



# Alabaster Ministries

*He shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the master's use and prepared unto every good work." 2 Tim 2:21*

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## DECEMBER 2016

Precious Friends,

Another year coming to an end and what a year it has been! Let us usher in 2017 with prayer, that this will be a time of great prosperity not only for this nation but also for Great Britain. Not just prosperity in the economic arena but also in the spiritual arena.

Since the elections, I am amazed at people in the church that have called me crying and really filled with fear because their candidate did not get elected. Where is our trust in God in the midst of all of this? Either we believe His Word that He can keep us under His shadow – that we can run into His strong tower or we don't.

I was in Rhodesia when Mugabe came into power and did we boohoo or were we filled with fear – no, because God was the very essence of our existence and Mugabe has been one of the worst dictators of the 20/21<sup>st</sup> century who has brought that once prosperous nation to where they could not buy a loaf of bread for a trillion Zimbabwe dollars.

There is always the debate about the pre, mid, post tribulation rapture. If we are behaving like this over the elections what happens if it should be a post trib rapture? Folks, if it is a post trib rapture Jesus is able to keep us, protect us and feed us even through that. For nations that have preached on faith for decades we can talk it but can we walk it?

What should matter to all those who are in Christ is that we do not depend on whoever is in the Whitehouse or 10 Downing Street but we depend on Him. We are merely strangers passing through on our way to an eternal Kingdom whose builder and maker is God. Jesus was never concerned about Caesar or Herod because His focus was the Kingdom of God. Let that be our focus and let us not get caught up in arguing and debating the shortcomings of our candidates. The Word says to pray for the leadership of the nation. If you are concerned about your leadership, then PRAY. The problem is that we do not believe in the power of prayer anymore because our prayer meetings at church are so mundane and faithless and quite frankly boring. I am generalizing and there are exceptions of course. It is no wonder people do not like to attend mid-week prayer. God wants everything we do to be filled with vitality and excitement and adventure and that includes prayer. Our personal prayer times should be just as exciting as our corporate prayer directed by the precious Holy Spirit and anointed by Him.

I am praying that God, who is an amazing bookkeeper and accountant, will open His ledger this coming year and view the expenditure columns for the United States and Great Britain. I pray that He will see the great numbers of missionaries that have ventured forth from both shores to the foreign fields of the world and He will see all the finances that these nations have poured out to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. I believe that it is "payback" time not just in the economic field but in the spiritual as well.

God wants to give more than we want to receive. He wants our nations to prosper once again, not for self although He delights to see us prosper, but to see multitudes in the valley of decision come into His rest. I am praying and believing for the Bride to come walking down the aisle in all of her radiance and beauty and to shake and stir up the body of Christ, to provoke it to jealousy so that they lay down self and be part of what God is wanting to do at this time.

I believe that there is going to be an explosion in the economic realm and in the spiritual realm in both nations. This is not a "thus saith the Lord" – I do not claim to be a prophet but my God is a remarkable banker and financier and keeps careful records and we are due the interest on our investment. Now is the time!

May your Christmas be wonderful as you share it with friends and family. May you be a light wherever you go that exudes His grace, mercy, and love.



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Greetings in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christmas again and we, in Malawi, do wish you all our friends in the Lord a Merry Christmas and a wonderful new year. This is one of the most important seasons in our lives as we celebrate Christ with our families and friends and in some instances, reconcile one with another in remembrance and obedience to the word of God.

1 Cor 1. The apostle Paul was aware of the problems the church in Corinth was going through and sets out to address this predicament by teaching the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven as was revealed to him by the blessed Holy Spirit of God. The church in Corinth had a small Jewish presence within a majority Gentile population. Paul was faced with the task of contending with two extremes; superstitious Jews and the sinful nature of the Gentiles. At the time, the church was disturbed and very much in a state of confusion as is the modern church with so many false teachings and fraudulent prophetic ministries.

In verses 1-9, Paul lays out his salutation to the Corinthians and thanksgiving to God. He constantly repeats the words "Our Lord Jesus Christ" because Christians are supposed to be united under one master, Jesus Christ the King. All Christians should be dedicated and devoted to Christ through our Baptism. If that is really our nature (dedicated and devoted to Christ alone), then everything in us should be under a strict obligation to be holy after the nature of our Father in heaven.

The Bible says Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God is one. Yes, we have the Godhead; God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Godhead is ONE. The Holy Spirit exalts the Son, and the Son exalts the Father. There is neither confusion nor separation, only Purity and Holiness.

Jesus Christ commanded us to be one just as He is one with the Father in heaven. The church today is the same, if not worse, and divided in every aspect as it was in the early days. We have fallen so far away from the grace of God with our little squabbles and constant divisions. Jesus Christ, is one with His Father in Heaven. He says to us, His Children, abide in me and I in you. How then will the Grace of God abide in us if we neglect His word and Holy Spirit at every turn?

In verses 11-13, Paul says, *"It has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"*

Paul issues a stern rebuke to the church in Corinth for their discord and presumptions. Often Christians forget their purpose on earth and their role in the ministry of Jesus Christ. We take our eyes off the mark, which is Christ, and focus on trivial earthly things. There is Perfect unity in the Godhead and so it will be in Heaven. There will be perfect unity in heaven and the closer we draw to heaven while we are here on earth, the closer we get to achieving perfection in Jesus Christ.

Amazing how easy it is to pervert and destroy the best things in this world. Paul taught and preached the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ but the principles were perverted and neglected by presumptuous followers, who broke into several contention camps.

Today, the church has broken into uncountable and divided denominations, all claiming to have the true message. There is only one who carries the true gospel and that is Jesus Christ. Man's task is to follow, emulate, and strive to be like Jesus by totally submitting to His rule. The devil has always sought to destroy God's children. He endeavors to wreak havoc by setting a seed of division within the church.

From the days of Adam in the Garden of Eden, to the time of Jesus Christ and the present day, the marauding hyena roams the earth looking for someone to devour, and stirring up strife in the church is one of his many tactics.

Paul the apostle was an educated man. He was an orator and a philosopher after his teacher, Gamaliel. Gamaliel was an esteemed philosopher, orator, and member of the Jewish Council of elders; the Sanhedrin. Nevertheless, Paul, with all his knowledge and abilities said, *"I count all things but DUNG, for the Knowledge and EXCELLENCE of Jesus Christ."* Preaching the plain message of the crucified Jesus was and is still by far the most powerful truth this world will ever know.

Paul was therefore, filled with pity for the Corinthian church in their discord and perversion of the simplicity of the greatest phenomena ever that graced the universe some 2000 years ago. The Knowledge of this world comes from the prince of the air.

Revelations 12:12, *"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."*

In Mathew 4: 1-11, we see the devil tempting the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that the devil offered the world to our Lord Jesus Christ if only He bowed to the whims of the evil one. We have enough proof that he failed in this desperate act of futility because the Blood of the Lamb saves us from the depths of depravity and the shackles of sin, and through His resurrection, we are reconciled with the Father in Heaven; we are restored into His marvelous kingdom and made whole again.

It is imperative to understand that earthly kingdoms and principalities belong to the prince of this world. He is but a thief, a murderer and he comes only to loot, plunder, and eternally destroy what God loves. The fallen sow seeds of sin in golden jars that are attractive to all mankind so as to lure them to the burning inferno that was prepared for him and his minions.

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His is only intellect, which he profusely showers on all who strive after knowledge and not wisdom, which comes directly from God.

In summary, I would like to share this simple truth, as the truth itself is plain and straightforward. God uses ordinary men to do His work. Yes, Paul was rich, educated, had an esteemed position, and was held in high regard by most people. His father purchased Roman Citizenship from his purse, yet he was still an ordinary Jew whom God had chosen to win the mainly the gentile nations. Paul gave up himself. He sacrificed his position as a leading Jew, his riches, family, friends, all for the knowledge and excellence of a simple and plain truth that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Frances Banda

### **BIBLE SCHOOL**

There were 38 in attendance. 19 pastors and their wives. We completed our second session of Bible school last week and we touched one of the most contested debates in the world today which is the role that women play in ministry. The Bible does teach us that God has established male leadership but also teaches that the woman works with the man by helping him fulfill the call of God in a family and ministry. Genesis 1:27-28, *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be ye fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and birds off the air, and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

The fact that God established male leadership does not make women inferior to the man. In the first place the Lord God created us all in His image which makes us equal in eyes of God. Besides, all people have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. God sees us the same and thus we are equal and joint heirs in Christ Jesus. Yes, we do have different roles to play in the family and in ministry and so it is important that we must realize what our gifting is and therefore perform our role to perfection. Men must not be a *"stumbling block"* for women in ministry but rather be great supporters of our women so that they might fulfill their calling by ministering freely.

The African tradition and customs hardly ever tolerates women leadership and you can imagine the dilemma when the subject was being taught. We are grateful that everyone who attended understood the importance of women in ministry as well as the duty bestowed on them to support and encourage our women in ministry as well as letting them (women) lead as we are coheirs in the kingdom of heaven.

It was a successful school and once again we saw God's hand in sifting through and removing the goats. Despite the fact we were very adamant at the first session of the

school that no pastor should have more than one wife a number of them arrived with two wives in tow. Our policy is that no one with more than one wife should hold a position of leadership in the church and nor can they put away a wife in order to do so. Some of them live on the border with Mozambique so they think it is fine to have a Malawi wife on one side and a Mozambican wife on the other side. No one has ever taught them differently which is one of the reasons why this Bible school is paramount – so that they can be made aware of the pitfalls of culture versus the Word.



Some of the pastors and their wives.

### **NTHONDO BRANCH**

We visited Pastor Shadreck Kamchila on December 10-11 and we had such a wonderful time there. We were all amazed to see the church building they were working on completed and the only challenge they have is roofing. It is extremely difficult for them to find finances for the roofing. We admired their unity for they made their own bricks and found a builder among themselves to build the church building. It is such selfless determination that God really blesses and a selfless attitude is exactly what we need in the church if we are to really get closer and closer to the heart of our Father in heaven. Roofing will be about \$500.



**CHIDIDI CHURCH**

A few newsletters ago we mentioned that a pastor in the mountains lost his church building because he left the organization he was with and joined Alabaster even though his congregation built the church on his land. Six months ago, we told him we would build a bigger and better church and all of the villagers kept laughing at him saying it would never be done. His congregation have been meeting under the trees.

This is his new church and even though the roof has to be reinforced because of the strong winds, they are already having their meetings in it. We will be planting a barrier of trees in front of it to help break the winds and protect it.

They now have a roof over their heads which is wonderful since the rains have come. All in all, what amazing blessings with the rain and the building. It is the envy of all the other pastors in the area!!

God has been so wonderful this year as you have risen to the occasion and supported the various projects.



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**HAPPY CHRISTMAS**

I was speaking with a friend on the phone yesterday who was telling me that another friend of ours was impatient to get a certain project done and he had told her that nothing would happen until after the New Year. It seems that the holidays begin at Thanksgiving and finish after the New Year. Yes, we all go into work but I see so much scurrying around in stores with busy people running here and there - Black Friday now carries on for weeks and after Christmas there are all the sales that everyone is rushing to.

Let us pause for a moment in the busyness of our lives when nothing seems to be accomplished and put our focus on HIM. He is the greatest gift that we could ever imagine and He has given Himself to all who ask Him. Knock.....! What a present!!!!

**BREAKDOWN OF MONTHLY EXPENSES FOR 2017**

Support for each elderly with four distributions an year:\$10 x 420		\$4,200
Support for girls (education and clothing)	5 10	50
Alabaster Bible school students	10 x 25	250
Alabaster Students attending PAOC school	30 x 2	60
Salaries – 8 pastors (13 months)	15 x 8	120
2 pastors (13 months)	20 x 2	40
3 staff members total (13 months)		570
	Monthly	\$5,290
 Building costs for 2017:		
10 houses for the elderly	\$5,000	
Upgrading pastors homes	2,000	
Bible school dormitories	6,000	
Roofing churches (grass to corrugated iron)	2,500	
Church at Tengani	10,000	
Staff housing	30,000	
Vehicle	5,000	