

## Bimonthly Encouragement to Sudanese Christian Workers

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### Are you Looking in the Right Direction?

I know that some believers in Sudan are living in fear. Will there be more bloodshed? What will happen to my home, my livestock, my children? It was to such people of his own time that Paul wrote Hebrews 12:1-3.

“Let us fix our eyes on **Jesus....who for the joy set before him endured the cross....so that you will not grow weary and lose heart**”.

Our Lord Jesus had his heart fixed on the ultimate goal. This is what helped Him and enabled Him to go through the terrible experiences of crucifixion, death and burial.

When the referendum goes ahead, we must all remember that in voting for a better life here “in Sudan”, our real home – and the only home that **REALLY FOR EVER** matters – is our home in heaven. Legitimate hope for a better life *now*, must never take away our hope for our ultimate living in heaven.

I live in England. I have done since God used an illness to close the door for me living in Khartoum, in 2003. Most people here have a reasonably good standard of life. One of the results of this is that God is pushed out of their lives! They seem to have no need for any God. They can, within reason, do as they please in life. It is tragic to see my friends around where I live day by day showing little or no thinking about the life that follows this one! In my witnessing I must begin by trying to show that there is a God who lives!

Please don't make the same mistake in Sudan that we have made here.

Vote as you lawfully can, and vote for what you really want. But, whatever happens during the poll and after the results are announced, **keep the goal of your life as to please and honour God, with your eyes firmly on heaven.**

With Jesus Christ as your Saviour there is no doubt you will enter a sinless heaven when you leave this world. Keep this always uppermost in your heart. Share it constantly with your family. Talk about it with your friends.

Show it, even to those who see differently to you. Your positive witness may win some more folk into the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (which will include people who are nomads, as well as those from all villages, towns and cities across Sudan and throughout the world). Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9-17.

For now, on this earth, we who say we are Christians must live “**a disciplined life of Christian discipleship**”.<sup>1</sup> We can all move into the unknown on the basis of what we do already know! Think of your Bible stories.

This is why Paul has written in Hebrews chapter eleven about many of the Bible’s “star people”. They have proven time and again that God eventually leads them through troubled times, and leads them on out the other side. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Samson, David, etc.

A word of warning here. **We must be realistic**, and not present only half of the Bible’s story. Paul also notes that **many other people did not make it through safely in this life**, Hebrews 11:35-38. However, it is said of these people that they are **alive in the new order** of heaven and **that is far better** than the old order of earth. “The world was not worthy of them”.

Stephen had a glimpse of this while he died a martyr for our Lord Jesus, Acts 7:55-56. What did Stephen see? “**The glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God**”.

*John Stott comments: “There are several parallels between the death of Jesus and the death of Stephen. In both cases false witnesses were produced and the charge was one of blasphemy. In both cases too, the execution was accompanied by two prayers, as each prayed for the forgiveness of his executioners and for the reception of his spirit as he died. Thus did the disciple – whether consciously or unconsciously – reflect his Master”.*<sup>2</sup>

*There is one marked difference. Jesus prayed to His Father, while Stephen prayed to his Lord Jesus. Stephen knew “**Jesus was in control of the whole situation and is with him, just as he promised he would be**, Matthew 28:20. This vision of Jesus is very reassuring to Stephen, and is equally so to all who are willing to suffer for the gospel. Stephen excitedly announces what he is seeing – **Jesus, the Son of Man, standing in a now-opened heaven**”.*<sup>3</sup>

**The word “endure” is in Hebrews 12:1-7 three times.** It means to bear up courageously under suffering, to undergo without yielding, to suffer something unpleasant without becoming upset. The same New Testament word is used in Matthew 10:22 and 24:13 meaning the one who stands firm until the end. It is in Romans 12:12 meaning the patient one. It is in 1 Corinthians 13:7 as the loving one who perseveres. It is in 2 Timothy 2:10 where Paul describes what he went through in order for other people to be saved.

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”, Hebrews 12:1. Let us pray “joy, endurance and faith” for one another at this crucial time.

*Pastor Colin Salter. (Please share these thoughts with others and refer them to my website for more study resources!).*

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<sup>1</sup> Tesfaye Kassa (Ethiopian) *Africa Bible Commentary* (Word Alive: Nairobi) 2006, page 1505.

<sup>2</sup> John Stott (English) *The Message of Acts*, Bible Speaks Today series (IVP: Leicester) 1991, page 142.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Mumo Kisau (Kenyan) *Africa Bible Commentary* (as above), page 1312.