

THE PASTOR'S STUDY

EXERCISING THE MIND | IGNITING THE HEART | PREPARING THE
HANDS



A free quarterly paper for rural pastors
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IN THIS ISSUE

- Editorial: Christ victorious - Joel R. Beeke
- Divine sovereignty suffering and gospel hope
Genesis 3 16 to 19
- The scriptural idea of sin - Louis Berkhof
- What is sin - Martin Bussey
- Hebrew and Greek words for sin
- A biblical theology of sickness - Brian G.
Najapfour
- Sickness - J.C. Ryle
- God's glory in judgement - Amos Kennedy
- Let's talk about debt - Eric Oraya
- The early life and conversion of Lott Cary

WELCOME

We have been late getting out the second and third issues of the 2026 Pastor's Study. Our WhatsApp groups have grown, and we now translate into 22 languages in 19 African countries. We have also been working to make our magazine not just something you can read and relax with, but a teaching tool.

The main articles will continue to centre on a single theme, and the teaching modules designed alongside them will be available on our resource website, krapfproject.org. While we will continue to include history and pastoral theology, we also want to make the magazine useful as a teaching tool for pastors, fraternities and small groups.

This combined issue (Vol. 6, Nos. 2-3) focuses on the theme of sin and suffering, and how we as Christians should understand suffering and navigate the frustrations of this present evil world. We also have a history

article, part one, on the life of Lott Cary, the first African American missionary to Africa in 1822. We're also thankful to have an article from a first-time writer, an accountant from Western Kenya, on the Christian's attitude to debt.

We pray that this issue of the magazine will bless pastors across Africa, for the development of healthy churches and the glory of God.

Sincerely,

Aaron Dunlop, Editor.

THE PASTOR'S STUDY

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Partner with us and appreciate this magazine.

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EDITORIAL CHRIST VICTORIOUS

By Joel R. Beeke

We want to acknowledge Dr Beeke's contribution to the Krapf Project and his generous stewardship of literature. He has contributed to The Pastor's Study from the beginning. We chose this excellent study of Jesus' temptation for our editorial because it contrasts so well the victory of the Last Adam against the failures of the first Adam, who brought us into a state of sin and suffering.

A perpetual war exists between Christ and the devil, the prince of this world (Genesis 3:15). Matthew 4:1–11 recounts one of Christ's great victories over the devil. After a long period of fasting, the devil comes with three temptations.

In the first temptation, the devil said, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (4:3). Satan is referring to the words spoken by the Father at Jesus’s baptism: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). In effect, Satan echoes his words to Eve in the Garden of Eden: “Yea, hath God said?” He then challenges Christ: “Do you really think that you are the Son of God? If so, prove that you are the Son of God by turning these stones into bread.”

The devil is clever; he knows that hunger is a sharp sword. And he knows how to use truth to his own advantage. Jesus does not yield to the devil. He refuses to use His divine power to relieve His physical hunger, choosing instead to do the will of His Father and endure suffering. “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (4:4), He tells the devil.

Quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus says, in effect, “Bread is not sufficient. I am dependent on my Father and His word, not on bread. I live out of His hand. I do not want bread if my Father does not want to give it to me.” Jesus refuses to separate the gift of bread from the Giver of bread, as Adam did. Adam pushed aside the Giver of fruit when he reached out for the gift of fruit.

Next, the devil takes Jesus to the top of the temple in the Holy City—the most sacred place in all the earth. “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down,” the devil says. He quotes Psalm 91:11–12, saying the angels will protect Jesus if He jumps (Matthew 4:6). In a moment, Christ would then be recognised throughout the religious world as the Son of God.

The temptation for Christ is to reveal Himself to Israel in a dazzling display of power and supernatural privilege rather than through the way of suffering and rejection as the Man of Sorrows. The devil offers a shortcut instead of the long route of suffering and death.

This was no small temptation, for Jesus wanted to reveal Himself as the Messiah. Yet it was contrary to His Father's will, which said that the Son must first suffer and then be glorified. Christ's exaltation would come, but only after His work in the state of humiliation was finished. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16, referring to Israel's temptations at Massah, where the unbelieving children of Israel demanded some sensational proof that the Lord was among them (Exodus 17:7).

Finally, the devil takes Jesus to a high mountain. He shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and says, "All

these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9).

“All the kingdoms”—what a tremendous claim! Even today, we face the temptation to sell our souls to the devil in exchange for the vain pleasures and treasures of this world. We must resist as Jesus did, quoting from Deuteronomy: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).

What a contrast between Matthew 4 and Genesis 3! Christ is victorious in a barren wilderness, where Adam failed in a beautiful garden. Christ is victorious on an empty stomach (Matthew 4:2); Adam failed on a full stomach. Jesus has overcome the devil, so we can overcome him too, through faith in Jesus.

Joel R. Beeke is a minister of the Heritage Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan (USA), and President of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, where he is also the professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics. He is the author of many books and articles.

MARCH/APRIL 2023 The Banner of Sovereign Grace, Truth, p. 49. Used by permission.

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY, SUFFERING AND GOSPEL HOPE GENESIS 3:16 TO 19

The Bible teaches us that God is sovereign in his reign and controls all things (Psalm 135:6; Isaiah 46:9–11; Daniel 4:35). Every atom of creation is within the sphere of God's knowledge, power, and presence. The tension between this world's suffering and God's sovereignty is often difficult to process.

Scripture often speaks of God's sovereignty over the frustrations and difficulties we face in this world. We see it in the story of Job. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes tells us what God “has made crooked” we cannot make straight (Ecclesiastes 7:13). Paul also tells us that God has subjected the world we live in to “vanity,” or “frustration” (Romans 8:20). These scriptures, and others like them, explain what God outlined in Genesis 3:16-19.

When Adam sinned in the garden, the manner in which he fell and the form of the misery in which he landed were according to God's sovereign purposes. In short, God has built pain, difficulty, and frustration into the fabric of our world, and all creation and humanity groan under it (Romans 8:22–23).

Only the power of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ can make sense of this and provide a perspective of wisdom and knowledge to navigate the rough terrain of a fallen world, and in a strange and often inexplicable way, provides incomprehensible peace and inexpressible joy in the midst of it all (Ecclesiastes 2:26; Philippians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:8). In his sovereignty, God redeems the calamities, frustrations, and pains of the world for his own glory and for our good (Romans 8:28).

Suffering in Genesis 3

The sufferings described in Genesis 3 help us understand what the Preacher means in Ecclesiastes 7:13 and what Paul means when he says that creation was “subjected to futility.” Human sin brought God’s judgment upon the whole created order.

Death was promised to Adam if he ate of the tree, but in mercy, God stayed the power of death and destruction and offered hope. Creation was subjected to futility “in hope” (Romans 8:20). God’s judgment was real; so too is hope of deliverance through Jesus.

First, suffering applies to all humanity without exception.

Suffering and sorrow in life are universal (Job 14:1: “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble”).

Second, suffering is temporary.

The suffering mentioned in Genesis 3 is physical, not eternal. God refers to the human body of the woman and to Adam, of sweat and suffering that will culminate in dust.

Third, suffering should not automatically be attributed to Satan, a witch doctor or some particular curse.

We know that Satan is still active (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 20:10), but God is in control. God, not Satan, has pronounced this suffering on humanity.

Fourth, suffering is not fatal nor final.

In Genesis 3, God makes a difference between Satan and humanity. Satan is condemned to destruction, but the earth is cursed “for man’s sake.” In mercy, God has a plan to recover men, to save some and deliver them from the curse of

death. In Christ, suffering is neither fatal nor final.

Fifth, suffering is part of the gospel purpose.

The pain and suffering of vss. 16–19 follow the gospel promise in vs 15. The sufferings of life then become tools for the work of the gospel in the individual's life.

There is a way back to God; it is through Jesus Christ, and those who follow Jesus must follow the path he took, a path marked by pain and sorrow. The road to glory is paved with pain and suffering, just like Jesus: the cross before the crown (Luke 24).

This is how God planned it, so every step would be an exercise of faith as we look in hope to the final glory.

THE SCRIPTURAL IDEA OF SIN

By Louis Berkhof

Several details are necessary to understand the Scriptural idea of sin.

First, sin is a specific kind of evil. It must not be confused with physical evil, that which is injurious, painful, or calamitous. Sickness may be called an evil, but in a different sense. Sin belongs to the ethical sphere, where the contrast is between moral good and moral evil. It is not merely a misfortune that has overtaken man, nor a defect arising from the limitations of his creaturely state. Scripture represents it as a deliberate departure from the right way, a revolt against rightful authority, a breaking of the covenant, and a guilty transgression of the law. It is therefore not something passive, such as a weakness, fault, or imperfection for which man cannot be held responsible. Fundamentally, sin is

active opposition to God and a positive transgression of His law. It is the result of a free but evil choice by man.

Second, sin is absolute; there is no room for exception; no neutral territory exists between good and evil. There may be varying degrees of goodness and wickedness; however, there are no gradations by which an individual progressively moves from moral good to moral evil. The transition is qualitative, not merely quantitative. A moral being does not become evil simply by possessing less goodness, but by turning away from what is good to sin. There is no position of neutrality. Man is either on the side of God or against Him; he is either walking in the way of righteousness or has turned to the way of evil.

Third, sin always relates to God and His will. The older theologians were right to define it formally as “lack of

conformity to the law of God.” The central demand of the law is love of God. Moral goodness consists in love of God, and moral evil therefore consists in its opposite. Sin is separation from, opposition to, and hatred of God. It reveals itself in transgressions of the divine law in thought, word, deed, disposition, and state, whether that will is written on the heart of man or revealed in the law of God.

Fourth, sin includes both guilt and pollution.

- Guilt has two parts: condemnation and liability to punishment.
 - **The guilt of fault.** In one sense, guilt is the illdeserving or demerit inseparable from sin itself. It is a simple fact that we’ve done something wrong.
 - **The guilt of penalty.** In another sense, guilt is the obligation to satisfy the law’s just demands. We’ve not only done something

wrong, and that will never change, but there is a debt that needs to be settled. This guilt is only removed by satisfaction, whether rendered personally or vicariously.

- Pollution is the inherent corruption of the sinner. It is not merely an outward stain or a substance infused into the soul, but a real corruption of human nature. Guilt and pollution must be distinguished, yet they cannot ultimately be separated in the sinful life of man. The sinner is both guilty before God and inwardly defiled by sin.

Fifth, the seat of sin is the heart. In Scriptural phraseology, the heart is the central organ of the soul, from which the issues of life flow. Sin does not reside in a single faculty alone, as if the intellect, the will, or the affections could be isolated from the rest of man. From the corrupt heart, its influence extends to

the whole person: intellect, will, affections, body, and conduct.

Sixth, sin is not limited to visible actions. Sin comprises sinful deeds, sinful habits, and a sinful state or condition. The sinful state is the root from which sinful habits arise, and these, in turn, manifest as sinful acts. At the same time, repeated sinful deeds establish and strengthen sinful habits. Thus, the acts and dispositions of man find their explanation in his corrupt nature. Sin is therefore seen in act, disposition, and state of being.

Louis Berkhof was born in the Netherlands in 1873. In 1881, his family immigrated to Grand Rapids, in the United States, where Berkhof eventually became a professor of theology at Calvin Theological Seminary.

WHAT IS SIN

By Martin Bussey

There are many different words used to denote sin in the Bible. These include in Hebrew: ‘hattat’—‘missing the mark’, which is often translated as ‘sin’ (Judges 20:16; Ex 20:20); ‘pesha’—‘rebellion’, which usually appears in English translations as ‘transgression’ (1 Ki 12:19; Is 1:28); ‘awon’ —‘perversion’ or ‘twisting’, usually rendered ‘iniquity’ (Is 24:1; Dan 9:5).

And in Greek we have: ‘hamartia’ — falling short or wrong direction (Jn 8:46; Jam 1:15); ‘asebia’— ungodliness (Rom 1:18); and ‘anomia’—lawlessness (Mt 7:23; 1 Jn 3:4). All these words imply something right and true which has not been attained: a mark is missed, a boundary is crossed, something good is spoilt, a demand is not met, and so forth.

What is this that is right and true and good which has not been attained? It is the law which God has given. Sin is missing the mark God has set; it is crossing the boundary God has drawn; it is spoiling something good God has set up; it is failing to meet a demand God has made. So the fundamental and most important thing about the character of sin is this: it is against God. (Notice what David says when he has committed adultery with Bathsheba: He says to the LORD, “Against you, you only have I sinned...”. Psalm 51:4.)

We can define sin briefly then like this: “Sin is any failure to conform to the law of God in thought, word or deed”. Notice the two different ways we fail to conform to the law of God: there are sins of omission (not doing what we are supposed to do) and sins of commission (doing what we are not supposed to do). So stealing from you is a sin of commission; but failing to give to you

when you are in need (of food, clothing or shelter) is a sin of omission.

Why is sin so serious?

What makes it so terrible? "What is really so bad about sexual immorality?" Well, this particular sin destroys families, spreads diseases, brings misery and does not satisfy those who indulge in it. But the thing that is so bad about this sin, as it is with all sin, is that it is shaking our fist at God. It is saying to the LORD, "I know better than you what is good and right. I know better than you what will make me happy. Go away! I will not do what you want; I will not go your way". And it is saying these things to the very one who made us and sustains us, and who provides the very strength with which we rebel against him!

Let me quote from Jerry Bridges:

I fear that in our day, even among sincere believers, we have lost sight of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. By contrast, godly men of earlier centuries saw their best deeds as falling so far short of the perfection God requires that they could be justly condemned for even their most fervent prayers.

And the world, of course, tries to downplay or completely ignore the sinfulness of sin. People speak of ‘taking money without permission’ rather than ‘stealing’! We hear people admit they ‘misspoke’, when what they really did was lie! People nowadays do not ‘commit adultery’; they ‘have a love affair’ (and because ‘love’ is involved, it sounds all rather nice and wonderful, rather than what it is: an affront to the majesty of the living God!). Others think of sin mainly in terms of unsociable behaviour: doing things that other people do not like or that society as a

whole finds unacceptable. Sometimes we talk about “little sins” or “respectable sins”: but any sin is dreadful because it makes us a rebel, a traitor against God.

Martin Bussey is a British-born professor of Theology at Africa International University in Nairobi.

TEACHING MODULES

This magazine has been designed both for reading and relaxation, and for study in small groups or pastors' fraternities.

Please contact us if you have any questions or if you want help setting up a pastors' study group.

For the notes associated with this magazine, scan the QR code or visit

<https://krapfproject.org/resource-tags/sorrow-suffering-series/>

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HEBREW AND GREEK WORDS FOR SIN

Hebrew and Greek	Meaning	References
ער / הער — ra' / rā'ā	Evil, wickedness, harm, trouble or calamity	Gen. 6:5; 8:21; 39:9; Deut. 9:18; Ps. 34:14; Jer. 17:9
רבע — 'ābar	To cross or pass over; morally, to cross a commanded boundary	Num. 14:41; Deut. 17:2; Josh. 7:11, 15; Judg. 2:20; Hos. 6:7
חטא — ḥaṭṭā't	Sin, sinful offence or sin offering	Gen. 4:7; 18:20; Lev. 4:3; Ps. 51:2-3; Isa. 53:12
עשׂר — rāšā'	Wicked or guilty person; one opposed to righteousness	Gen. 18:23; Ex. 23:7; Ps. 1:1, 4-6; Prov. 10:24
חטא — ḥāṭā'	Trespass	Gen. 20:6; 39:9; Ex. 32:30-33; 2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51:4; Eccl. 7:20
וָוַע — 'āwōn	To wander, stray or go astray	Gen. 4:13; Ex. 34:7; Lev. 16:21-22; Ps. 32:5; 51:2, 5; Isa. 53:6
ἁμαρτία — hamartia	Sin an act condition guilt or ruling power	Matt. 1:21; Jn. 1:29; Rom. 3:9; 5:12; 6:1-23
ἁμαρτάνω — hamartanō	To sin do wrong or fail to meet God's standard	Matt. 18:15; Lk. 15:18, 21; Jn. 5:14; Rom. 2:12; 3:23
ἀδικία — adikia	Unrighteousness injustice or wrongdoing	Lk. 13:27; Jn. 7:18; Rom. 1:18, 29; 1 Jn. 1:9; 5:17
παράπτωμα — paraptōma	Trespass offence false step or sinful fall	Matt. 6:14-15; Rom. 4:25; 5:15-20; Eph. 2:1, 5
ἀνομία — anomia	Lawlessness or disregard for God's law	Matt. 7:23; 13:41; 24:12; Tit. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:4
σκάνδαλον — skandalon	A trap stumbling block or enticement to sin	Matt. 13:41; 16:23; 18:7; Rom. 14:13; Rev. 2:14

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF SICKNESS

By Brian G. Najapfour

At some point in your life, you will experience sickness (you might get a cold, the flu, or even cancer). It is important, therefore, to have a biblical view of sickness.

Sickness is a consequence of original sin and is a punishment from God for sin.

In Genesis 2:17, God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that he ate of it he would surely die.

Adam disobeyed God. And the moment he sinned, his body became subject to illness and death.

If Adam had not sinned, there would be no death; there would be no sickness. Sickness is a sad reminder of Adam's

fall and original sin. Sickness exists because sin does.

Sickness may be a consequence of your personal sin; in this sense, your sickness is a chastisement from the Lord.

In James 5:14–15, the author asks, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him.... And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

Also writing to the Corinthian church, Paul says that in Corinth, many had eaten at the Lord’s Table unworthily and were “weak and sickly”, and many had died (1 Corinthians 11:27–30).

Notice the connection between sickness and sin here. It is possible that God has given you infirmity in order to chastise you (Hebrews 12:6). Perhaps it is a consequence of the irresponsible care of your body (e.g., bad diet).

Nevertheless, in this context, affliction comes to us from God's loving hand. Affliction is like a rod that God uses to discipline his children.

Sickness may not be a consequence of your personal sin; in this sense, your sickness is a test from the Lord.

Job is an example of this truth (Job 2:4–7). Sickness became an instrument in God's hand to mould Job into the person that God wanted him to be. Sickness became a blessing for Job, for it brought him closer to God.

Sickness can be a consequence of the personal sin of another person.

In 2 Samuel 12:15 we read that “the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore unto David, and it was very sick.” David's child died as a result of David's sin concerning Bathsheba and Uriah. David committed adultery and murder. In another instance, the nation of Israel

suffered a pestilence because of David's sin (2 Samuel 24).

Sickness may not be a consequence of our personal sin or even a consequence of the personal sin of someone else.

In this sense, sickness is simply a demonstration of God's absolute sovereignty. Remember the man born blind in John 9:1–3. In that passage, Jesus says that God was simply showing His absolute right to do whatever pleases Him—displaying His sovereignty—to remind us that we do not control our health. He does!

Sickness comes to us from God ultimately for His glory and for our good.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick (John 11:4), He said, “This sickness is ... for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby” (v. 4).

Pray that God would be glorified through your sickness. While sickness is for God's glory, it is also for our good. Paul notes in 2 Corinthians 12:7, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh...lest I should be exalted above measure." In short, God has given Paul "a thorn in the flesh" in order to keep him from the sin of pride.

Maybe God has given you a certain kind of illness in order to keep you from pride and teach you to depend more on His grace (2 Corinthians 12:9), so that at the end you can sing with the psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:71).

Brian G. Najapfour is a part-time pastor of Congregational Life at Eastmanville United Reformed Church and a member of the HRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

SICKNESS

By J.C. Ryle

Introduction

The words I especially dwell upon in this chapter are singularly affecting and instructive. They record the message that Martha and Mary sent to Jesus when their brother Lazarus was sick: “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.” That message was short and simple.

Mark first the childlike faith of these holy women. They turned to the Lord Jesus in their hour of need, as the frightened infant turns to its mother. They turned to Him as their Shepherd, their almighty Friend.

Mark second the simple humility of their language about Lazarus. They call him “He whom thou lovest.” They do not say, “He who loves you, believes in

you, serves you,” but “He whom Thou lovest.” Martha and Mary were deeply taught of God. They had learned that Christ’s love towards us, not our love towards Christ, is the true ground of expectation and the true foundation of hope. To look inward at our love for Christ is painfully unsatisfying; to look outward at Christ’s love for us is peace.

Mark, lastly, the touching circumstance that the message of Martha and Mary reveals: “He whom thou lovest is sick.” Lazarus was a good man, converted, believing, renewed, sanctified, a friend of Christ, and an heir of glory. And yet Lazarus was sick! We learn from this that sickness is not a sign of God’s displeasure. Sickness is intended to be a blessing to us, and not a curse. This subject of sickness is one that we ought to look in the face. We cannot avoid it. In the midst of life, we are in death (Romans 8:10–16). Let us consider sickness in the life of the

Christian, and may it, by God's blessing, teach us wisdom.

Sickness is universal

Sickness is everywhere. In Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America; in hot countries and in cold, in developed countries and developing countries. Men, women, and children all get sick and die. Sickness is among all classes. The gospel does not lift a believer beyond its reach.

Riches will not buy exemption. Rank cannot prevent it. Kings and their subjects, masters and servants, rich men and poor, learned and unlearned, teachers and students, doctors and patients, ministers and hearers, all fall sick. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city" (Proverbs 18:11), but there are no doors and bars that can keep out disease and death.

Sickness is in every part of us.

From the crown of our head to the sole of our foot, we are liable to disease. Our capacity of suffering is something fearful to contemplate. Who can count up the ailments by which our bodily frame may be affected? Given that the body is so vulnerable to sickness, the wonder is not that men die so soon, but that they live so long.

We cannot prevent sickness.

The average lifespan may be slightly lengthened. Doctors may continually discover new remedies and effect surprising cures. Wise sanitary regulations may greatly lower the death rate. But, after all, whether in healthy or unhealthy localities, whether in mild climates or in cold, all will get sick and die.

So, why is sickness universal?

What can we make of this great fact that sickness is universal? How can we account for it? What explanation can we give of it? These are serious questions.

Did God create sickness and disease at the beginning? Did He who formed our world in such perfect order create it with suffering and pain? Can we think that He who made all things “very good” made Adam’s race to get sick and to die?

No! The Bible tells us that something has entered the world and taken man from his original position. Sin has marred the perfect order of God’s creation. “Sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Romans 5:12). Sin is the cause of all the sickness, disease, pain, and suffering that prevail on the earth. There would have been no sickness if there had been no Fall.

Bishop John Charles (J.C.) Ryle (1816–1900) was an Anglican bishop of Liverpool, England, a prolific writer, especially gifted in writing short tracts on gospel and practical subjects.

GOD'S GLORY IN JUDGEMENT

By Amos Kennedy

Introduction

Many people today try to avoid the subject of God's judgement. Some speak only of God's love and do not mention judgement at all. Yet the Bible speaks clearly about both.

Scripture does not hide the truth that God judges sin. Instead, it shows that judgement is part of God's holy character. God's judgement is neither cruel nor unfair. It reflects both His justice and His love.

The Nature of God's Judgement

God's judgement flows from His holiness. Because God is perfectly holy, He cannot ignore sin. He must judge. Sometimes God shows His judgement in time, here on earth, expressing His displeasure at sin and injustice

(Deuteronomy 9:5; Psalm 9:16; Psalm 37:28; Proverbs 11:5; and Isaiah 32:16, 17).

But the Bible also teaches that a final judgment is coming at the end of time. Jesus Christ Himself will judge all people (Matthew 25:31–46; John 5:27–29; Romans 2:5–11; Hebrews 9:27; and Revelation 20:11–15).

The Display of God's Glory

Every person will stand before God on that day of final judgment, and God will show His glory in two ways:

First, His holiness and justice will be seen when sin is judged, and when He eternally punishes those who do not believe (Jude 5–7).

Second, God's grace will be seen when believers are welcomed into eternal life. Even believers will appear before Christ, for we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans

14:10), and every work will be brought into judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

But for those who trust in Christ, this judgment will not bring condemnation. The Lord Jesus has already taken the punishment for their sins. Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Because Christ has died for sinners, God’s justice has already been satisfied.

Living in Light of God’s Judgement

Knowing that God will judge sin should shape how we think and live today.

First, it motivates us to holiness

Christians know that they will one day stand before Christ. Because of this, we should seek to live holy lives. We should fight against sin and desire to please the Lord. The apostle Paul looked forward

to “the crown of righteousness”, which the Lord will give on that day (2 Timothy 4:8).

Second, it encourages in suffering

Believers suffer injustice in this world; evil people seem to prosper while the righteous struggle (see Psalms 37, 47, 49). Yet God will set all things right at the final judgment. Christians are called to live by faith, knowing that no sin will remain hidden and no act of faithfulness will be forgotten. This truth comforts those who suffer.

Third, it cultivates in us love for the lost

The coming judgment should also give us a deep concern for those who do not know Christ. Many people around us are not ready to meet God. As pastors and teachers of the Word, we must warn people with love and patience. The Bible also reminds teachers that they will give

an account for their work in this regard
(James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17).

*Amos Kennedy spent much of his childhood in Kenya
with his missionary parents. Today he is a Baptist
pastor in Northern Ireland, but continues to serve the
church in Africa.*

LET'S TALK ABOUT DEBT

By Eric Oraya

The pastorate is demanding, not just on our time, but spiritually and emotionally. It is also financially demanding, and many of us are overwhelmed and struggling under the burden of debt. Debt is not wrong, but some have learned to pretend it isn't there, delay, and dodge payment. They avoid calls, dodge messages and make excuses.

Unpaid debt is a mark of the ungodly; "The wicked borrows and does not repay" (Psalm 37:21). Unpaid debt chains the soul; it steals peace, breeds anxiety, and forces us to live in hiding rather than walk in freedom.

Unpaid debt is never just a financial issue; it is a heart issue, an issue of integrity, a stewardship issue and an issue of Christian witness. When we

carry the name of Christ, we must walk worthy of it.

As Christians and pastors, we must bring our lives back into alignment with the Word of God. Scripture does not whisper on this subject. It speaks plainly. “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another” (Romans 13:8, NIV). God doesn’t say, avoid the people you owe, or hide from the responsibility. God says, “Let no debt remain outstanding.” When we borrow and

refuse to repay, we’re not just breaking trust with people; we are sinning and misrepresenting God’s character.

Paying our debts is the responsibility of the righteous. The wicked borrow and do not repay, but “the righteous shows mercy and gives” (Psalm 37:21).

Paying our debts is an act of worship. It declares obedience: “I trust God enough to do what is right, even when it costs me.” God is not impressed by loud prayers if our integrity is silent. Spiritual freedom begins when we obey God, not when we pay the debt.

Let us take responsibility, be honest and honour God with our finances. The same God who calls you to be faithful will provide.

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THE EARLY LIFE AND CONVERSION OF LOTT CARY THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONARY TO AFRICA



Lott Cary missionary

Lott Cary was born in Charles City County, Virginia, in the newly formed United States of America, just four years after independence. A Virginia farmer named William A. Christian enslaved his parents.

Little is known about Cary's early life, and no record of his birth date exists. Early biographers state it was "about 1780." He was his parents' only child. His parents were illiterate, and young Lott received no education. His father was a devout man and a distinguished member of a local Baptist church. Although his mother attended the church, she made no public profession of faith.

His home, his illiterate parents' instruction, and his father's prayers had little effect on Cary as a young man. What hope could there be for a young slave boy, or any prospect of freedom?

Confronted with the harsh realities of his circumstances—being owned and traded among the city's merchants—Cary rebelled against the gospel. He turned to alcohol, became increasingly profane and violent, and emerged as the main troublemaker among his peers.

In 1804, Cary, owned by a Methodist minister named John Bowry, was hired out on an annual contract as a common labourer to the Shockoe tobacco warehouse in Richmond, about 30 miles northwest of his home. In Richmond, his rebellious nature found a greater outlet, and although he attempted to reform his life, he realised he could not.

The turning point occurred in 1807 at the First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. At the time, there was no separate church for slaves to attend; however, the galleries of the First Baptist Church's large meeting house were reserved for slaves associated with the church and congregation.

The exact date of Cary's conversion remains unknown, but it occurred in 1807. One particular sermon is recorded either as the means through which the

Lord brought the gospel to Cary's soul or as inspiring in him a strong desire to read.

The passage was from the Gospel of John, chapter three, recounting the conversation between Nicodemus and the Lord Jesus. From that day, Cary was eager to read the Lord's interview with Nicodemus, and he decided to learn to read and write. He obtained a New Testament and, with assistance from a young man at the warehouse, learned the alphabet and, in a short time, was able to read the chapter and write.

The pastor at the time was John Courtney. Courtney was born in 1744. He did not have the advantages of formal education, but he was "a humble and plain man," with an excellent mind and a heart for the kingdom of God, and was converted to Christ in adulthood.

For thirty-six years—1788 to 1824—Courtney conducted a godly and laborious ministry for Christ in Richmond.

During Courtney's pastorate in Richmond, the church grew year on year, with baptisms recorded each year. By 1824, the year of his death at 80, the church's membership reached 820, many of whom were slaves. In this church, Whites and Lott Cary, Missionary Blacks mingled, gathering each Lord's Day to listen to the same instruction from the Word.

It was under Courtney's ministry that Cary was baptised and admitted to fellowship at the First Baptist Church in Richmond; there he grew in faith and Scripture knowledge, and there also he developed a passion for the lost, and especially his own people back in Africa.