



Evangelism:

A Dedication of the Heart

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(Based upon a lecture given by His Grace Bishop Antonius Markos, Bishop of African Affairs, at the SUS Evangelism Conference)

"The number of the disciples kept growing... (Acts 6:1)"

...On the day of Pentecost when St. Peter started to speak and we examine his speech after the dwelling of the Holy Spirit upon him, upon the apostles and the disciples, we can see what St. Peter said more or less was a history regarding the Israelite Nation and how God dealt with them according to His great mercies and concerning their evangelism...

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel... And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your young men shall see visions; your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on my maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in Heaven above and signs on earth beneath; blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Men of Israel hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you



Rev. Ishmael Noko (left) and HG Bishop Antonius Markos (right)

yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

For David the psalmist says concerning Him, "I foresaw the Lord always for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will you allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life. You will make me full of joy in Your presence....

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, 'What shall we do?'

Peter said to them, 'Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' And with many other words he testified and exhorted them saying 'Be saved from this perverse generation.'" (Acts 2: 14-40)

When the heart is touched by the Word of God, the person will come in true submission, and 3000 came forward and asked St. Peter what we shall do brother.

It is a total submission, and it is a total willingness for



Isaiah the Prophet

obedience and whatever you tell them they will do because their heart has been touched by what you said, so it is no wonder that the first consecration of the life started with the consecration of the heart.

As written in the Holy Book of Acts 16:14: *"Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul."* So there are many things that can make our heart be opened and dedicated to the Lord.

Is it the Lord, which opens the heart as the case of Lydia?
OR

Is it the word of St. Peter and the Holy Spirit which opens the heart of the people to come and say what shall we do?

OR

The Spirit of God does that as St. Paul put it in II Corinthians 1:22 *"Who also has sealed us and given us the spirit in our heart as a deposit."*

AND

In the Holy Book of II Corinthians 4: 6 we read, *"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ."*

There are so many people in darkness in these

worldly days.

Darkness

Darkness of the flesh
Darkness of lust
Darkness materially
Darkness of the corruption in the world

*But within this darkness the Lord shines
(II Corinthians 4:6).*

For an individual who has a very listening and very sensitive heart which is listening to the call of God they are the ones if God speaks in their heart can start dedicating their life to God and their heart that is dedicated will move into dedicated life and the fruits of such dedication of the heart will lead to dedication of life will do marvelous things.

Nehemiah

Should we think about him? He was such a good example of a person who is not at all a servant to God, but he had a sensitive heart. He was faithful to Israel and Jerusalem and the House of God. Nehemiah was doing very well in the palace of the king because of his station as the cupbearer of the king.

But his heart was in Jerusalem and he was very sensi-



tive about what happened to the people who went into exile. He was well acclimated within the palace of the king, and all his work comprised was carrying the cup to the king in the evening, and offering him wine to drink.

His relative Hunan came to visit Nehemiah, and when he asked him concerning Jerusalem, he reported to him the burning of the temple, so the heart of Nehemiah was so sad. He cried, fasted not eating anything, and he prayed to God for many days.

That was the beginning of Nehemiah's dedication of the heart. Amazingly what happened with Nehemiah shows that after many days of fasting and praying, he did not continue to live in this mourning mode but he said: Let us move to action, and that action was prayer, fasting and that action was dedication of the heart and then when he stood in front of the king, the Lord spoke in his tongue.

The king asked him: What is that I see in your face? Is it sickness? He answered him it is not sickness your majesty. He answered honestly: How can I rejoice when I hear what happened to the House of God-- that the walls are destroyed and the doors are burned! And the king said to him what shall I do for you? The dedicated heart of Nehemiah raised itself to God.

A dedicated heart is an obedient heart to God, a person who is willing to say AMEN. Here I am Lord, send me as Isaiah said when the Lord said whom shall I send? And who shall go to speak in my behalf to the people?

The prophet Isaiah's heart was dedicated when he was exposed to a great vision when he saw the Lord setting on the Throne in the Temple.And when he heard the angels singing and glorifying: *Holy! Holy! Holy! The Lord of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of your Holy Glory.*

In fact, the dedicated heart to God comes through the

touch of the Holy Spirit, or the speech of a man, or the work of God Himself makes one willing to give his life for the Holy Bible. The dedicated heart tells us about Nehemiah, once he was dedicated to the mission, built back the walls of Jerusalem and restored the doors, confronting many dangers including stating his people's case before his king, which in itself is a type of evangelism!

He was obedient to God, did his best, worked hard and that mode of the dedication is amazing. He was permeated to others for when he spoke to the people and said: let us build the walls of Jerusalem, they followed him, and they really as the Holy Bible said, they had heart for the work.

So what was in the heart of Nehemiah affected the heart of others and all were bound in dedication together. It is no wonder that their action displayed that their hearts were dedicated and their lives also were dedicated.

The dedicated heart to God is:

Obedient
Humble
Steadfast
Courageous

I can see the 3 holy young men when they stood in front of the king. I can say that their hearts were dedicated to the Lord for they were willing to confront any danger. Their hearts were firm in what they believe. So, the steadfastness of the heart is very important, not the heart of rotating one hour with God and one hour with the world or, the heart that is going in two directions.

If you see David who defends his sheep against the wolf, you will see the dedicated heart; what are you doing David, you are a young man. I am defending my sheep; I am fighting the lion and fighting the bear. Why are you fighting the lion David? I am fighting the lion for the sake of these sheep! They are mere animals! Yes, but they are my flock; I will not allow any of them to be





taken away or destroyed.

The Lord took note of David and in an unexpected hour, the youngest of his father Jesse's sons was called, *"Arise, anoint him, for this is the one! Thin Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of the brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from the day forward."* (1 Samuel 16:13)

I am the shepherd. The Lord looked at him and said: Yes, indeed David was a good shepherd, and the good shepherd is willing to give his life for the sake of his sheep. Steadfastness can make David defend small sheep against the mighty lion and the ferocious bear, which is unequal in terms of battle, and extremely dangerous. But David the shepherd boy did.

And the three young holy men in the fiery furnace did the same.

Daniel likewise did the same when he stood against the king. All these are holy and fearless examples. Joseph, the young man, when confronted with sin, right away in the house of Potiphar, said: How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God my Lord!

I think this is the steadfast heart, whatever the temptation is. Whatever the fights are whatever the war of the devil, the war of the flesh and the lust and the desires we must have steadfast hearts. So the dedicated heart is the heart which is:

A dedicated heart is steadfast in his way, not willing to negotiate.

Irenaeus, an early church father and bishop of Eastern background wrote taking evangelism a step further addressing its reaching out to others, "The church having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it..."

For the churches which have been planted in Germany

do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, not those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world. But just as the sun, that creation of God is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shines everywhere and enlightens all men who are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth (c. 180).

The heart that is dedicated has a vision, and as he walks in his way God opens more scope of vision to him. Anyone who has worked in a very challenging mission of evangelism in America or Africa, as we go we must give our heart to the Lord as he said: *"My son give Me your heart, and let your eyes observe My way."* And we really live that verse in our mission in Africa.

I could spend hours telling you how much the Lord has blessed us in Africa. We have seen His hand opening in many ways for us every day and every moment of that day in a truly amazing way. That is the dedicated heart for God showing Himself to us and to you every day, and giving you more vision and more enlightening and more ways as you open a set of tracks. This will continue indefinitely until you say enough!

The dedicated heart is a brave heart, it exhibits no fear at all; St. Paul speaks about the tribulation in which he experienced throughout his mission such as the time in which the ship was wrecked, how many times he went to jail, how many times he confronted danger from his own people and strangers and finally how many times he discovered hunger and thirst. There even came a time St. Paul was put in a basket and the basket hung over a wall and lowered down outside of a city because the governor wanted to kill him.

St. Paul was convinced about his mission, submissive with a dedicated heart, and with complete trust in the Lord, *"And see, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there. I only know that the Holy Spirit warns me that in every*



city chains and tribulations await me.”
(Acts 20: 22-33)

The dedicated heart keeps all the things happening in his heart, thinking of it as the Virgin Mary did. For the Holy Bible said in St Luke: Mary was keeping all these things in her heart and she was meditating on them all the time.

We keep these things inside as a road mark, and a living history in our life. I've seen Him here. I've touched Him here. I've experienced Him here. He has done that with me, He has done that with others, and He has done great deeds with us. This experience with all of us as a whole becomes a great encouragement to the Church.

The dedicated heart knows how to pray deeply from within. Not the prayer from the lips or from the tongue but it is from the depth of the heart. The dedicated heart is the person who lives the internal life, the life of the inner –man who is blessed by being renewed every day. Not the outer-man who perishes.

The dedicated heart loves deeply and is composed of a very strong life-love.

The dedicated heart is a simple heart. This is how you can attract people with faith and love and not with empty philosophy and then they will see the holiness and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ

In Africa come and see how the change happened in the heart of the African people who did not know the Lord. Come and see how many Africans were living in sin and corruption and how they became real people of God. The African Christian people are now living a holy life after change and repentance.

So the open heart is the dedicated heart to the Lord Jesus Christ who is willing to accept all kinds of people sinful or not, we should open our heart to them. We are there for those who are corrupt, for those healthy ones who do not need a doctor but are spiritually sick.

Once the heart is convicted and dedicated then at that point we can go into the service of evangelism, because before life can be dedicated the heart must be. As the Holy Bible says: When the heart is changed from inside you will see that the way of talking, the way of behaving will change and as the Lord Jesus Christ said: From the heart springs every thing and from the excess of the heart the tongue speaks and the hands moves, and the legs walks and the eye sees.

So start with the dedication of the heart and from the dedication of the heart your life will start to change. Dedication of the heart will shape the entire life as we see that in St. Moses the Black and St. Takla Hemanout and St. John Khame.

Many, many churches in Africa were named after St. Moses the Black that dedicated himself after much corruption in his life and became a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also he became a father of confession for one thousand monks and a defendant of the sinners.

When St. Moses the Black name is mentioned the people glorify God for the conversion he made in the heart and how that led to his inspiring and dedicated life, for he became an example of the new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. ✠

Books authored by His Grace Bishop Antonius Marcos include:

The Story of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Our Present Time, Book 1: In Ethiopia and East Africa (1993)

Theology of Mission (1997)

Orders for His Grace's books as well as correspondence may be sent to:

His Grace Bishop Antonius Markos
PO Box 72191 Parkview 2122
Johannesburg R. South Africa