



Refreshing Times

ACTS 3 : 19

ISSUE 2: JAN TO MAR 2023

About us

Refreshing Times is a quarterly publication whose vision is to spread the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ and make disciples of all nations.

It is our prayer that through this publication you can grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

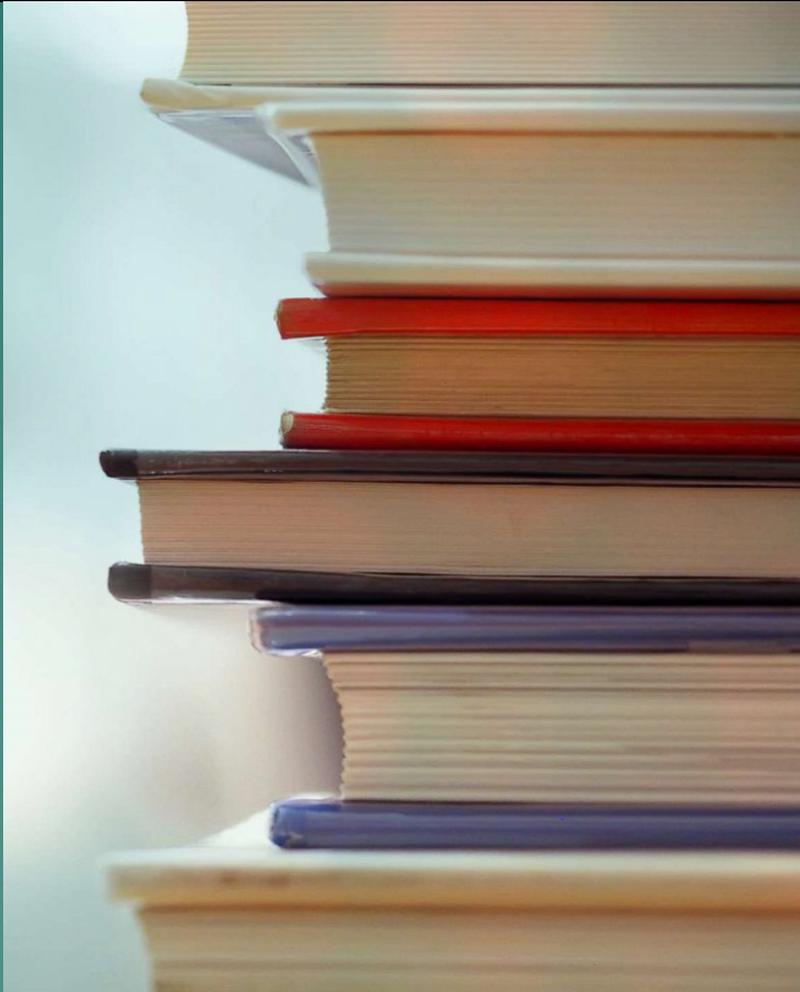




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JAN TO MAR 2023



THE IMAGE OF HIS SON

Article by Tinashe Mlambo

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Romans 8:29-30

As soon as you get into the Word of God, in the very first chapter you are immediately introduced to God and thereafter the heavens, the earth and all the host of them. However, on the very last day of creation God created a creature like no other. On the last day of creation, God created his final crowning piece - man. Up until the 6th day, nothing had been created in God's Image, even though everything God had created up until that time was good, it was not made in His image. But on the last day: God created man in His own image, in the Image of God created He him.

The Image of God

This Image of God was a distinguishing attribute of man. It distinguished him from everything that God had created, animate & inanimate. Man was the only creature whom God "breathed into" His own breath, everything else was created from nothing. (Heb. 11:3). In the beginning God created things & beings from nothing, He called things into existence, calling things that are not as if they were (Rom 4:17b). Yet when He created man, He created him not from nothing but after His Image. That's how 'special' man is in the eyes of God. It took God's personal involvement in the creation of man, that's why the redemption of man also took God's personal involvement. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:19).

It is for this image that the prophet wonders, "*what is man that you are mindful of him, what is man that you care for him?*" (Ps. 8:4) It is His image that He cares for. It is His image He is mindful of. God cares for man personally, affectionately & watchfully. The Lord answered a question around whether the Jews should pay taxes to Caesar, after asking for a Roman coin, He asked "whose image & inscription does it have" & they answered "Caesar's" & He said, "*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, & to God the things that are God's*" (Luke 20:22-25). Christ says if you bear the image of God, you owe God what is His. Every human being owes God His image.

It is no wonder, God plainly makes a command never for anyone to make an image of God (in Exodus 20:4) it was because He had already made an image of Himself, when He created man. There was no need for another copy. Which is why the fall of Adam is inexcusable! He had everything! He knew he was created in the image of God! Which begs the question why Adam would believe that the ability to be like God was hidden in a forbidden fruit & not in himself? He didn't need to do anything else, or eat anything else to look like God, he already did. So why did Adam fall? He believed a lie. That he didn't look like God, that he could get from a fruit what he couldn't get from God. If you don't understand the image you were created in, you will be lied to. That same old lie is what hinders man from knowing God. Man is blinded, he doesn't understand that he is created in God's image & for that reason he worships created things & hand-made images. Man believes he came from nothing except a big bang. Yet man came from God & not a noise or just nothing.

THE IMAGE OF HIS SON...

Though the First Man, Adam was perfect, God purposed further to make the New Man in the image of His Son. God says the whole idea & intention, His eternal purpose & plan was to conform man to the Image of His Son. *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son”* Rom 8:29-30.

To fully understand the import of what God’s purpose was, it’s important to understand what being “conformed” to His Image means. It means being “jointly formed” into the image of the Son, being “shaped & made in the exact likeness” of the Son, to the extent that His identity becomes yours.

God’s eternal purpose was so that we, the new man, may be in Christ & be found in him, not having a standing or identity of our own but that which comes from God (Phil 3:9) For God finds no satisfaction outside Himself, He is the Self Existent & Self Sufficient One. So, for Him to be pleased with you, you need to be conformed, jointly formed & be made in the exact likeness of His Son. Why His Son? because what may be known about God is only visible, perceivable & perceptible in Christ. He is the visible image of the Invisible God (Col 1:15-16). What can be seen, heard & felt about God: His Face (2 Cor 4:6), His Voice (John 1:1-2), His Person (Heb. 1:3) are only visible in Christ. God intended that the same Spirit & Body, the same Image & Imprint which is Christ Jesus be also us.



God intended that just as Christ is, we be. We be righteous just as Christ is righteous, we be loved & pleasing just as Christ is.

So how did God achieve this? How did He achieve this great feat of jointly forming us, shaping us in the exact image & imprint of Christ? He did so through 5 acts of Grace. He Foreknew Us, Predestined Us, Called Us, Justified Us & Glorified Us to be conformed to the Image of His Son. Whenever we hear *“foreknowledge, predestination, election, calling, justification & glorification”* (Rom. 8:29-30) we always think of them as theological concepts which have very little to no relevance to our everyday lives. Yet these words are central to how we view our lives. They are cardinal truths for which we owe our very existence to

1. Foreknown

In God all the past, present & future are simultaneously present to Him. One thing you can be assured God was doing before the beginning of time, before the foundation of the world is that He was thinking of you. He foreknew every possible angle, He saw everything that might happen, that will happen, that could happen. So, God foresaw it, planned it & foreordained it that we may be jointly formed & conformed to the Image of His Son.



THE IMAGE OF HIS SON...

2. Predestined

Of all these acts of grace, predestination is the most misunderstood, yet it is the foundation of everything else that follows. Others hate predestination, others love it. But you can't ignore it. What is clear is no one is predestined to hell or heaven such that their fate is sealed. God doesn't elect who is to be saved, but those that are saved become the elect. God doesn't decide 'who' will be saved or not; He decides 'what' we will happen to those that are saved or not. Once you are saved, you can't run away from the fact that you become the elect. We often struggle with the idea of "election" because everything we have practically elected ourselves has never quite worked for us perfectly. Yet what God elects & predestines cannot fail.

So, we should not look at predestination as an unfair, partial process by which God decided "through fate" who will be saved & who won't, but that "through faith" those who are saved are predestined to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph. 1:5)

3. Called

You were not only foreknown & predestined, but you were also called to be conformed & jointly formed to the image of His Son. The call which led you to Christ is the most important call than any other calling, because it is a call 'to be Someone' not a call 'to do something.' It is a heavenly calling, (Heb. 3:1), It is a high calling, (Phil 3:14) and it is a holy calling (2 Tim 1:9).

4. Justified

This is the mystery of godliness & it is great... we were justified just as His Son was justified in the Spirit (1 Tim 3:16). We were justified so as to be conformed to the Image of His Son. You stand acquitted not as 'a man who never sinned' but as Christ who cannot sin.

5. Glorified

Lastly but not in any way least, our glorification cannot fail, it is certain. In Christ, there awaits for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor 4:17). For "*we are children of God, & if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, that we may also be glorified together.*" (Rom 8:16-17). So, if there is a reason to love, to forgive, not to give up, to persevere... it is because of what God did for us to bring us to this moment!

If there is ever a reason for you to know that all things, present & future, will work for your good, it is because you were foreknown, predestined, called, justified & glorified to be conformed to the image of His Son.



YOU HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE

(PART 2) ARTICLE BY ELTON TOFA

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (Hebrews 10:36)

The word “patience” means to be consistent and unchanging until you accomplish your objective or goal. In other words, to be consistent means to see something through to the end whilst at the same time maintaining your composure.

One example the Bible uses to demonstrate the virtue of patience is Job. *“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”* (Jas 5:11).

James is admonishing us to consider the example of those who spoke in the name of the Lord, that is, those we read about in the scriptures. He says we should learn from their example of patience in the midst of their sufferings and afflictions. He raises Job as an example of patience. We have all heard and read of the patience of Job, how he held on to His faith and convictions in the middle of great suffering.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (Joh 16:33). The word, “tribulation” comes from the Greek word, “thilpsis” which means pressure, trouble, or adversity. Jesus assured us that times of pressure, trouble and adversity will surely come, but we should be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. Therefore, the foundation of our patience is Christ and what he has done for us.

This is the truth that Paul understood. He knew that He had power to go through anything through the indwelling Christ who strengthened Him. Due to this Paul became one of the examples of patience. Writing to Timothy, he says, *“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,...”* (2Ti 3:10). Paul is saying his life of patience had been made clear and evident to Timothy.

It was through patience that Paul lived a life of consistency to the end. He says, *“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* (Php 4:12-13). Everywhere and in all circumstances both negative and positive, Paul was instructed to be independent of circumstances. This means his peace and joy was not controlled by what he experienced but by Christ who strengthened him. That was the source of his patience.

That is why at the end of it all, Paul says, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:”* (2Ti 4:7).



NEVERTHELESS

not my will

ARTICLE BY TAGUMA NYANGA



“And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, *“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”* Luke 22:42

These are the words of our Lord Jesus when He was staring the death of the cross. The death of the cross was not only painful and shameful, but it was also a symbol of criminality. In His purity and holiness, the kings of the world judged him and condemned him to death, the death of criminals.

As He was in Gethsemane, anguish consumed Him, and His heart was exceedingly sorrowful (Matthew 26:38) but He remained steadfast focusing on the joy that was set before Him. He laid down His will and gave pre-eminence to the will of the Father.

“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2

There is some crowning after every act of obedience. God rewards obedience. When He whispers something in your heart be prompt to act. When he lays down the course for your purpose here on earth, lay down your pitcher and follow the course. Nothing can be more rewarding and fulfilling than that. To hear Him one day saying, “Well done faithful servant”, is the ultimate success.

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name...” Philippians 2:8-9

In His hands our vulnerabilities are cured

When we are most vulnerable, the temptation is to forge our own way out. Jesus could have done that. He could have called a legion of angels to come to His rescue, but He subdued His will to the will of the Father. In whatever situation you find yourself in, you are most secure in His will. Your worldview, how you see things, can lead you astray but the will of God aids you to fulfil the purposes of God. In His will our vulnerabilities are cured.

This perhaps explains why David said:

“I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.” 2 Sam 24:14.

There is no safe place to be than to be in the hands of God!

Giving up your will is the ultimate surrender. If you can give up your will, you can give up your all. Self-will blunts spiritual sensitivity and breeds rebellion. Contrary, a surrendered soul pleasures heaven and is usable. Out of His will, we are a law unto ourselves, and we give up too many privileges.



He directs our steps.

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.” Psalms 37:23

This is a privilege that you must cherish knowing this one thing that God cannot lead you where He cannot sustain you. If God sanctioned the journey, He has provisions in place for the upkeep.

But If God orders steps of good people, why do good people sometimes find themselves in unpleasant situations? This is a vast subject of discussion. But I will keep it simple this way; sometimes the course of a good person can pass through difficulty, yet God will bring them to a good ending. When Job stayed faithful, his end was better than his beginning. You too can go through the fire and flooded rivers but be rest assured that God will see you through. You will not perish in the fire; the many waters will not drown you. This is reason enough to stay in His will!

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.”

The Psalmist also exclaimed:

“You have caused men to ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water; But You brought us out to rich fulfillment.” Psalms 66:12.

The Lord will not allow you to be stuck. Allow the process, He is taking you to your destiny.

Will you surrender your will? Are you sincere when you say, “Thy will be done” ?

Remember that you are not your own!