

On His 99th Birthday, Billy Graham Delivers A Powerful Message

World-renowned evangelist Billy Graham turned 99 on 7 November. Dr Graham has now entered his 100th year on the planet – an astonishing achievement. Billy Graham has preached to millions around the world and across a ministry career that spans longer than most of our lifetimes.

'My father, Billy Graham,' says Billy Graham's son, Franklin in a new video, 'is entering his 100th year—that's pretty amazing. As my father enters his 100th year, for the year leading up to his 100th birthday, we are going to honour what God has done through him by highlighting significant moments of his life and some eight decades of ministry.

'The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association is moving strong into the future, but it's also important to celebrate the past. Each month leading up to my father's centennial birthday BGEA will highlight significant points in his ministry, with special content featured on BillyGraham.org and in *Decision* magazine.

'My father always wants the focus to be on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not on him; and so we will point to the amazing ways God has worked in lives around the world, through the ministry of Billy Graham,' Franklin said.

Dr Graham's own message on the video is: 'I've been praying that we might have a spiritual awakening, but that only comes as individuals surrender their lives afresh and anew to Christ. We are to live a life in which we love one another, we help one another, we live according to what Jesus lived. The Holy Spirit is the One that helps us live that new lifestyle. Go to your knees, and pray until you and God have become intimate friends.'

To view the video, go to: billygraham.org and click on **Video**.



Dr Graham's largest ever congregation was in Seoul, Korea, in 1973 when 1.1 million people gathered on an unused airport runway.

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Giving Thanks For The Reformation

The Gospel Coalition marks the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation with the following statement, drafted by Dr Kevin de Young:

We join with millions of Christians around the world in celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Granted, dates like these are hard to pin down. Who is to say when something as big as the Reformation began? And what about those who laboured for reform long before 31 October 1517? Nevertheless, for centuries, Protestants have instinctively recognised that a providential series of events was set in motion on this day 500 years ago when a German professor named Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

We give thanks for Martin Luther, imperfect though he was, for the role he played in igniting a reform movement that caught fire in the cities of the Holy Roman Empire, spread through the rest of Europe, and now reaches to the ends of the Earth. Wherever we find the Scriptures alone as the highest and final authority, grace alone as the only hope for sinners, faith alone as the only ground for justification, Christ alone as the only atoning sacrifice for sin, and God alone as the ultimate object of our worship—wherever we find these truths sung, savoured, and celebrated, we have reason to rejoice in the Reformation.

But we do more than give thanks for the past. We also marvel at what we see in the present. Who but God could have foreseen the triumphs of the Gospel in the last 500 years—from the planting of Reformation churches in the New World, to the explosion of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa, to revivals in Korea, to the endurance (and now spectacular growth) of the church in China, to renewed Gospel vibrancy in places as diverse as Australia, the Arabian Peninsula, Brazil, and India? Who but God could have known that once the Bible was translated into English and German and French it would also be translated into Albanian, Cambodian, Japanese, Oshindonga, Navajo, Swahili, and Pitjantjatjara? Who but God could have predicted that with the advent of planes, radios, and the internet, the good news of justification by faith alone in Christ alone through grace alone would be available to more people in more places than at any previous time in history? 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes' (Psalm 118:23).

And yet, we are not blind to the challenges facing the church: secularisation in the former countries of Christendom, opposition to Biblical orthodoxy in the West, and increasing violence against the church in parts of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. Theological heterodoxy holds sway in too many places, as do grinding poverty on the one hand and affluent indifference on the other. And this is to say nothing of rising racial tensions, widespread nominalism, and the plight of the billions who have no access to the Gospel.

But Scripture tells us that the Word of God is not bound (2 Timothy 2.9). What we know from the Bible and have seen in history—that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1.16)—we expect to see in the years ahead. We are not confident in ourselves or in our ministries. We are but a vapour, a mist that appears and then vanishes away (James 4.14). We will not change the world, or even a single human heart, but we know the One who can and does. The God who Luther proclaimed is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and our God too. Though cultures change, and the church with it at times, the Head of the church does not change. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13.8).

– To read the full text of this message go to: thegospelcoalition.org.au

Responding To The SSM 'Yes' Vote

With the final result of the Same Sex Marriage Vote being 61.6% in favour to 38.4% against, several ministries which vigorously opposed the change to the law have responded. The Marriage Alliance Response is published below as possibly representing the reaction of the largest number of those opposed to the change:

The Marriage Alliance Response: Despite the huge media bias against the 'No' campaign, and widespread attacks on supporters of true marriage, millions of Australians voted against radically changing one of our key social institutions. However, it wasn't enough to get us over the line. While this is obviously disappointing, we must shift our attention immediately to the challenge ahead. Throughout the campaign, supporters of same-sex marriage, including many leading politicians, claimed there would be no adverse consequences to redefining marriage. It is now vital that we hold them to their word. Urge your local Federal MP and senators to protect your freedoms in any parliamentary vote.

There are two very different same-sex marriage bills being proposed. The bill from Senator Dean Smith is grossly inadequate, only offering very basic protections for ministers of religion (which could be easily taken away in the future). It does nothing to protect anyone else.

The new bill from Senator James Paterson is a vast improvement. While it may not be ideal (after all, it would still change the Marriage Act) his bill makes a serious attempt to enshrine freedom of speech, conscience, religion and parental rights for Australians who believe marriage is between a man and a woman. These fundamental freedoms must be permanently protected otherwise we will see our fears realised as Pandora's Box is opened. Send your local MP and senators an email urging them to protect our key freedoms.

Thank you for being a part of this historic campaign. We may not have achieved the result we wanted, but we have been truly humbled by the massive role Marriage Alliance supporters have played over the past few weeks. We are grateful for your ongoing support as the campaign enters this new and even more challenging phase.

Sydney Anglican Response: Archbishop Glenn Davies says he accepts the outcome of the postal plebiscite, but warns there must be freedom of speech, conscience and belief for Christians and others who disagree. 'Now that the outcome is that the yes vote is the majority vote on behalf of the Australian people, as I said to the Prime Minister 18 months ago on behalf of other religious leaders, that if that's what the Australian people want then we live in a democracy and I recognise and acknowledge that outcome. Therefore it is quite proper for the parliament to legislate for same-sex marriage in accordance with the will of the people, notwithstanding that it wasn't a referendum which was compulsory voting, but almost 80% of people voting is a very high threshold and I accept that. That doesn't mean I will change my views. I will still continue to teach that marriage is, in God's plan, between a man and a woman. But I acknowledge that once the parliament passes those laws, that will no longer be the law of the land,' Dr Davies said. 'The consequences then are: what happens to people who want to hold to that truth. It is one thing to say, for example, we don't have laws against adultery in this country, but I still want to say adultery is wrong, it is immoral. I want to be able to uphold that teaching without the law saying to me: no, it is not illegal, so you can't say that. At the moment that's not the case, but the way in which we have seen in other Western Democracies, the co-ercive effect of changing the definition of marriage has been to restrict people's ability to hold a different point of view. And one of the outstanding points of democracy and human dignity is the freedom of speech, the freedom of faith and the freedom of conscience. Therefore what the parliament needs to do now, in legislating for same-sex marriage, is to do so in a way which protects people's liberties.'

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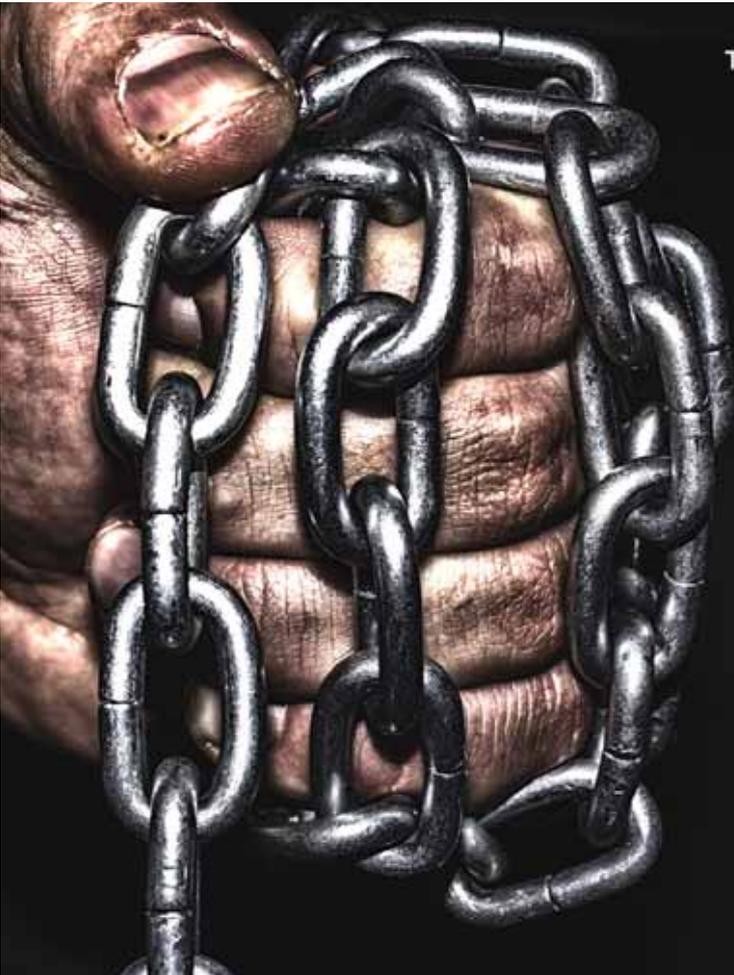
Today's Typical Church: Multicultural, Female, Well Educated –2016 National Church Life Survey

Compared to all Australians, people who go to church are more likely to be a first- or second-generation migrant, female and tertiary-educated.

A multicultural church. More than a third of Australian church attenders (36%) were born overseas, according to the latest *National Church Life Survey* results. Of those born overseas, 27% of churchgoers were born in a non-English speaking country, higher than in the general Australian population (22%), demonstrating that Australian churches are culturally diverse and can be a significant place of welcome and social inclusion for migrants. NCLS Research Director, Dr Ruth Powell, says this multicultural mix in Australian churches has increased over time. 'The proportion of attenders born overseas was 28% in 2006, and ten years later it was up to 36% in 2016,' she said. 'Compared to other nations, we have a very high proportion of multicultural churches.'

More women than men attend local churches: six in ten church attenders are female. As in previous waves of the NCLS, this is higher than in Australian society, where females represent 51% of the population. 'The fact that women continue to be more religious than men confirms a long-term pattern, which has been found in all religions and across the world,' explained Dr Powell. 'While there are lots of factors involved, the evidence points to social and cultural factors having an important role.'

Those in the pews are more educated than ever before. Some 37 % of churchgoers aged 15+ held a university degree in 2016, up from 27% in 2006. The proportion of tertiary educated churchgoers continued to be higher than the Australian population where 22% of those aged 15+ held a university degree in 2016. Ministry implications include the challenge of catering for highly educated younger Christians, as well as older attenders with lower levels of formal schooling. – NCLS Press release.



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NIGERIA: Fulani Used As Proxies For Islamic Jihad

In the early hours of Monday 16 October, ethnic Fulani Muslim cattle herders dressed in military fatigues stormed the mostly Christian, ethnic Irigwe village of Nkyie Doghwro in Bassa Local Government Area, Plateau State. Knowing that an attack was imminent, the villagers had requested extra security from the Special Task Force soldiers in the nearby base. The soldiers disarmed the residents and gathered them into a schoolroom where they were to sleep under the protection of military personnel from Operation Safe Haven. However, when the Fulani invaded, the soldiers withdrew, leaving the residents defenceless. Christians have accused the military of complicity in the massacre which claimed 29 lives and emptied the village. The military denies this, claiming the soldiers were simply overpowered (an equally disturbing, though highly unlikely, proposition).

The Muslim Fulani attack at night. They kill and displace the mostly Christian indigenous residents, and emptied villages are subsequently occupied by Fulani Muslim settlers from the north. During the first two weeks of October, Christian villages in Plateau were attacked on an almost daily basis. [See recent reports from *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*, *World Watch Monitor* and *Morning Star News*]. In Bassa LGA alone, over the course of five weeks, numerous attacks targeting two indigenous Irigwe communities, left 72 villagers dead, 23 injured, 489 houses burnt and 13,726 mostly Christian Irigwe displaced, out of a population of 80,000. The attacks continued despite a government imposed curfew. On 19 October the Nigerian Air Force announced it had deployed troops, fighter aircraft and attack helicopters to Jos, Plateau State, to join the military efforts in curtailing the violence, in particular to 'prevent reprisals from the natives'.

In the face of escalating violence in Plateau, a coalition of 25 ethnic nationalities has given the Plateau State House of Assembly two weeks to initiate a bill against open grazing and six months for it to be passed into law. Such a law would mandate that cattle be raised in ranches and banned from grazing on the gardens and crops of indigenes. Other states with Anti-Open Grazing laws are Benue in the south (law enacted 1 November) and Tarbaba in the east (law to be enacted in January 2018), both in the Middle Belt. Whilst Anti-Open Grazing laws could go a long way towards curtailing the crisis, Fulani violence is about more than feeding livestock.

While the Bible mandates that Christians spread the Good News that God reconciles sinners to Himself through Jesus Christ, Islam mandates that Muslims expand the territory under Allah's rule (ie, under Islamic Sharia Law – a political mandate). Forced out by the ever-encroaching desert, the traditionally nomadic Fulani cattle herders migrate south in search of food and water for their livestock. These Fulani are then exploited by jihadists and other Islamists, including those in the military and in the government, who use them as proxies in an Islamic jihad to expand Muslim territory at the expense of Christians. This is why they routinely attack with high-powered automatic weapons, wear bullet-proof vests and military fatigues. It is also why they are virtually never caught and never brought to book. Many suspect they also are supported by Islamists at the highest levels of government. Banning open grazing would actually eliminate one of the Islamisation strategies.

Whilst the most recent violence has occurred in Plateau, Fulani expansion is certainly not limited to Plateau. Speaking at a forum on 30 October, former head of state General Abdulsalami Abubakar released some grim statistics. In 2016, Fulani cattle herders killed 2,500 and displaced 62,000 mostly Christian indigenes in Plateau, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Benue alone. Human rights advocates and Christian leaders have criticised President Muhammadu Buhari (a Fulani Muslim from the north) for his silence over the crisis. They also question why, on 16 October, the United Nations rewarded the Buhari government by re-electing it to the UN Human Rights Council.

PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL:

- richly bless all Christian evangelistic ministry to Fulani Muslims, pouring out the Holy Spirit in abundance and with great power;
- bless and protect all Fulani Christian converts committed to evangelising their own people, not only in the interests of the Fulani, but also in the interests of peace. As converts, their lives are gravely imperilled. May the Lord guide them, bless them and be their shield;
- bless and supply the Bible Colleges that are training Fulani converts and other evangelists to work amongst Nigeria's Muslims. Fulani are coming to faith in Christ! May the Lord continue to build His Church in Northern Nigeria;
- intervene in Nigeria's political processes to enable the progress of Anti-Open Grazing laws where they are needed; may He also enable the traditionally nomadic Fulani to embrace the concept of ranches and remove all obstacles to their establishment.

Elizabeth Kendal is the author of *Turn Back The Battle: Isaiah Speaks To Christians Today* (Deror Books, Melbourne, Australia, Dec 2012) which offers a Biblical response to persecution and existential threat; and *After Saturday Comes Sunday: Understanding The Christian Crisis In The Middle East* (Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, USA, June 2016). See www.ElizabethKendal.com

Chaplaincy In Schools Turns Ten

After 10 years, the public school chaplaincy program former Prime Minister John Howard introduced still makes a difference in the lives of 2,000 students each week. Mr Howard knows this because he sat in the front row at the Museum of Sydney last month as chaplain after chaplain told stories of lives changed and prospects made brighter by their work. From the young student anxious over the possibility that her mother's cancer might return, to the older boy who wanted to gain a place in a selective school in order to get a good job and support his struggling family.



A public school principal told how the chaplaincy program 'adds soul to our school' and that, aside from supporting the students, the chaplain had now organised fathers into a group to encourage each other to be better parents. Almost all the fathers in the school, in Sydney's south, were involved.

Such good news stories were shared at the tenth-anniversary celebration of the chaplaincy program. On hand were representatives of several providers, including *Generate Ministries*, which is the largest provider of chaplains in NSW state schools, with more than 220 positions. Generate's general manager James Flavin quoted the words Mr Howard used as he unveiled the scheme: 'Chaplains will be expected to provide pastoral care, general religious and personal advice, and comfort and support to all students and staff, irrespective of their religious beliefs. A chaplain might support school students and the wider school community in a range of ways, such as assisting students in exploring their spirituality; providing guidance on religious, values and ethical matters; helping school counsellors and staff in offering welfare services and support in cases of bereavement, family breakdown or other crisis and loss situations.'

Mr Flavin added: 'From what we have heard this morning, Mr Howard's words were definitely prophetic. This is a very popular program, with the last funding round oversubscribed by 200 schools. I think we can all agree that the Government receives excellent value for the \$5 million it spends on these 400 or so chaplaincies.'

The former PM was clearly delighted by the stories of the good work chaplains have been doing. 'Today is a celebration of something that was sneered at, at the time,' Mr Howard said. 'It was labelled as an invasion of the separation of church and state but in reality, it was fulfilling an increasingly growing need within our community. We all are conscious of the terrible impact on young lives of violence in the environment in which they live, of family breakdown, of the inability of dysfunctional families to cope with sudden tragedy and loss. While I acknowledge, and I was very happy to emphasise at the time the program was introduced [that] it was not to be a vehicle for overt proselytisation, clearly the driving force behind this program and its great success has been the spiritual commitment of individuals.'

Mr Howard said the value of chaplaincy work needed to be stressed to governments. 'The best thing I heard this morning was that there was an oversubscription of 200,' he said. 'In other words, more and more people want chaplains and the greatest weapon [in] defence of the program – against those who might try and withdraw it or cripple it or reduce it or weaken it – is the evident need. If communities want this program, in the end, governments will keep it?'

– Russell Powell, Sydney Anglicans

Myuran Sukumaran's Art Lives On To Tell The Story

Many Australians were profoundly impacted by the execution of Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, two members of the Bali Nine drug ring who became Christians during their time in prison, back in April 2015. An exhibition of Myuran's art has won an award for Best Museum Project. Centre For Public Christianity's *Our Life & Faith* podcast took listeners on an audio tour of this deeply moving collection earlier this year, and considered some big questions of life, death, justice, and whether people really can change. If you missed it, you can listen now. It's available here: <https://www.publicchristianity.org/another-day-in-paradise/>

CPX says, 'If you're not a regular listener of Life & Faith, We encourage you to give it a go. Visit our podcast page to listen online, or subscribe on Apple Podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts. Our last couple of episodes explore the impact of the Reformation – in conversation with Lutherans, Catholics, atheists, and a Martin Luther impersonator.

Rallying Call Given On Logos Hope

Christian young people in the Caribbean have committed to world missions at a rally on board the good ship *Logos Hope*. Operation Mobilisation's mission ship was packed with 13-30 year olds to hear crew members share their experience. *Ready, Set, Go!* was the rally theme.

Local rapper, Arnold Jules (AJ) and wife Patrice performed a song they had written for the event, titled *Ready, Set, Go!* – a call for missionary action.

During a time of reflection, young people were invited to consider making a pledge to pray. They

were asked to pray for a missionary, going into missionary service themselves, or offering support to the persecuted Church. Written commitments were given to the event organisers for follow-up.

– Operation Mobilisation



A Brisbane Church Puts Its Money Where Its Faith Is

Staff and volunteers at Collective Church in Brisbane have given up the luxuries of life to invest in a bank account for the support of Christians in need. *Eternity News* reports that it's part of a strategy to live the way Jesus spoke about and how the disciples in the early church lived. Pastor James Schleusener says he had felt frustrated by the limits Christians place on loving each other. The church leadership decided to forego daily barista coffee, expensive restaurant meals, cinema outings and new clothes. They set up a bank account purely to help people in the church. 'Not just our church,' Pastor Schleusener says, 'but any church. We've got an account that is there first and foremost to help believers in need.'

– *Eternity News* at biblesociety.org.au

Listening Ears Bring Muslim To Faith In Christ

A Syrian Muslim soldier came to faith in Christ after suffering at the hands of ISIS and overworked doctors. Sayid (not his real name for security reasons) underwent 12 operations to reduce swelling of the brain, get skin grafts and repair internal organs. But he says he became very depressed because his gruff doctors were too hurried and seemed to regard him as an interruption to their busy schedules. Sayid decided to visit a medical clinic run by an indigenous Christian ministry, and they offered him something his doctors had not – a listening ear. Sayid also began listening to the Christian medics talk about Jesus Christ. Having learned about Christ's love he said he wished all the medical people would learn about Jesus so they would treat people well. Soon, Sayid received Christ as his personal Saviour, and says he has finally found real joy.

– *Christian Aid Mission*

More To Come

A network of Christian missions has announced a goal to reach millions of Muslims for Christ. The goal was set during a consultation in Thailand where 900 Christian leaders met to begin the outreach. The network of 180 mission organisations

plans to reach the more than 1,000 Muslim people groups who have not heard the Gospel. They committed to ten years of prayer, fasting and spreading God's Word. The leaders, 25% of whom are from a Muslim background are expecting to see at least 170 million Muslims converted to Christ by 2025. The mission network is called *Vision 5.9* a name taken from Revelation 5.9. – *Mission Network News*

VOM To Send Christmas Blessings Parcels To Egyptian Christians

Egyptian Christians are to receive this year's *Christmas Blessing* packages from Voice of the Martyrs. With a special focus on children, the gifts will include school supplies and a children's picture Bible. VOM will also provide families with food items like bags of rice. Levi MacGregor from Voice of the Martyrs told Mission Network News that Egypt has been chosen to encourage the Church after a horrific year of bombings, burnings and murders. The plan is to encourage 3,000 families in nine Egyptian villages. *Christmas Blessing* packages in previous years have been sent to families in Syria and Jordan. In both these countries, many of those receiving food packages invited Muslim neighbours for Christmas dinner, having an evangelistic outcome.

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For more information go to: www.ElizabethKendal.com



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A Note From The Editor:

My apologies for the lateness and smaller size of this issue. Since returning from Germany I have been plagued by a serious bout of flu which has been compounded by a worse than usual case of jetlag. Things should be back to normal for the next issue, due on 1 December. The last issue for 2017 will be the 15 December issue, after which we will take our annual break until the 15 February 2018 issue. Thank you for your consideration and understanding.

– *Bob Thomas*

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PERSECUTION WATCH

IS Renews Threat To Copts As Al-Azhar Head Says Islam 'At War With Itself'

A pro-Islamic State group media outlet has issued a new threat against Egypt's Coptic Christians, saying they must be attacked as 'infidel fighters' and their churches must be blown up. 28 Copts were killed in an attack for which IS claimed responsibility in which gunmen opened fire on pilgrims travelling to a monastery for Ascension Day. (Pictured, right.)



The message, issued by the Wafa Media Foundation, said Copts did not accept dhimmitude, the

condition of submission imposed by Sharia (Islamic law) on Christians in Islamic societies, the Vatican-linked *Fides* news service reported on 10 November. Instead they should be fought because they continue to build churches and even promote television networks to spread the Christian message, Wafa said.

IS's Egypt affiliate has claimed responsibility for massacres in churches on Palm Sunday and last December, and for an attack on a coach-load of Christian pilgrims in May. In February it issued a video in which it described Copts as its 'favourite prey'.

The new threat came days after one of the most senior voices within Sunni Islam said Islam was facing 'a war against itself'. Ahmed el-Tayeb, the grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar university and mosque, had a private meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican on 7 November, and at an interfaith dialogue conference later that day pledged greater co-operation to fight terrorism. The Vatican did not release details of the meeting between the two men. At a meeting organised by the Sant'Egidio Catholic community, Tayeb said Islam was facing 'a war against itself', and stressed that Muslims too were 'victims of terrorism', AFP reported.

'[Terrorism] is a cancer which has metastasised to different parts of the world,' he added. Al-Azhar, he said, 'is offering its resources and a greater contribution for a permanent collaboration aimed at finding solutions to terrorism' He was speaking at the third in a series of events called *East And West: Dialogues Of Civilisations*, organised by Sant'Egidio and Al-Azhar. The 7 November roundtable was exploring means of coexistence following a century spanning the end of colonial empires and the rise of globalisation. 'I wish to state my conviction of the necessity for a dialogue between religions, between the wise, or we risk falling back into periods of violence and darkness,' he said.

VIETNAM: NGO'S Call For Release Of 165 Prisoners Of Conscience

A joint initiative by 14 Vietnamese and international organisations, including Christian Solidarity Worldwide, is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience in Vietnam, including those detained in connection with their religion or belief. The launch of the *NOW! Campaign* coincides with the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum on 11,12 November. According to the campaign, as of November 2017, there are at least 165 prisoners of conscience in Vietnam. However, due to the challenges of obtaining information about prisoners in the country, the real number is likely to be higher. The figure includes men and women who have been arrested for their political or religious beliefs. Many of those on the list belong to independent religious communities not registered with the government, including Christians from ethnic minority groups. CSW continues to re-

ceive numerous reports of violations.

CHINA: Christian Advocate Confined In An 'Infinite Darkness'

When Gao Zhisheng, committed Christian human rights attorney and religious liberty advocate, emerged from three years' secret detention in August 2014, many surmised he was 'utterly destroyed'. Confined to house arrest and denied access to medical care, Gao (who had survived torture) could have withered and died, but he did not. He recovered. Despite intensive supervision, Gao wrote both a memoir and a 40-page report on human rights in China. These secret writings were smuggled out and have since been published. On 13 August Gao 'disappeared'. Recently Gao's supporters discovered that he is being held in a secret prison in Shaanxi Province, in solitary confinement, in total darkness and denied access to medical care. They fear for his life. Please pray for Gao and for China and its Church.
- Elizabeth Kendal

‘Gates Of Hell Shall Never ‘Gainst That Church Prevail’

ACTS 23.

Like Jesus before him (John 18.22), Paul is struck on the face by his opponents. Also like Jesus, it is not apparent why his words should warrant such a response. Luke is drawing a further contrast between the Roman justice system, which can be trusted and will treat Paul fairly, and the Jewish system, which violates its own law and quickly descends into chaos.

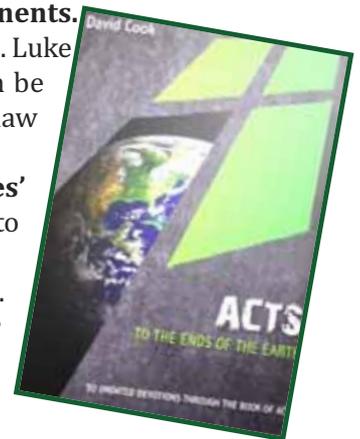
Paul claims that he is being opposed because he maintains the Pharisees’ conviction about the resurrection (v 6). Once again, the meeting erupts into chaos – this time because of the contrary convictions of the Sadducees (v 8).

Paul is once again rescued, this time in danger of being torn to pieces (v 10). Verse 11 contains a wonderfully kind reassurance from God – that no matter how dark things look, Paul will testify in Rome. After all, the word of Ananias is yet to be fulfilled – that Paul will carry Christ’s name before the Gentile kings (Acts 9.15).

One wonders how long the 40 men mentioned in verse 14 kept their oath ‘not to eat anything until we have killed Paul’. Meanwhile, the commander assembles an extraordinary detachment of soldiers to guard Paul (v 23). Jewish opposition is not underestimated, and Paul’s case is treated with the utmost respect by the Roman authorities. The irony is that the Roman pagans become deliverers of God’s apostle from the hands of God’s ancient people.

The God of the Word is in control. Paul is neither fearful nor uncertain. Paul’s perseverance is fed by his trust in God to see His purposes fulfilled. The phrase, ‘it must happen’ is translated from a little Greek word that is one of the most common words used in Acts (it appears over 40 times in Luke–Acts).

Again, the gospel and its messenger prevail in the face of insurmountable odds.



FOR REFLECTION:

Acts 23.11 records a direct word from God. Others like this are recorded in Acts 8.26; 9.6,15; 10.19,20; 13.2; 16.9; 18.9,10; 20.22; and 27.24.

What do these records tell you about the nature of God and His purpose?

Content taken from 'ACTS – To The Ends Of The Earth' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

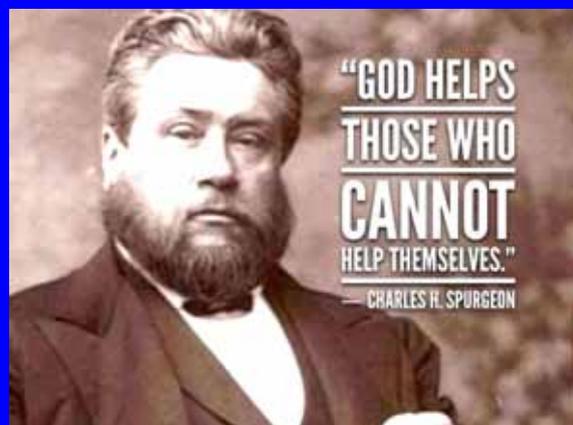
SEEN ON FACEBOOK:

Christianity affirms that at the heart of reality is a Heart, a loving Father who works through history for the salvation of His children. Man cannot save himself, for man is not the measure of all things and humanity is not God. Bound by the chains of his own sin and finiteness, man needs a Savior.

Martin Luther

**Matthew 7.7,8
He Answers Prayer**

Words Of Wisdom:



BOOKS WORTH READING

CELEBRATING THE REFORMATION: Its Legacy And Continuing Relevance, Ed Mark Thompson, Colin Bale and Edward Loane, London: Apollos, 2017.

This sizable volume contains 18 essays celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, and it is edited by three teachers at Moore Theological College, Sydney. The title says it all – the Reformation is not apologised for (for splitting the Western Church), or regretted (as a rash act by zealots), but celebrated for what it is, a recovery of the Gospel of God's grace and of the authority and relevance of the Scriptures in shaping the life of the church and individual believers. The book is dedicated to Michael Ovey who died suddenly earlier this year, and one of the essays comes from his hand.

Gerald Bray shows that the Reformation still matters politically (explaining much of the map of the modern world) and theologically (for the root problem in human nature is still sin). This helpful chapter addresses and effectively answers the 'so what?' question. The issues and achievements of the Reformation are not just of antiquarian interest.

Mark Thompson helps us to find the real Martin Luther, the flesh and blood man behind the many images made of him by followers and detractors alike. As Joe Mock demonstrates in a well-written chapter, the reformer Zwingli discovered the Gospel independently of Luther (in the Bible!), and though he died on the battlefield (as a chaplain, not a fighter), it was by preaching and arguing that he sought to win people to the faith and to reform the life of Zurich. Melancthon was the systematic theologian of the Lutheran movement, whose debt to and differences to Luther are sympathetically assessed by Dean Zweck. John McClean explains Calvin's passion and vision for the reform of the church, and shows that Calvin was both an idealist and a born organiser, for he knew how to translate a theological vision into a practical program of change.

Martin Foord shows the vital contribution made by Bullinger to the clear Gospel message proclaimed by the reformers. Stephen Tong tells the story of Martin Bucer, who worked tirelessly to unite the Reformed movement. Tim Patrick reveals that a key aim of Thomas Cranmer in formulating the *Book Of Common Prayer* was that the whole Bible be read in services each year. Jane Tooher introduces the readers to one of the heroines of the Reformation, Katherine Zell, whose many letters strengthened believers and promoted the Reformed faith.

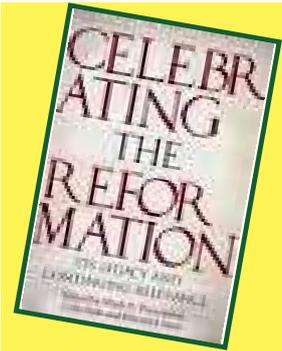
The next chapters explain and vindicate key Reformation doctrines: salvation through Christ alone (Edward Loane), justification by faith alone (Michael Ovey), Scripture alone (Mark Thompson), the priesthood of all believers (Chase Kuhn), and discipleship in all of life (Andrew Bain).

Andrew Leslie traces post-Reformation developments that are too varied just to label 'Reformed Scholasticism', for many resisted the inroads of rationalism and insisted that God's Spirit must convince a person of the truth of the Scriptures. Rhys Bezzant shows the strong links between the Reformation and the Eighteenth-Century revivalism in the persons of John Wesley, George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, who did not woodenly follow Calvin but each in their own way furthered the aim of re-Christianising Europe, America and beyond through more flexible church structures and greater lay involvement. The Victorian view of the Reformation was polarised (Edward Loane), with Evangelicals on one side and the Oxford Movement on the other.

David Hohne helps us to differentiate the reformed ideal of 'always reforming' from the Romantic ideal of revolution and change for change's sake. Hohne sees the five solas (Christ alone, faith alone etc.) as a helpful tool for guiding progress and avoiding mistakes as we seek to articulate and apply the faith to new times.

Finally, Colin Bale rehearses the history of the various Protestant churches in Australia and reviews the sectarian clashes with Roman Catholicism. Those disputes have now died down, though the Reformation heritage is as vital as ever as a reminder of the importance of guarding Gospel truth and to ensure the continuance of Bible-based Christianity.

– Greg Goswell



'The title says it all: the Reformation is not apologised for (for splitting the Western Church), or regretted (as a rash act by zealots), but celebrated for what it is, a recovery of the Gospel of God's grace ...'