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A Word of Gratitude

At the end of this month I shall be 70 years old. I have lived much longer than I expected to live. Far more importantly, I have been blessed beyond my wildest dreams. This issue of MaozNews is dedicated to thanking God. It is a poor but heartfelt effort to worship him in fellowship with those who have played a large role in my life and ministry. May God have glory, and may his people be edified and encouraged to love and serve him with the kind of abandon he deserves. May I too be enabled so to do through these recollections.

Salvation

I recall with shame and horror the darkness of my early years, growing up without Christ and without a Christian example to challenge me, correct my ways and set an example I should emulate. My past was stained. Early in life I established a criminal record and became known for my angry cynicism. My memories are dark, full of despair, defilement and disgust. But God pursued me with a stubbornness born of gracious love, until he brought me to himself.

In the eternal counsels of his gracious will, God determined to save me. He sent his son, not merely to die for sinners, but to die for me. "The Son of God ... loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). God then sent individuals to preach the Gospel to me, and his Spirit to convince me of his righteousness, of my sin, and of the inevitable judgment to come. Convinced, convicted, humbled to the dust and then encouraged by the amazing mercies of God, I was left no choice but to flee for refuge to him – and he forgave me!

Opportunities

I was not only forgiven; I was transformed. What I sought in the past no longer had attraction. What I despised I began to seek. I find deep pleasure in the Law of the Lord and satisfaction in self-denial, in service and in worship. God's word became precious and his honor very dear to my heart.

There were many changes toward which I had to work. The Gospel was understood in but a superficial manner. Its reach into the various recesses of my heart and the various departments of life was not understood. But God was patient, as were my fellow Christians. Through their example, teaching, rebukes, encouragements, forgiving attitudes and patient long-suffering, I slowly grew.

God provided me with opportunities to study, with means to complete my studies and with doors of opportunity to serve him, equipping me step by step for the task ahead. I began translating while improving on my theological understanding and linguistic skills. I

undertook preaching after sitting at the feet of one of two wonderful preachers in London and, later, one of Israel's finest preachers. I initiated a youth work after witnessing the amazing work of two dear friends among youth in London. I commenced efforts to establish a church after being exposed to solid, stable, wise and godly examples of church life. Friends to pray for me, advise and criticize, encourage and support, opponents to keep me on my toes, excellent books and the trust of a growing congregation were all the loving, enabling gifts of God's grace.

What a privilege to serve as an under-shepherd of a flock of God's people! What a glorious, powerful message to declare, God's power to save (Rom. 1:16-17)! What an amazing, heartening, challenging hope to motivate us: We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2)!

I have been privileged to teach generations of God's people, to share their conflicts, trials, sorrows and triumphs, to weep with them for joy and for shame, to long with and strive alongside them, and to be able to look back and declare in their company, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul" (Psa. 66:16), "Come and see what God has done. He is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man" (Psa. 66:5).

God has enabled me to initiate and oversee the translation of the Old Testament into Modern Hebrew. He has allowed me to translate and write a good number of books on biblical and theological subjects in Hebrew, and to have some of my books translated and published in English and in Dutch. In spite of my age, I am still engaged in writing, with a long list of intended projects ahead of me.

I had the joy of pastoring a thriving church, committed to the pursuit of holiness, eager to understand and obey God's word, evangelistically active and socially involved in society, with a solid work among the children and youth of the congregation, capable Elders and Deacons and exerting a positive influence among the churches of Christ in Israel. Although leading the work of Christian Witness to Israel in the country, I was taught and encouraged by CWI to make the church my focus and to seek to impact others primarily through the church. I was further encouraged to promote the unity of the church and the primacy of Christ rather than an ethnic or cultural emphases. Later, when CWI changed the course of its endeavors I was criticized on both accounts, but regret neither.

Having completed my term of service as Pastor of Grace and Truth, Bracha and I are now able to serve (in a premeditatedly limited capacity) in another church, preaching regularly and teaching the Young Adults.

Family

Though I grew up in a broken home and left at the age of 14, God has granted me a wife, three daughters and two foster daughters, three sons-in-law and two foster sons-in-law, seven grandchildren and two foster grand-children. We are a tight, close-knit family, loving, anxious for close relations, happy to be with each other, involved in each other's life. I have a family! Relations with my sons-in-law are excellent, I talk with the girls quite often (I HATE Skype – it does not allow one to hug, pat on the back, smell or feel the warmth of loved ones, but it's all we have) and enjoy the grandchildren no end.

My natural daughters and their families all live in the US. But, so far, God has enabled Bracha and me to visit that country on an annual basis, and to see the family as regularly. Katya lives nearby and Rose is still at home, although developments in her life may well lead her to move to another country.

My sons-in-law love my daughters as I hoped and prayed they would. The girls are dedicated wives and mothers, who serve their homes and bring up their children in a principled, intelligent and faithful manner. All but one of them love and serve the Lord.

Health and Security

In spite of years of ill health, still-existent physical limitations and ongoing pain, I'm in excellent health, still more or less in my right mind (or so I imagine myself to be) and eager to serve. I'm enjoying long hours of work and, while not as productive as I would like to be, am still churning out materials.

Through the faithful generosity of Patmos International, and churches and some individuals in the US, Bracha and I live in relative material security, with no physical or material crises in view.

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I look back with utter amazement at God's goodness. Francis Thompson's (1859-1907) amazing poem, *The Hound of Heaven*, expresses it well:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me'.

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followed,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.)
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to:
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateway of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to Dawn: Be sudden—to Eve: Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossom heap me over
From this tremendous Lover—
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;

Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
 But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
 The long savannahs of the blue;
 Or, whether, Thunder-driven,
 They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,
 Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—
 Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.
 Still with unhurrying chase,
 And unperturbed pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
 Came on the following Feet,
 And a Voice above their beat—
 'Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.'

I sought no more after that which I strayed
 In face of man or maid;
 But still within the little children's eyes
 Seems something, something that replies,
They at least are for me, surely for me!
 I turned me to them very wistfully;
 But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
 With dawning answers there,
 Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
 Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
 With me' (said I) 'your delicate fellowship;
 Let me greet you lip to lip,
 Let me twine with you caresses,
 Wantoning
 With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
 Banqueting
 With her in her wind-walled palace,
 Underneath her azured dais,
 Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
 From a chalice
 Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring.'
 So it was done:
 / in their delicate fellowship was one—
 Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
 / knew all the swift importings
 On the wilful face of skies;
 I knew how the clouds arise
 Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;
 All that's born or dies
 Rose and drooped with; made them shapers
 Of mine own moods, or wailful divine;
 With them joyed and was bereaven.
 I was heavy with the even,
 When she lit her glimmering tapers
 Round the day's dead sanctities.
 I laughed in the morning's eyes.
 I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,

Heaven and I wept together,
 And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine:
 Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
 I laid my own to beat,
 And share commingling heat;
 But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
 In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
 For ah! we know not what each other says,
 These things and I; in sound / speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
 Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
 Let her, if she would owe me,
 Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
 The breasts o' her tenderness:
 Never did any milk of hers once bless
 My thirsting mouth.
 Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
 With unperturbed pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
 And past those noisèd Feet
 A voice comes yet more fleet—
 'Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me.'

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
 My harness piece by piece Thou has hewn from me,
 And smitten me to my knee;
 I am defenceless utterly.
 I slept, methinks, and woke,
 And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
 In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
 I shook the pillaring hours
 And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,
 I stand amidst the dust o' the mounded years—
 My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
 My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
 Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
 Yea, faileth now even dream
 The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
 Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
 I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
 Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
 For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
 Ah! is Thy love indeed
 A weed, albeit an amarinthine weed,
 Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
 Ah! must—
 Designer infinite!—
 Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
 My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
 And now my heart is as a broken fount,
 Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever

From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest-fields
Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
'And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
'Strange, piteous, futile thing!
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught' (He said),
'And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!'

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.

Help Still Needed

We are preparing a new, updated brochure, and are seeking an experienced graphic artist who would be willing to offer services at a reasonable price to design and prepare the brochure for print.

If any are willing to assist us in this way, please write to the following address: languageservice4u@gmail.com, stating your experience and terms of service.

Ministry and Family News

I have completed the first draft of **John's Gospel** and have commenced translating the book of **Acts**. Two of the three girls and their families have come from the US to celebrate God's goodness on occasion of my birthday, and the eldest is soon to join us with her family. I am not being as productive as I hoped to be in the course of this month.

We will hold no big celebration, nor invite any. Just family. But I do want to take opportunity of this newsletter to thank you all for being such faithful friends, and to seek your prayers for the coming years, few or many as the Lord would see fit.

I also wish each of you, on occasion of this evocative season's meaning, God's rich blessing, more of his presence in your lives, and more opportunities to serve him faithfully.



TAX-deductible **support for our ministry** should be written to the order of **Berean Baptist church, P.O.Box 1233, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48480-3233**. Direct bank transfers may be made to **Franklin Bank, 24725 West Twelve Mile Road, Southfield, MI 48034 USA, Routing Number 241271957 Berean Baptist Special Account No. 567495976**. Please inform **Mr. Craig Cooper** of the details of the transaction (date, transaction number and sum) at coopmobile31@gmail.com

All contributions are tax deductible. Receipts are sent at the end of the calendar year or at the donor's request. Please do not send contributions directly to us – we consider accountability extremely important.

Funds sent for the ministry will be used exclusively for that purpose.

We reserve the right to use for the ministry funds sent for personal use.