The Apostle Paul (Acts 17:6)

⁴ Martin Luther

⁵ Elisabeth Elliot among the Aucas; Bruce Olson among the Motilones

⁶ Page 29

⁷ Page 22

⁸ Page 32

“How can you possibly improve on that gospel? If there ever was a fool’s errand, it was the errand that people chase when they think they can come up with a better gospel. It’s the gospel of God. He composed it, and He commanded it for us and for our people and our children forever. It’s His gospel, empowered by His Spirit that transforms our lives that must be received in repentance and in faith.”

– R.C. Sproul, “The Transforming Power of the Gospel”



HUARAZ, PERU

STORIES OF GRACE FROM PERU

JUAN PABLO OSORIO

Juan Pablo was pastor of “Christ Is the Way” Baptist Church for many years in the Santa Isabel area of Villa el Salvador in Lima, Peru. In 2016, he began church-planting efforts in a village in the mountains near Huaraz, Peru. Here he gives us an update of recent events and shares the testimonies of some recently baptized believers.

MISSIONS UPDATE

By the grace of God, my family’s health is recovering. My daughter was sick with hepatitis; after a trip to the hospital, though, she is now recovering through treatment. Here in Huaraz the rains and thunderstorms have started, which means the roads are now dangerous. The other day, I almost wrecked my car because of the rain and fog. I am thankful to God for strengthening us to continue moving forward in the work of His kingdom, and we are thankful to all the brothers and sisters that pray for us.

The missionary work here in Callejon de Huaylas, Huaraz, is advancing step by step. Almost daily we are going out to share

the gospel in the communities surrounding us, and we are holding Bible studies wherever there is an open door. On Sunday, November 19, our heavenly Father was pleased to allow the baptisms of our brothers and sisters (some of whom are family members) Liliana, Maria, Zulema, Ruzbel, and Noe (testimonies below). We are praying for their spiritual growth and for their service to the Almighty.

I thank God for the brothers and sisters that He is raising up who love God and are helping with the work of the Lord here in Huaraz. Recently, we assigned a brother the responsibility of caring for the group of believers that is now meeting in the city of Hua-

raz. Another brother has been assigned the responsibility of serving in the community of Tumpa. Two sisters are discipling other women in the city of Carhuaz, and another brother is working alongside them. I am currently

leading Bible studies in the communities of Copa Chico and Yungar. I have found that I need to better distribute my time to be able to work more thoroughly for the Lord in each place. Please pray for me to that end.

TESTIMONIES

LILIANA

I am 32 years old, and I have two children. Before coming to Christ, my life was very bitter. I was resentful because life seemed to be meaningless, even though I was committed to the Roman Catholic religion of my parents and participated in all of the saints' festivals. As a young woman, I had two children; after living some time with the father of my children, I was left alone as a single mother of two. All I could do was work and try to survive.

Three years ago, my mother died in an accident with a drunk

driver; my whole family was very affected by it. I was like a mad-woman; I couldn't sleep, and the memorial services held for my mother didn't bring me any hope.

At that time, a Christian named Mariana reached out to us, and she brought us a Bible. Some time later, Pastor Juan Pablo and another Christian visited us and started to study the Bible with me. Through our Bible studies, I came to understand the gospel, and I called on the Lord Jesus to save my soul. He brought peace, comfort, and meaning to my life.

MARIA

My life was always characterized by sadness. From the time I was a little girl, I worked in the fields, sowing and harvesting the crops in order to stay alive. I was a faithful Catholic like my parents and my siblings. In my youth, however, I enjoyed a sinful lifestyle.

Shortly after my second son was born sickly, my children's father abandoned us. With the help of my parents, I was able to take care of my two sons—until the tragic death of my mother. After she died, I fell into depression.

That was when Mariana visited

us and encouraged us. She sowed the word of God in us, but I still did not give my life to Christ. Later, Pastor Juan Pablo and another brother began to study the Bible with us in the home of my brother, who had already become a follower of Christ. We started to attend those Bible studies, and the Word of God reached my heart. I surrendered to Christ, and since that time He has been my Lord who is with me. Even though I still have hardships in life, God is helping me to continue in His ways, and He gives me peace and joy.

ZULEMA

When I was born, my father rejected me and left our family. I never met him. When I was twelve years old, my mother died; my sister and I became orphans. We were helpless, sad, and bitter; and we had so many questions about life and death. From that time we have lived with our grandparents or our uncles.

I looked for answers in the Catholic church as well as among Evangelicals, but I couldn't find

any. Three years ago, my grandmother died in a traffic accident. My aunt and uncle had become Christians, and they shared the Scriptures with me. I came to know Christ as my Lord and began attending the Bible studies in their home. Now with Christ I am growing in the knowledge of the Lord. He has filled the emptiness of my heart, and I know His love and peace. I have been baptized, and I want to follow His ways.

RUZBEL

I am 14, and I live with my parents and my five siblings. We all work in the fields, and we also raise sheep. I also go to school, along with two of my siblings. In our village, there is a Catholic chapel that is only open once a year during the town's saint festival. Life at home is very hard.

Last year, Pastor Juan Pablo and some other brothers started coming every Friday afternoon to talk to us about Jesus Christ. I have believed in the Lord, and I want to serve Him. I am helping the pastor with the ministry to the children. I am happy that the Word of God has come to my town.

NOE

I'm 24 years old. I'm unmarried, and I study accounting in the university, which is why I live away from home in an apartment in Huaraz. I was born in the province of Yungay, in the mountains of Huascaran. As a child, I attended a church with my parents; but I only went because it was our custom. When I finished school, I came (with my parents' help) to the city of Huaraz to study.

Three years ago, some people from a local seminary invited me to a teaching module they were hosting. There I met a man named

Ruben, and he explained the gospel to me, clearing up a lot of misunderstandings I had. My life changed at that point, but I still wrestled with some of the wrong things that I had been taught in the past. Later, I met Pastor Juan Pablo and some other brothers and began attending the church they had planted in Tarica. Since then, I have been meeting with the church there and growing in the grace of the Lord. With joy, I now speak to people in my university about Christ, and I serve in our local church. ■



ROSARIO, ARGENTINA

STORIES OF GRACE FROM ARGENTINA

NICOLÁS SERRANO

Nicolás is one of the two founding pastors of Iglesia Familia de la Gracia (Family of Grace Church) in Rosario, Argentina. The church was planted in 2010, and Nicolás spent the better part of 2011 studying at the Ministerial Academy in Lima, Peru. Here he shares the stories of three young people whom the Lord recently saved.

FLORENCIA

Florencia is a young woman, the wife of one of the members of our church and mother to a young and charming little girl. We have known her for two years and have had many evangelistic conversations with her. In truth, I think we shared the gospel with her as extensively, clearly, and passionately as we could. But, nevertheless, despite our attempts to “force her to enter,” she did not manifest at any moment any evidence of spiritual understanding or sensitivity to the Word of God. She seemed, in a very strange and extreme way, kindly indifferent to even the most terrifying and shocking truths of the gospel.

But, after we had fired all of our bullets and had resigned and

left behind any expectation of being able to see her embrace Christ, something sudden and marvelous happened. On a Sunday just like all the others, during a service when Florencia was present, the Lord manifested Himself to her in the preaching of the Scriptures in such a powerful way that she broke into weeping in the midst of the congregation and was unable to contain or bear the conviction of sin that she was experiencing. The sermon was on justification by faith from Philip-
pians 3:9. Really, the sermon was less of an exhortation and more of a teaching lesson in which I determined to exposit with a lot of detail what it means that we are saved not merely by the death of Christ but also by His life.

It was then that the eyes of Florencia's heart were opened; she was pierced by the sword of the Spirit. In an instant, all that she had heard about the gospel became more real than the floor on which she was standing! In the midst of her tears and conviction of sin, she left the room; when she finally returned and we spoke with her, she said to us, "How could I have been so blind? How did I not see it before? How is it that I could have heard so much about Christ without being affected? Not only did I not love Him—I hated Him! And yet, there He was, loving me. We are saved only by His righteousness. All of our good works are a filthy rag before His holiness. We don't have anyone

else to whom we can go; we don't have any other Savior but Jesus Christ. I want to proclaim the gospel! I want everyone to know how marvelous He is and how it is that men and women can be justified by God Himself!"

It would be very difficult for me to forget her face full of tears of repentance, of emotion, of joy, and of new life. Since that joyful Sunday, it has been so evident that she "saw" Christ and that she "entered" the Kingdom of God! All of us have been impacted by her conversion, especially her husband, who had shared the gospel with her time and time again. What is impossible for men is possible for God. Glory be to His blessed name!

JOSE AND LAURA

Jose and Laura are a young couple that came to our church not long ago. Neither of them is from Rosario, but they live here now because of their university studies. Their history with us is pretty short. Almost within a month of being with us, Jose began to express serious uneasiness about his salvation. In his own words, he told Pastor Ariel, "Christ is everything for you guys, but He is not everything for me." But in a very similar way to Florencia, one great Sunday, something happened. Jose was impacted during the first part of our Sunday meeting, the time that we devote to prayer together for revival. Hearing the prayers of some of the brothers in the church that were hungry for more of Christ, he was profoundly convinced of his own misery and of his de-

served condemnation—so much so that under great anguish he cried out to Christ to rescue him.

Later, during the preaching, the Lord came to him through the exposition of the Scriptures and opened his eyes in such a way that he could see his urgent and absolute dependence on Christ for his salvation. As he heard the preaching from Philipians 3:10 on our need to know the enlivening power of Christ's resurrection, Jose surrendered himself completely to Christ, confessed his inability to save himself, and cried out to be raised from spiritual death. As the musicians led us in music after the sermon, as he told us later, Jose was able for the first time to truly praise the Lord with all of his being. Jose's praise to God was the cry of one who had been reborn!



Nicolás and Andrea

Days later, Laura had an experience of conversion. Together with Jose, she decided to listen to our radio program, in which my wife Andrea was sharing her testimony of how the Lord freed her from the deceit in which she found herself as a false convert and how He saved her with His strong hand. Laura identified herself with Andrea, and she realized that she was in same place Andrea was before her conversion. But she began to resist the conviction of sin and appealed to her supposed personal righteousness before God: “I am not that bad; I am not lost.”

But Jose, now that he viewed things with new eyes, began to explain the gospel to her and to plead with her to not be superficial and to not excuse herself, but

instead to confess her need of a Savior. Finally, Laura surrendered. She recognized her lostness, and she was broken and humbled before God. She cried out to Him to be saved from condemnation and from the power of sin. Today, despite the fact that only a month ago Jose and Laura were slaves of sin, both are manifesting the desire to follow Jesus no matter the cost. They want to be members of the church; they want to know the Lord Jesus; they want to serve Him; they want to live in the fullness of the Spirit. Oh, how worthy it is to serve the Lord and to be a servant to men! It is worth it all if only to see one more sinner repent and be washed in the blood of Emmanuel! ■



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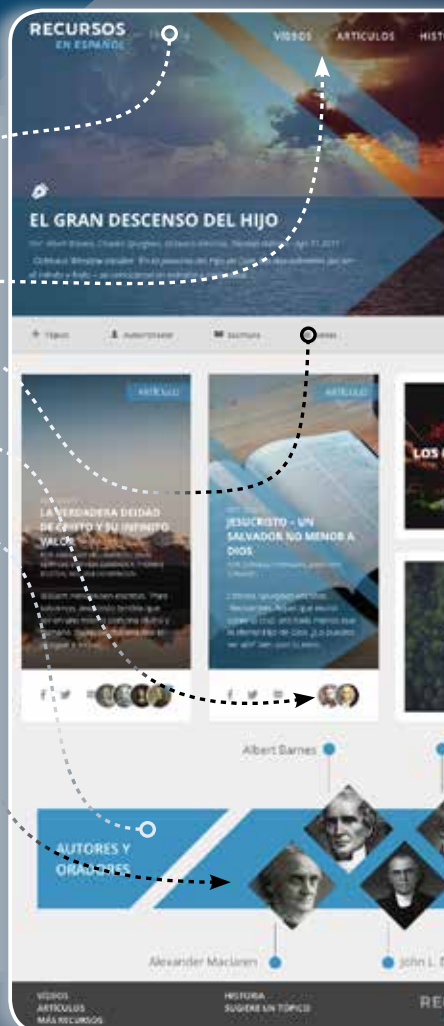
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ROSARIO, ARGENTINA

MISSIONARY SPOTLIGHT: ARIEL UMAÑO

Ariel Umaño was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina; he came to experience and was met with the saving grace of Christ when he was 22 years old. In 2014, Ariel and his wife Jesica moved to Rosario, where they became members of Family of Grace Church. In January of 2017, Family of Grace recognized Ariel as one of the pastors alongside Nicolás Serrano.

TESTIMONY OF CONVERSION

I was born in Buenos Aires into a family that attended an Evangelical church. My parents began attending church one year before I was born, but their local church became more and more liberal over time. For much of my childhood, I lived a moral life—until I was about 13, when I got involved with the punk and anarchist movements in Argentina. My involvement in that movement let loose the evil that was in my heart, and I fell into a life of drunkenness and worldly pleasure. The philosophy of the punk movement, which says “there is no future,” began to produce a meaninglessness in my life. Friendships were point-

less, and alcohol and a libertine life could not satisfy.

When I was 18 years old, in a state of depression and apathy, I read a portion of a Bible that was in my house: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). That sentence devastated me, because I found myself incapable of weeping or feeling anything, much less weeping for my sins. I thought all I could do was wait for His condemnation.

Still, in that moment I did what they had taught me to do—I prayed a prayer of faith, giving my life to Christ. The following Saturday, I was in the youth group of my parents' church. There I was

received as if I were a Christian. I began to acquire Evangelical lingo and started to live a moral life again. Soon, I was leading a group of young people and studying theology in seminary.

I spent a couple years of my life in that church where they preached ecumenicalism and pluralism—this was one of the most influential churches in Buenos Aires, even in the country. All the while, my conscience was dead; I simply thought I was a Christian because I had made a decision in a prayer and because I had separated myself from the more obscene sins. But I was plainly a Pharisee.

When I was 21, I married Jessica. She came to know the Lord in a very extraordinary way. Without having any Evangelical background, the Lord led her to experience grief over her sins and to embrace the righteousness of Christ through faith simply by means of her reading the Bible. After her conversion, she came to that same church, looking to be fed.

During the course of our first year of marriage, my conscience began to be awakened through the testimony of her life and her spiritual incompatibility with me and with our local church. By the end of that year, I began to seriously question my profession of faith, since I did not have any devotion to the Lord or desire for His Word. I simply did not know Him; therefore, I did not love Him.

A question began to torment me for several months: “Why do you think you’re a Christian?” I walked the streets like a madman talking to myself and refuting the different questions that came to my mind, but I could not find a

solid answer to the question. Reading the Scriptures, praying, attending church, doing good things, attending seminary, believing that God exists—none of this could make me a Christian.

In this state of mind, I began to read the book of Ephesians like I never had before (verse by verse and within its context). At the same time, my wife began to read about the history of the Church. When she got to the first councils and explained them to me, we came to understand that the Church has always had to defend the truth, which caught our attention because of the pluralistic context in which we were living. We discovered that many of the heresies that the Church refuted in the first century were being openly preached from the pulpit in our own church.

It was around that same time that I got to Ephesians 2:4-5: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” What a fountain of life for my dead soul! Nevertheless, I still did not understand the depth of what this text was saying.

Providentially, an email was sent to me with sermons from Charles Spurgeon (with whom I was totally unfamiliar until that point). For the first time in my life, at age 22, I came to understand the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. I began to grasp truths that were so essential, like the cost of the sacrifice of Christ, the new birth, and justification through faith alone. My heart clung to the righteousness of Christ through faith and to His Word as my only

authoritative guide.

I walked through much of this process on my own, because I had no healthy teachers or pastors to whom to turn—when I had gone to them before, they only assured me, “Remember, you made a decision to put your faith in Jesus.”

I fought for many months to find assurance of my salvation, and I would often ask myself, “How do I know that I am not

deceiving myself all over again?” After about six months, I was able to begin seeing the work of the Lord clearly evidenced in my life. For years I was the slave of certain hidden sins, but now, moved by His love, I was able to put those sins away because I sincerely wanted nothing to do with the sins I once loved. Now, I loved Him whom I once hated so much.

CALL TO MINISTRY

I was in my second year of seminary in Buenos Aires when Christ gave me new life. The seminary embraced things like higher textual criticism, liberal theology, open theism, and the like. So, when I was converted, I left

like John Piper, John MacArthur, Paul Washer, and others; and reinforcing the essential doctrines of the gospel.

My wife was also awakened to the historic gospel at that time, and—in the midst of our own immaturity—we started to proclaim the gospel in the different ministries we had been given within our local church (prison ministries, evangelism in the streets, and small group studies). Some of the people that heard us were uneasy with the gospel we were preaching, and we eventually began to experience opposition from some of the teachers in the church.

In the middle of 2011, we spoke with our pastors and left the church. We had nowhere else to congregate, so with fear we began to meet in our own home to study the Scriptures and pray. At that time, there were about twenty people meeting with us in our home. The Lord was impressing on our hearts more and more a longing for His Word, for the exaltation of His name, for the edification of His Church, and for the salvation of the lost. Nonetheless, my character and maturity



my seminary studies and instead invested that money in books, especially books on systematic theology, church history, and pastoral theology. For the next three years (2009-11), I devoted myself to studying theology; reading the Scriptures from start to finish; diving into the sermons of C.H. Spurgeon and the Puritans; learning from contemporary preachers

had much room to grow.

With time and through many afflictions, the Lord continued pouring His grace on me, molding my character for the work of the ministry and making it more and more evident that He had called me to this work. The brothers and sisters that were close to us began recognizing the gifts that the Lord had given me and affirming my calling. At a personal level, the sense of calling was getting stronger and stronger. The words of the Apostle Paul were made real to me:

“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.” (1 Cor. 9:16)

In the middle of 2014, Nicolás Serrano invited us to come to Rosario in order to be trained

and disciplined at Family of Grace Church. Originally, the idea was that we would spend a year or two in Rosario and later return back to Buenos Aires as missionaries sent out by the church. I understood that I needed to be disciplined, that I lacked the necessary theological maturity to be able to pass on the counsel of God to the next generation. Even though Jesica and I felt a great burden to continue serving the Lord in Buenos Aires, we decided that we would be much more useful in the ministry after a process of discipleship. So, with great expectation and joy, we moved to Rosario and became members of Family of Grace Church. The church has been a great instrument for edification for me and my family.

The church confirmed my gifts and calling, and in January of 2017 I was recognized as one of the pastors of Family of Grace.

RECENT UPDATE

This has been a month of great joy for our family. The Lord, by His mercy, has given me the opportunity to begin working full-time as a pastor, which is a great responsibility and an enormous privilege that we assume with great joy, gladness, enthusiasm, and sobriety. For our family, the month of November was a month of many adjustments, preparation, visits, and attention given to members of the church; and even

though it was a month of intense work, we have been able to see the hand of the Lord in every detail. He is a God who dwells close to His children!

I ask you to pray for my family, for this time in particular of new responsibility. Pray that we are free from temptation, that we remain physically strong, that the Lord would give us wisdom, and that our hearts and minds would delight more and more in Him. ■

TRANSFORM IN TWATASHA



BLESSINGS NDHLOVU

Mapalo “Blessings” Ndhlovu has been laboring to establish Faith Baptist Church in Twatasha, one of the poorer sections of Kitwe, the second-largest city in Zambia. The history of his church building is a

strong image of the transformational power of the gospel. Just as the gospel has changed the purpose of that building, it is now changing people’s lives—and perhaps the entire community someday.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH BUILDING

I would like to give the interesting history of Faith Baptist Church’s building in Twatasha. This property was bought by my sending church, Faith Baptist Church Garnaton, after they felt convinced that Twatasha was a growing place and needed a church plant.

Before I was even born, a man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) came to Zambia and bought a large plot of land. He built a bar so exquisite that it became famous throughout Zambia.

The owner used to invite musicians from DRC to come to his bar and play live music called ‘Rumba.’ He must have been the only one in Zambia who was doing this, because his bar became so popular that people from all over the country traveled just to have this

experience. On the same property, the owner built guest houses for the musicians and those who wanted to spend a night at the bar. The facility also had a swimming pool, a green garden, and a restaurant. It was modern and clean; it hosted live music; and men and women were flocking there in great numbers. Business was booming.

Nothing on this earth, however, lasts forever. The owner of the bar got very sick and died. He had married about five women and had children from each. When he died, the children started sharing the property and the houses, but the bar was left abandoned. It sat for many years without anyone using it. Eventually, they started taking out every valuable thing that could be sold, like doors, windows, and the roofing. Noth-

FORMATION SHA



KITWE, ZAMBIA

ing remained but the walls.

When my church felt the need to plant a church in Twatasha, we started by having Bible study under a tree. In our search for a more suitable place of meeting, we noticed this abandoned place that had been a bar long ago. We enquired from the daughter who was the current owner of the place. In the midst of those conversations, she was saved, and right now she is one of our faithful members at

Faith Baptist Church Twatasha!

We can still see the mindset that was planted in this community years ago, especially in the widespread drunkenness. Would you believe that people here often start drinking beer at 8 o'clock in the morning? Teens find their pleasure in smoking, drinking, and fornication. Marriages at a very young age, due to pregnancy, are common. Please pray, dear friends.

BUILDING REPAIRS FINALLY FINISHED

Our church thanks God for a wonderful prayer answered this year. We have been praying to finish repairing the rest of our building for a long time. Specifically, we have been praying to have our children's Sunday School room covered. By God's grace, Heart-Cry Missionary Society donated

the funds to finish the roof on the building. Thankfully, the building is now looking very good as one completed structure. It is comforting to know that our children will be learning from inside a building, without having to run from the rains when they come.

ANOTHER LIFE TRANSFORMED

One of the hardest things with a new church is that most of the people are in their first steps of

maturity, and that means more problems and more sin to confront. Yet even a new church gets

to experience peaceful moments and see growth in people. One of our praises to God has been seeing Bana Shekinah, a regular church attender, growing in grace. We have been with this lady for about a year now. She got saved through women's evangelism, and since then we have been watching closely over her. Thanks be to God, she has been faithfully attending the church meetings.

Here is a bit of this woman's history: firstly, she is HIV positive and on medicine. She had a bad temper most of the time, and she

used to fight often with her husband. Her husband is not saved and does not worship with us, but we keep on sharing God's Word whenever we find him at home, and he freely talks with us. Just last month, he was confessing the great change he has seen in his wife. They are now living peacefully, and she does not argue with him like she did before. Even the neighbors are talking about the change they have seen in her! These things have brought great joy to my soul in seeing that God is at work. ■

The Five Solas of the Protestant Reformation conference.



BILL ISSA, UGANDA

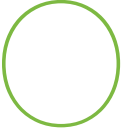
FORT PORTAL SEMINARS: ENCOURAGING GOSPEL GROWTH

In February of 2017, HeartCry missionary Bill Issa in Uganda visited Fort Portal in the western region of the country. He had received an invitation to preach and meet with church leaders there. The result was an agreement for Bill to

lead seminars on a quarterly basis, teaching them biblical doctrine and church practice. A church in Bridgeport, California, partnered together with HeartCry to fund Bill's travel and cover the conference expenses.

FIRST CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The first seminar was held in June. Here is Bill's delightful description of his time in Fort Portal. We are particularly pleased with how Bill avoided starting with controversial topics, instead teaching reverence for God's Word and then letting their curiosity bring the Word to bear on those topics.

 In the morning of the first day, we drove twenty kilometers to a village where the organizers wanted us to have the seminar. We really wanted the seminar to be held in town for many reasons, but we decided to go along with it and see how the first one would go. The organizers in Fort Portal were expecting twenty-five or thirty pastors. However, the first day's turnout was not good, as only a few pastors came. Among these were some women pastors. We had asked the organizers to invite pastors from all Christian denominations just the way they are, trusting that the truth would set them free from any errors.

On the second day, we had

about thirty-four pastors. The day ended very well, and (to our grateful surprise) many pastors were more encouraged. On the last day, we had a few new pastors join us. The teaching went well, and the day ended with more questions and answers.

We taught three subjects over the course of the three days:

- ① *The Doctrine of God: Knowing the Living God*
- ② *Basic Principles of Bible Interpretation*
- ③ *Leading According to Jesus' Pattern*

We had many village pastors who could neither read nor write, so reasoning with them through Scripture was not easy.

UNEXPECTED RESPONSES

Overall, the seminar was very successful. We had forty pastors and church leaders in total, though not all were present for every session. We had decided not to begin with doctrines that bring divisions among denominations, like speaking in tongues and women pastors. But during our hermeneutics lessons the pastors themselves started asking us how some Scriptures could be correctly interpreted according to the principles we had taught. The examples they chose were Scriptures about speaking in tongues and women pastors! We had no option but to apply the principles

of biblical interpretation to some of those Scriptures and help them understand what the Bible really teaches.

Surprisingly, people were encouraged by the teachings beyond our expectation. After reasoning with them through the Scriptures concerning these controversial topics, we feared that they would be discouraged and stop coming. Instead, they continued coming, and to our amazement this is what some of them said:

PATRICK: "Brothers and sisters in Christ, I don't know what to say about this seminar. It is the first of its kind in my life. I'm a



pastor, and I've attended many seminars and conferences, but we spend all the time singing and dancing and leave very little time for learning, and the little they teach us is nonsense. But these people, to me, are unique. They've spent the whole time teaching us, and whatever they teach they open the Bible to prove that it's not their own mind. Indeed, God has remembered us in Fort Portal."

JENIFER: "I am amazed with these teachings. I'm a woman, and I've been a pastor for many years now, but no one had explained the Bible very clearly to me like these people have done! I now understand very well that,

according to Scripture, women can't be pastors. What I should do next is what I don't know; I need God's grace to guide me."

CHRISTOPHER: "Friends, I'm also in a dilemma like Pastor Jenifer's. I am a male pastor, but my senior pastor is a woman. I now understand clearly the meaning of these Scriptures—women should not be pastors. What I can give to Pastor Jenifer as advice is that we should not rush things. After understanding the truth, let us pray to God about what we should do and how we should do it. We need a lot of prayer and wisdom. But I thank God for having brought us these servants of His from Kampala."

SECOND CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

In October, Bill returned for the second seminar in Fort Portal. This one turned out to be quite different from the first, as Bill explains below.

As we did last time, we encouraged everyone from every Christian denomination to come, even women pastors, so that we could reason together from the

Scriptures and try to understand better the mind of God together. In our first seminar in June, we taught the pastors on three subjects: 1) the doctrine of God—His attributes; 2) hermeneutics—ten

principles of Bible interpretation; and 3) servant leadership—leading according to Jesus’ pattern. This time, because our seminar took place during the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we decided to celebrate the event with the pastors of Fort Portal by taking them through the teachings of the Reformers. “The Five Solas of the Protestant Reformation” served as the theme of our October conference.

We began by giving them a brief history of the Church, from

its birth in the New Testament (how it was simple and Scriptural), then showing how corruption entered, which eventually led to the Reformation. After that brief history, we spent all our time going through the five Solas. Surprisingly, almost none of the pastors even knew about these doctrines, because they were more interested in experiences than history! Let me first share the challenges and then what we felt were successes on this trip.

CHALLENGES

If I compare this seminar with the previous one, I can say that this one was far more challenging to us. In fact, at one point, the host pastor stopped us in the middle of the lesson to publicly oppose what we were teaching. The biggest problem for them was the word “alone.” They wanted us to teach *Scripture*, *grace*, *faith*, *Christ*, and *the glory of God*, but without the word “alone” after each of them. We told them we may as well drive back to Kampala if they did not want that word in our teachings, because all of those doctrines without the word “alone” are helpless, powerless, and meaningless.

I always believe that one can-

not teach “Scripture alone” effectively without pointing at teachings and practices in the Church today that are nowhere found in the Scriptures—this proved to be where the trouble started for us. We found ourselves, without realizing it, teaching against some of the very doctrines and practices of our host church, a Pentecostal church called, “Power of God Ministries.”

This church was new to us, because in June, we had met about thirty kilometers outside of Fort Portal in a rural area. This time, we asked the organizers to find a church in the city center, and this is how we ended up at Power of God Ministries.

SUCCESSES

The Lord is always amazing! Can you believe that the conference that was more challenging to us is the one we consider more successful! How? We had more attending the conference, a total of sixty-seven pastors, compared to forty at the one in the village.

Providentially, the Lord linked us with our dear brother Jim Robinette, who works with Mission Africa here in Uganda. Jim is also the agent of Chapel Library from Pensacola, Florida, here in Uganda. He receives a lot of good literature from Cha-

pel Library; when he learned that we were going to train pastors, he gave us a box full of books to give to pastors free of charge. Brother Sam Smith also came from Tororo with another box of books. At the end of the conference, each male pastor went back home with thirty-eight free books, among them *Ten Indictments against the Modern Church* by our brother Paul Washer. This added new flavor to this conference compared to the previous one. We thank the Lord for these books and for our brothers Jim and Sam.

While the host pastor, his son, and a few other people were busy opposing our teaching, we saw the power of God when many other pastors defended us even though they too were Pentecostals. We were also very encouraged to see some pastors from the first conference come from the village (thirty kilometers away) to hear us teach again. When others started calling us names, one of them, Pastor Edward, stood up and said in their local language:

"Dear brethren, I hear you say a lot of things against these men from Kampala. Allow me to share a brief testimony of what happened to me in June, when these people first came to teach in Fort Portal. After Pastor Bill had taught us for two days, I was very much confused because what he was teaching against is what we do in our church, yet he was supporting everything with Scriptures. I got so very confused. But when I returned home, I

prayed, asking God to help me understand His will, only to hear God tell me that what these men are teaching is the truth and that I shouldn't oppose them. From that day forward, I respected these men. I stand here to warn you that we should be very careful what we say against these men. Just go back home and pray to God; I'm sure He's going to guide you the way He did with me. What these people are teaching is the truth from God. Those are my words."

After that, he sat down.

After the conference, a number of pastors came to us outside, confessing that they were afraid to support our teachings openly because of the host pastor's presence, but that they loved everything we taught. Some even asked us what they ought to do with their churches that are not biblical! They encouraged us not to fear anything but to continue speaking the truth in love.

Before we left, the host pastor and his son apologized to us, thanked us for the teaching, and expressed a desire to learn more. They mentioned potentially visiting our church, and they invited us to return any time to teach the Bible. Everything ended in harmony. These are some of the reasons why we were very encouraged with this conference, in spite of its challenges.

Our next seminar is scheduled for February 2018. After seeing in the first two seminars that we already have some people who are very interested to learn more,

we have decided to have the February meeting in Kampala instead. We are inviting only those pastors who have shown signs of understanding our teachings, in order to disciple them more closely without the distraction of those who are not ready to learn. We also want them to worship with us on Sunday and see

how we conduct services at our church. We have already identified those who truly have shown interest to learn more. We will be going back to Fort Portal in June, God willing. Please be in prayer for these people, that the Lord will use some to establish biblical churches in western Uganda in the future. ■

NEPAL

GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

BY JEFF S.

Recently, Mrs. Gangi Sara, an elderly woman and faithful member of a church hidden in the mountains of Nepal, went home to be with the Lord. She was not famous or well-known, nor was her departure noticed by anyone outside of those who personally knew her. She was one of many elderly among the villagers, yet she was not like most. She was the only believer in her family, and her devotion to the Lord and the local church she attended was obvious to all. In fact, her attendance was amazing in itself, for she had no vehicle, and the meeting place was several hours away by foot. Despite the pain in her legs and the resistance from her family, she would walk several hours up and down the mountain paths in order to attend the fellowship of the saints each week. She had life. It was evident to all that she had something within her that was more than just breath in her body or fleshy determination. Her sons

saw it. Her neighbors saw it. And though they knew of her testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, they were not interested in it. Not until the 28th of December, when she slipped away from this world and into the arms of her Savior.

Ecclesiastes 7:2 states, "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart." This proved to be true, for as her family and neighbors gathered together for her funeral service, it was obvious something had changed. In reflection of her unwavering faith and in contemplation of the frailty of this life, they not only listened to the message preached, but they also seemed even excited to hear it! Afterwards, they even invited the pastors for a return visit so they could hear more.

On January 3rd, God opened up the opportunity for the gospel to be preached once again in this village. The meeting was well



attended, and Brother Khem C. preached the gospel. Many gospel tracts were distributed among the group, and plans have been made to follow up with this village in the near future.

Truly, God works in mysterious ways and uses the events that this world sees as the most tragic to bring about the greatest of blessings. I cannot help but wonder how many petitions Mrs. Sara made before the Lord for her sons and for her village. Undoubtedly, she longed to see the Lord work among her neighbors. I can-

not help but imagine how many prayers were answered in this one simple meeting.

Would you pick up where she left off and pray for them as well? Please pray that the Lord opens the hearts of all who heard the truth concerning the person and work of Christ. Pray that the gospel tracts would be read and would bring further conviction both of sin and of the love of the Savior. Pray that more opportunities would be granted to declare His name among the people of Nepal. ■





ISRAEL

COUNTING THE COST

BY SEAN R.

Brother Leonid serves a congregation in Jerusalem. He wrote about the struggles of a woman who seems to have come to faith:

“Recently in Jaffa, an elderly woman from Bulgaria by the name of Virena* has repented. Her parents baptized her as a child in the Orthodox Church. Twenty years ago, Virena married a Jew and moved to Israel. Ten years ago, she became a widow and now lives in a hostel for pensioners. Virena has come to understand from attending our meetings what is true faith in Christ and has asked me about baptism. However, further events have taken place, verifying once again the words of Christ our Redeemer:

‘For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ (Matt. 10:35-36)

“Virena called her only son in Bulgaria to share the joyful news of her upcoming baptism in our congregation in the spring. Her son answered that he would damn her for such an act and that he would refuse to call her ‘mother.’ Virena is deeply grieved and has stopped preparing further for baptism. But she still attends our meetings, reads the Bible, and asks many questions. I ask you to pray for her to count the cost and follow Christ.”

On a brighter note, Samuil L. reports from Tel Aviv: “We recently held a special service, during which our brother Alexander fulfilled the Lord’s commandment and was baptized. He received Jesus in our congregation and went through a special course in preparation for baptism. Please pray for Alexander’s spiritual growth and for the salvation of his parents and brother, to whom he has been witnessing about the grace of Jesus Christ.” ■

* Pseudonym



BY CHRISTOPHER SIPPLEY

THE FRENCH CANADIANS OF NORTH AMERICA

Canada boasts being the second-largest nation by land mass in the world, ranking only below Russia and just squeezing in above China. With diverse, breath-taking beauty from coast to coast, it is a place where tourists flock and where many (including myself) love to call home.

Canada's diversity is not limited to its scenic landscapes but is also evident among its many ethnic groups, the second largest of which are the French-Canadians (French, Québécois, and Acadian), who make up roughly 21% of the population. The nation's official languages are English and French, and the official language of its largest and second most populated province (Québec) is French.

While that might not be surprising information to most, what many do not realize is that French-Canadians are arguably the most unreached people group in North America, with an Evangelical population of less than one percent (over 99% unreached).

Statistically, Roman Catholicism claims the chief status among religious adherents; however, attendance has been in steady decline, and many parishes have closed their doors. In addition to the drop in religious interest, there has been a steady decay in the moral fabric of the culture, as seen in the alarming divorce, abortion, and suicide rates. Needless to say, the situation is dire, and Spirit-empowered gospel labours are required.

Please remember the nation of Canada in prayer, particularly the French-Canadians. Petition the Lord of the harvest for an increase in French-speaking labourers, that God would raise up many with a burden to reach the lost; there is a great need for healthy churches to be planted and established, that entire communities would come under the power and influence of the Word of God. Pray for faithful, Christ-centered preaching as well as godly leadership in the existing churches; many are outwardly religious, but few are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. ■



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JULY 2017

TABLETALK

When All Things Are Made New

By R.C. Sproul

RIGHT NOW COUNTS FOREVER

I was first introduced to R.C. Sproul when I was a young missionary in Peru. Someone had given me his video series entitled, “The Holiness of God.” I remember pulling a chair in front of a small television to watch the first lecture. It was not long before I found myself on my knees and then face to the floor. I realized that Dr. Sproul was introducing me to the God of the Bible, the God before whom even the seraphim hide their face, the God that no man can see and live. It was one of the most important moments in my life, and it set me on a course of seeking to know God as He is revealed in the Scriptures and in His beloved Son.

The recent passing of R.C. Sproul brought to me both sadness and joy—sadness, because he would no longer be with us; joy, because he was now looking in the face of the One who saved him and made him the man that he was.

- Paul Washer

As a pastor and theologian, I’ve had to think about a lot of hard questions over the years. Truth be told, however, the most difficult problem I’ve faced is the problem of suffering. We all face suffering in some way, and we all know people who’ve lived such

painful lives that we wonder how they can go on.

We don’t ever want to downplay or deny the pain that suffering brings. Christianity isn’t a system of Stoic denial wherein we pretend that everything is OK even when we are

enduring the worst things. At the same time, we dare not forget the Christian hope that one day suffering will be gone forever. When we deal with suffering, we tend to have our gaze completely locked on the present, but the Christian answer to suffering, while making it incumbent upon us to alleviate present suffering as much as we are able, looks beyond the present to the future.

the future. Let me touch on a few of the highlights.

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (21:3–4). When I was a little boy, life was tough. There was a boy in our

CAN YOU IMAGINE LOOKING INTO THE UNVEILED GLORY OF GOD FOR ONE SECOND?

The very essence of secularism is the thesis that the *hic et nunc*, the here and now, is all there is. There is no realm of the eternal. But as Christians, we are called to consider the present in light of the eternal. This is what Jesus preached again and again. What does it profit a man if in this time and in this place he gains the whole world, but he loses his own soul (Luke 9:25)?

Scripture says that the end defines significance of the beginning (Eccl. 7:8). God alone knows the end from the beginning comprehensively, but in His Word, He gives us a glimpse of the end toward which we are moving. And if we can focus our attention on the end and not merely on the now and the pain we experience here, we can begin to understand our pain in the right perspective.

In unfolding the new heaven and the new earth, Revelation 21–22 gives us one of the clearest glimpses of

community who was much bigger than I was, and he was a bully. Sometimes he would beat me up, and I would run home crying. And my mother would be in the kitchen, and she’d have her apron on, and she’d say, “Come here.” I’d come in, and then she’d lean over and wipe away my tears—one of the most tender forms of communication—with the edge of her apron. When my mother wiped away my tears, I was truly comforted, and I was encouraged to go back into the battle. But I’d go back out, and sooner or later I’d get hurt again, and would cry again, and my mother would have to wipe my tears away again. But when God wipes away our tears, they will never flow again for all eternity. (Unless, of course, they are tears of joy.)

That’s the eternal perspective. That’s the end from the beginning. Right now we live in the valley of tears, but that situation is not permanent because God will wipe away our tears.

John also says, “Death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying” (v. 4). Death, sorrow, crying, pain—these all belong to the former things that will pass away. I can imagine having conversations with you in the new Jerusalem, and you’ll say, “Remember back then when we used to worry about the problem of suffering?” And I’ll say, “I hardly remember what that was.”

Then, in **verse 22**, we read about something else that will be missing. Not only will there be no sorrow or death, but there will be no temple in the new Jerusalem of the new heaven and earth. But how can the new Jerusalem be the holy city without a temple? Well, John means that there will be no temple building. There will be another kind of temple, John says—“the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” The most beautiful earthly sanctuary in this world will be passé in the new Jerusalem because we’ll be in the presence of God and of the Lamb.

“No longer will there be anything accursed” (22:3). You know that song “Joy to the World”? I love the line in the song that ends with “far as the curse is found.” How far is that? In this present darkness, the curse extends to the end of the earth—to our lives, to our labors, to our businesses, to our relationships. All suffer under the pangs of the curse of a fallen world. That’s why there’s a cosmic yearning, where all of

creation groans together waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, waiting for that moment when the curse is removed (**Rom. 8:19**). There won’t be any weeds or any tares in the new Jerusalem. The earth won’t resist our plows because the curse won’t be found. “But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him” (**Rev. 22:3**).

And then we get the highest hope, the most incredible promise in the New Testament—we will see God’s face (v. 4). All of our lives we can come close to the Lord, we can sense His presence, and we can talk with Him, but we cannot see His face. But if we persevere through the pain and the suffering of this present world, the vision of God waits for us on the other side. Can you imagine it? Can you imagine looking into the unveiled glory of God for one second? It will make every pain I’ve ever experienced in this world worth it to see that.

“These words are trustworthy and true” (v. 6)—not salve or opium to dull our present pain but the truth of Almighty God, who made us, who knows us, who by the suffering of His Son has redeemed His people. He has now guaranteed that if we are in Christ by faith alone, we are bound for glory, and nothing can derail that train. So these former things that cause us so much grief will pass away, and He will make all things new. **T**

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"The world lives in a time of crisis. Christians alone are in a position to rescue the perishing. We dare not settle down to try to live as if things were normal."

— A. W. Tozer

"If, by excessive labor, we die before reaching the average age of man, worn out in the Master's service, then glory be to God, we shall have so much less of earth and so much more of Heaven!"

— C. H. Spurgeon

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