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STRIVING TO DO GOD'S WORK, GOD'S WAY, FOR GOD'S GLORY

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Dear Friends in Christ,

As you read through the Book of Acts, it seems that everywhere Paul and his companions ministered they either saw revival; a riot; or both! In Acts 17, Paul and Silas entered into the synagogue and began preaching "The Lord Jesus Christ"! This passage tells us that a number of people were converted. However, 'those who were not converted' gathered a mob and begin to produce an uproar against them. I love the accusation hurled against Paul and Silas, by the 'gospel-rejecters'. They said, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too!" Oh brothers and sisters, how wonderful it would be, if we were reviled with similar words. Notice the theme of the message which aroused this taunting accusation; "Saying that there is another King---JESUS!" They preached a message that focused on the Lordship of Jesus Christ! They were heralding the reality that the "Kingdom of Jesus is at hand,— repent and believe the Gospel"!

Dianne is presently reading a wonderful book, entitled, "10 Lies about God", written by Erwin Lutzer, pastor of Moody Church in Chicago. A few nights ago, she read the following lines to me, that really caught our attention. "Our agenda as a church is not to take over nations, politically speaking. Of course, Christians should be involved in government as good citizens, but our PRIMARY message is the transformation of a nation, through the transformation of individuals!" Oh friends, we need to be reminded that the early disciples were under the brutal tyranny of the Roman Empire and its wicked emperor, Nero. You can be certain that those 1st century believers had no voting block which represented them in the Roman Senate; nor did they have a 'so-called' conservative representation in the courts of Rome. They were constantly experiencing great pressure and persecution from this "Christ-hating" government. You can be certain that they were facing infinitely more trouble and tribulation than we have ever experienced in this nation. Church history informs us that every time some crisis or calamity would befall Rome, the political leaders would falsely accuse the believers by saying, "The Christians must be thrown to the lions; for the Christians have done this!" These believers were slandered verbally, beaten physically, and yes, sometimes even martyred for the Gospel. Yet they were mightily used by the King of Kings to extend His Kingdom into the hearts of sinners! Their living, their praying and their witnessing was so effective, that they were accused of "turning their world upside down"! They were not focused on the political transformation of the Roman Empire, as evil and sinister as it was. Instead, they were absolutely consumed with the extension of the reign of King Jesus into the hearts and lives of individual sinners. They were focused on the Eternal Kingdom! These believers clearly understood what Jesus meant, when He said, "My Kingdom is NOT of this world". These disciples possessed a singular focus on Eternal business; and their message was making "holy tidal waves" everywhere that they went. These believers were being radically used to penetrate the Kingdom of Darkness, by faithfully and passionately using God's ordained means to carry out God's great mission. They courageously proclaimed the truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ; they lived lives that were consumed with the Lord Jesus Christ; and they were continually involved in 'believing and expectant evangelistic intercession' for the progression of the gospel! They exhibited a willingness to move forward with great courage, and contentment; whether they found themselves in the midst of glorious conversions or great conflict! They turned their world upside down because their focus was on 'things above; and not the things of this world'!

Brothers and sisters, if we are going to turn our world “right side up”, we must also be men and women who are wholly committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel! Our Lord declares, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. And he who does not take his cross and follow Me, is not worthy of me.”

Sadly, there are many within the church walls today, which appear to be ‘lukewarm’ in their commitment to Christ! They exhibit more passion over political agendas and the state of the financial markets, than on God’s agenda of the proclamation and propagation of the Gospel. They spend more time focused on the future of America; instead of focusing on the extension of the Kingdom of Jesus into the hearts of sinners. So many seem to have forgotten that every born again child of God is a RESIDENT ALIEN in this nation. This is not our home. We are just passing through this foreign land called the U.S.A. Our citizenship is in Heaven. We are here for this brief period of time, for the purpose of being faithful ambassadors for the King of Kings! Yes, there is no doubt, we should be very grateful to have been born in a nation, in which we enjoy many freedoms and privileges. But are we using these freedoms and privileges, to focus our lives on things that have eternal value?

Brothers and sisters, there are only two things that have eternal value in this fallen culture - The Word of God and the Souls of men! If we are going to be known as those ‘who turn our world upside down’, we must determine to do all things for the sake of the GOSPEL! We must purpose to live our daily lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, by laying down our idols of materialism and amusements, which so easily beset us! We must resolve to refuse to follow the doctrines of men and the methods of men in carrying out God’s great mission. Our message must be a pure gospel of repentance and faith; not a message filled with error and trickery. We must be unstoppable in our commitment to live a ‘Jesus-focused life’; to be passionately and persistently involved in evangelistic intercession; and even be willing to embrace sacrifice and suffering if necessary, for the propagation of the gospel and the glory of God. Friends, this is the ONLY HOPE that individual Americans will be turned “right-side up”, in the midst of a corrupt culture that is headed for judgment! Oh brothers and sisters, may it be said of us, as it was of these men many centuries ago, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too”!

KENYA—A TASTE OF REFORMATION REVIVAL

Just a few weeks ago, I had the awesome privilege to teach the ‘Christ-Centered Evangelism’ study at the Kenya Ministries Training Institute, (KMTI). Approximately 400 pastors and leaders attended; and over half of the pastors were former graduates of this institute. There were many other pastors from several denominational backgrounds, who were also in attendance. Most of them were from this particular area of Kenya; however, some pastors travelled from Sudan and Uganda. I would begin teaching at 9 a.m. (which is midnight our time); and I would conclude at 5 p.m. Beginning on the first day, there was a glorious liberty and a true sense of spiritual hunger and teach-ability among those in attendance. My interpreter, Pastor George Wafula, was absolutely awesome in his translation work. Bro. George, (who is also the Director of this Institute) and I have taught this study together on many different occasions. The Lord had used these truths in 2005, to transform and reform his evangelistic message and methods. George had been praying for the last 6 years for an opportunity to have this conference at KMTI. During every session, the pastors seemed to be hanging on every single word. At the end of our brief breaks between sessions, they would literally run back to their seat with great excitement and anticipation. You may not be aware of this, but a large percentage of the churches in Kenya and across the continent of Africa have been corrupted by the ‘health and wealth prosperity gospel’; which has been exported to them from our nation. But brothers and sisters, throughout these 18 hours of teaching, the Spirit of Truth was being applied by Sword of the Spirit in mighty power, to deeply penetrate the hearts, lives, ministries, methods and message of these leaders.

At 3 a.m. on the 2nd morning of the conference, I was awakened by what sounded like a roar of a crowd! Admittedly, at first I was agitated, because I was already battling “jet lag” and struggling with lack of sleep. But shortly after, I discovered that this roar was coming from the auditorium. A large group of pastors had gathered; and they were on their faces before God. The roar that I heard was these precious pastors crying out to the Lord, in holy mourning and repentance over preaching “another gospel and another Jesus”. Others were repenting of attempting to do God’s work of evangelism, by using “humanly invented techniques”, that have not been ordained by God.

It was absolutely amazing to see the Holy Spirit begin to turn their 'man-centered' evangelism upside down; and powerfully inspire them to return to God's instruction manual; and make a new commitment to do God's work; God's way; for God's glory! I really do not have the words to express all that the Lord did throughout this time.

Enclosed are the words from George Wafula. He puts his feelings into words, to testify of the great things that the Lord has done! "This was a blessed moment in the history of our Institute! It has been my desire since 2005, when I first heard this teaching, that you would come and pour the truths of 'Christ-Centered Evangelism' into the lives of hundreds of leaders in my area of Kenya. God has made it possible! This meeting was one of its kind in the history of our Institute! Everyone is thrilled with what God has done in these days. I am constantly receiving phone calls from pastors who attended the conference, testifying about what God has done in their ministries; and how they are already beginning to implement what they have learned. God has truly ploughed deep into the hearts of the pastors who attended. The pastor of one of the largest churches in Bungoma testified that he has never attended a meeting, that has so 'opened his eyes' in this vital area. He confesses that he was 'lost in his teaching on evangelism'. But he has already begun teaching this study in his church! Many pastors and bishops have been calling me and openly confessing that they were guilty of doing God's work in their own ways; and they are ready to change and return to God's plumb-line! I will never forget on the last day of the conference, when I came across 5 pastors who were laying prostrate on the floor and were crying out to the Lord. They were repenting for deceiving the people through their own preaching! Another pastor told me that God has given him great illumination this week. He said that he had come to realize that he had been blind and deep in a hole. But he says that the blinders have been removed from his eyes; and now he can see! There were several Bible College principles and teachers who left confessing that they had never heard the truth in such a way! Glory to God! Praise His Holy Name! The pastors and leaders have requested that you would come every year to speak in our annual conference."

Bishop Fredrick Mulei e-mailed this testimony, "It has been a great and tremendous moment to see the great power of God convicting the hearts and lives of pastors and church planters. As I mingled among most of them, I heard many confessing to God, that they must abandon their ways and return to His means to carry out His mission. They were confessing that they had acted in ignorance of the truth. The pastors from the Bungoma district posted a joint resolution to 'never again use an unbiblical approach when evangelizing the lost'. They further resolved to teach 'Christ-Centered Evangelism' to all of their church leaders, in order to restore God's method and message of evangelism, as outlined in the Book of Acts! They all testified that 'our eyes have been opened to see what we should be doing, in the evangelism of the lost'. We, as leaders of the body of Christ have been instructed, corrected, challenged, strengthened and invigorated, according to the awesome power of God and the might of His glory! Friends, only the mighty work of the Holy Spirit applying His Word, can bring about these awesome results! Glory to God!

On the last afternoon, I announced that we were going to have a session in which we would have questions from the audience. I informed them that we would take as long as needed, to field and answer the questions from the Word of God. But all of them shouted in ONE ACCORD, "There are no questions! We only have to obey what we have been hearing!" Wow! What a precious blessing to see the Holy Spirit apply the truths of this study to turn the evangelism methods and message of these pastors "upside down"; and then "right-side up", for the glory of our King and Savior! I have also received another glorious report from 4 precious pastors who had studied these truths during past conferences. They have been joining together to take the teachings of "Christ-Centered Evangelism" to the nations of Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia, and Burundi! Already, we have received many 'Macedonian calls', as a direct result of this conference. Please pray for God's wisdom, so that I might know which of these doors is the next one to walk through.

I also was given the privilege of teaching evangelism at the R.H.E.M.A. Pastors' Training Institute in Nicaragua, which was founded by our first pastor, Dr. Ron Herrod. This has been a wonderful "ongoing opportunity" to serve among these pastors; as well as to serve the pastor that first served our family, many years ago! The institute provides informal short term theological training for pastors in developing nations. These men are unable to receive such training in any other way. This is provided to them at no cost to the students. These students are being equipped to pastor established churches or plant new churches, for the glory of God and the transformation of lives! I also had the joy of teaching 'Christ-Centered Evangelism' at First Baptist in Cross City, Florida, during the latter part of June, with my dear friends, Pastors Mike Brown and Carlos Perez. Those who were in attendance testified that the Lord did a wonderful work in their lives.

EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH AT A PLANT!

I have just returned from Gastonia, NC., where once again, God opened the door to preach at Industrial Electroplating Plant. My dear brother in Christ, Walter Prescott invited me to preach the gospel for 4 days, to approximately 70 employees. Walter offers every employee an opportunity to come to the conference "break room" for a 45 minute service; paying them their normal wages while attending the service. Friends, you must know that the vast majority of these men and women do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a tremendous opportunity to plant the 'gospel seed' into the lives of many needy sinners. Each day, I had the absolute joy of walking among the men and women inviting them to come to the meeting. I rejoice that each session was wonderfully attended, not only by the men and women of the plant; but also, most importantly, by the Holy Spirit. The Lord blessed me, as I preached a series of 3 messages that I have entitled, "A Journey to the Cross". Then on Saturday evening, Walter and his family invited all the employees to come to a free meal, in which I had the opportunity to share my testimony of conversion and proclaim the gospel. Bro. Walter writes, 'Wow! What a blessing that the Lord has brought to each of us, during these days of ministry at IEP. Men and women are talking about the tremendous effect that this meeting has had on their lives. Many are already asking about when you are coming back. Ed, I can tell when I walk throughout plant, that there is a difference in many of our employees. Some told me today, that the messages were deep and convicting; and that they could understand everything that you said. I believe that there will be many lives changed from this meeting. I will keep you posted on the ongoing results!' We give God all the glory and praise, for His mighty activity among us during that week.

The Lord also blessed me with a wonderful opportunity to preach and serve at Faith Baptist Church in Laurel, Maryland, for the first time! It was an amazing experience to see how God has planted brothers and sisters from many different nationalities in this local church, in a suburb of Washington D.C. There is tremendous potential to reach scores of people from many different nations, as they grow in their passion and purpose to "turn their world upside down" with the message of our King!

I don't want to close without sharing what a personal joy it has been, to have an ongoing opportunity to preach, teach and witness at the Mission of Hope, here in West Mobile. Some of my best friends in Christ join me as we witness to these eternal souls, that are in the grip of drugs and alcohol addiction! There are usually about 50 men in the program. Recently, I had the joy of preaching the gospel to the men in their Sunday morning worship hour. Then, in the afternoon time of worship, many of their family members present as we shared a gospel message. God has given many precious opportunities to proclaim the only message that can truly set the captives free! Please pray for the upcoming "evangelistic crusade" that I will be preaching there in September. It will be an awesome privilege to proclaim the liberating truth of the Gospel; and watch the Holy Spirit turn their lives "right-side up" for the glory of God!

WITH A HEART FILLED WITH GLORY TO OUR KING
AND GRATITUDE TO HIS PEOPLE!

When I sit and ponder the mighty works of the Holy Spirit that I have witnessed in these past 2 months, I am overwhelmed with praise and thanksgiving to our Lord and God. When I think of the provision that has been given for the ministry in the Kenya and Nicaragua pastors' conferences, I am filled with gratefulness to our King and His people. In those two trips alone, we provided more than 6,000 meals, we provided the travel expenses for all of the 400 Kenya pastors'; and paid for the use of the facility in Kenya; not to mention all of my travel expenses. OUR GOD provided according to HIS riches in glory in Christ Jesus. But, as always, He provided through the loving and generous support of You, His bride! Dianne and I would like to share our deep gratitude to our Savior and His providence, in bringing you into our lives and ministries. Please receive our sincere love and heart-felt appreciation for your love, for your faithfulness to pray for us and for your encouragement, as you stand with us in the international outreaches. We are blessed to be the channel of ongoing support to 25 church planters and a number of other ministries. Our passion is that our Lord will continue to allow us to be a channel of blessing to many others, both spiritually and materially. We want to invest our lives and our resources in things that have ETERNAL VALUE! You are an essential part in that eternal passion and purpose! Dear Friends, we love you in Christ Jesus our Lord, and truly thank Him upon every remembrance of you. We know that these are precarious times. We do pray for you, knowing that like us, you are facing many challenges and difficulties. May we all set our eyes upon Him, in these days. May it be the desire of our hearts to be like the early disciples and have it said of us, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too!

II Corinthians 4:5

Ed Lacy