

Life in the Afternoon - much more than a story of soaring - and reflections of that on my life.

by P.K.Odendaal. 1 January 2012.

You can read the previous chapters here :

<http://pkodendaal.blogspot.com/>

Part 10 - Faith and the Blessed Assurance.

My reliance on intellectual interpretations to understand religion and scripture, was about to change drastically - as I thought it would - for the simple reason that only the mind can act on the normal senses which are used for intellectual activities. Spiritual activities are being watched by other senses like faith and discernment - and even many other parts of the body - known as manifestations or discernment in the body.

Nonetheless, when it came, I was not prepared for it. In a brief vision God just said these words to me : I am going to teach you faith.

I was embarrassed. I have been serving Him for twenty six years, and I thought I knew what faith was - and here I am told that I do not know. I accepted His judgement in this and knew in my heart I had been fighting this moment for many years. I did not like faith - and I did not understand it - and I didn't want to, because I feared. I feared that I would stand in faith with regard to a certain thing, and then God would disappoint me, and I did not want to be disappointed. It was better and easier for me to understand His ways than it was to trust His ways - however limited my understanding was.

It happened quite a few times that I asked God for something tangible, and waited for it to happen, but it never did. That created unnecessary tension between me and God - even animosity and blame from my side. I could not understand that God was not prepared to help me. This happens to most Christians, and I need to address it here to give some perspective, guidance and direction.

Of course, the main source of the problem is doctrine.

We are incorrectly coached that we can ask anything and it will be given unto us. I still have to find the scripture that promises this unconditionally. There is even a very delusional doctrine called the Prosperity Teaching which teaches that - a very popular doctrine in affluent societies like the United States. The doctrine states that I am the child of the King of the Universe, who has everything and who can give me everything if I just ask. I just have to believe and everything will be mine, specially wealth.

The real issue is the following. When I can ask anything and get it, I am the king and God is my servant, and I can just demand and it's there. He must just hurry up - I cannot wait forever. Maybe we have forgotten who is the king and who is the servant. As I read the Bible, God is the King and I am the servant, and he can just ask me what he likes and I must serve. In fact, if I look closely at the Old Testament and the Exodus, it was always God who dictated and the Israelites who had to follow - so where does this new doctrine come from? Have we forgotten that God guides us, and not we Him.

On a lighter note I still smile at a slogan I saw on a billboard recently. It says there are only two things anybody needs to know. The first is that there is a God, and the second is that it is not you.

Once I got over that false doctrine, I found that I did not need a lot of faith to trust God. I only need to do what God tells me to do. How difficult can that be? I mean to understand. It does get difficult at times to execute His wishes, especially when we misunderstand them - but that makes it so much fun.

But once, there was a test of faith I had to pass - as Abraham - with his son.

I was a week-end flying instructor and the occasion was my son learning to fly. His seventeenth birthday approached, and we wanted him to solo on his seventeenth birthday - and he was ready for it. Just two weeks before his birthday I had this terrible dream : I dreamed that I sent him on his first solo flight, and during this usual short flight of only one circuit around the airfield, the aircraft engine stopped, he crash landed and I saw smoke coming up from the nearby field. I ran there, and picked him up from the wreck. He was still alive, but could not speak coherently, and I knew he had brain damage. I said : 'God, it was unfair. We older pilots get an engine malfunction once or twice in a lifetime, and here you give it to him on his first solo flight!' - all in the dream.

I woke up frightened. What shall I do? I cannot stop his flying career here just because I am scared. I cannot risk his life by pretending nothing happened. Oh fear, Oh fear, you are a demanding enemy. We can sit in a safe place forever and keep on living, but what fun would it be? I need to resolve this within two weeks. So I think and think until the blood sweat almost drops from my brain. Ultimately, I realised that this was not an intellectual problem, but a spiritual one. I realised that the devil wanted to make an attack on us at a delicate moment - his usual trick.

At the end of two weeks I did what I knew I should do in these circumstances - make war. I went to the prayer room and started a fight with the devil in the spirit, with the sword of God's Word - piercing him fanatically - and I wrestled with God like Jacob.

The next day I sent him solo on a very successful flight, and he went on to become a Boeing captain when he was 33 years old. What else could I do? Think as I hard as I can, before and after the event, there was no alternative. But it took FAITH.

But then again - what is faith?

Let me take a step back and explain myself by way of an example - again an intellectual one.

Let's say I still have a biological father who might never die or might outlive me.

My experience with him would be verbal, emotional and physical when I am a child and he brings me up - I can hear him, see him, talk to him and feel it when he chastises me. One day I might leave him and go to a far away land, and I would then only be able to talk to him and see a vision of him over a video phone. Then I might become blind and will not be able to see him anymore. I can then talk to him over the telephone. Then I might become deaf and I will not be able to hear him anymore, but still I know he lives, because people who know him, tell me that he lives.

There is no faith here, but only a full assurance. I know him, I have seen him, I have spoken to him.

Now, this example can be reversed and be applied to spiritual affairs.

People tell me about my Father who lives in a far away land. I cannot talk to Him or see Him, because there is a wall of sin between us. I then start to serve Him and I start to talk to him in my mind (over the heavenly telephone). One day I might have a vision of Him and talk to Jesus face to face ... and so on ... and then one day I will be in His presence :

1Co 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. v:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Where in this example does faith start and end and where does the full assurance start? I do not know. Can there be misunderstandings, inaudible or ambiguous words, visions incorrectly interpreted or not properly observed? Plenty. Will this destroy my faith? No. Will I have doubt? Plenty.

And that is why I cannot tell you when and where it happened - I can only tell you it happened.

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth ... put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

It was time for my baptism with fire, but not in the normal biblical sense of the word - my faith had to be tested with fire.

Now, on reflection, I can clearly see the cause and effect of this all, but it was not so easy during that excursion into that furnace of faith. : Dan 3:23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Although Jesus had set me free, I have, unbeknownst to me, again fell into bondage by the Church and men. Scripture says that : Joh 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The Son had made me free, but I became a slave again to Church dogma and doctrine, to what people think of me and to the spiritual high esteem I still held the Church leaders in. I got to the stage where I thought these Church leaders were such wonderful people - and infallible - and they became my bench mark of faith and the object of my veneration. It was time I was set free again.

And it started so insidiously that I did not notice the first shots in this battle at all. In fact, I was already bleeding in battle when I realised I was trapped in it.

The first shot was an in depth ecumenical discussion I had with one of our senior Church leaders, which boiled down to the fact that churches and church officials come and go, and that there is a time for a church to grow and a time for a Church to go into demise. It was the most profound insight I ever got about the lighter or institutional side of religion. During the discussion I was deeply disillusioned, shocked and moved - and I realised that my bondage to this Church was deep and profound, despite my intention to keep my eyes on Jesus Christ only.

During the discussion I also noticed something strange - a thing I had only noticed once before during one of my last services in my previous Church. That was that whilst he spoke to me, he did not understand the real implication and truth of his own words - as if he taught me a lesson he did not understand.

As a short digression ...

One of the last sermons I heard in the DR Church, was during the time of Pentecost, when the Dominee preached about the Easter Lamb. I had by then already been inspired by the Holy Spirit and was studying scripture in my search for the truth, as I have written in a previous chapter. His sermon set me on fire. I sat in awe in his Church, realising that he is telling me something wonderful and profound today - something which he himself did not know or realise or understand or believe what he said - and it did not touch him at all. He set me alight - I burned like fire.

It was then that I started to understand the meaning of the scripture which says: Isa 55:11 **So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.** Almost unbelievable, but trust me - it's true. If you testify to someone and the person does not believe or understand you - do not worry - **it shall accomplish that which God pleases.**

... and so ends the digression.

Speaking to this person was a turning point in my spiritual life. That was my Damascus moment. I saw the light! I was free - I have slipped the surly bonds of earth ... and touched the face of God. The bondage of church and men disappeared almost immediately. Although there were some other visions and messages from God after this, on this subject, this was the defining moment.

Little did I know in what trouble this 'light' would get me soon. Although I knew history - and I knew that people who really served God regardless of what other people or churches say or think, gets killed - but I remained ignorant.

The second insidious event took place a month or two later. A sister, the wife of the Pastor who features in this story, phoned me from the USA, where they were working for the Lord. She said that she had had this terrible nightmare of me having been bitten by a snake (signifying jealousy and venom), and what is more, it looked very serious and all the people feared that I might die (spiritually).

The third insidious event took place a month or two later. In a night vision God told me that that Pastor (her husband), was going to teach me a lesson. I was naturally very excited about the prospect of learning something from a 'man of God', not realising that it would be a lesson of what one should not do.

The fourth insidious event took place a month or two later, when they were transferred to South Africa to be our pastoral couple.

God had set the table - the plot was complete. Without boring you with too much detail - this is the result of it all :

Without really intending it, I was no longer the law abiding church goer which I was previously thought to be. I was free from all Church dogma, doctrine, rules, laws, decrees and institutions. I could not toe the line anymore, as was expected of me - and because of that, I got in harm's way.

I disregarded the fleshly arguments of men, and also that of my Pastor - those that 'have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof' (1 Tim. 3:5). I also held the 'tradition of the elders' (Mark 7:3) in contempt. However hard I tried to be what I was before - I just could not - I had seen the light.

The Pastor, in turn, basing his judgement on some issues on an incorrect interpretation of scripture, and standing on the Catholic principle of the infallibility of the Pope - even though we are not Catholics, did not like my demeanour, because I did not heed his fleshly instructions. During such occasions I find it impossible to be the subservient church goer these people would like me to be. I voice my opinion so that there is no doubt on which side I stand - or fall - and Popes don't like that - so they start the persecution.

The Pastor, some other church officials and some congregation members started a smear campaign against me. This is the stuff that dreams are not made of.

The turning point in this, for myself, having landed in this mess ignorantly, was one night when my wife woke up in a fright after a night mare. She woke me and told me that she had had this terrible dream. She said that she dreamed that this pastor was preaching from the pulpit, directed his finger at me in front of the whole congregation, and shouted that he would kill me. I immediately remembered the phone call from his wife from the USA a year earlier. The snake was going to bite me - and - will I survive?

And sure as daylight, the first shot of that war was fired at the next service, when he got up during my testimony and told the congregation that I was talking nonsense and that I must shut up and sit down (in my own words). From then on the prophecies in our services were all directed at me in the form of God speaking to me anonymously, but everyone knowing whom He was speaking to, on how sinfully and ungodly I was behaving myself. It got so bad that my wife later told me not to go to church anymore, as I would always be the target of his venom in the form of a prophecy.

I deal with this only because I learned a lot from it, not to cast a reflection on that Pastor - there are many like him - who do it possibly in ignorance, or applying some vague Church dogma, or to wield power - a favourite pastime of church officials.

But God cannot slumber or sleep (Psalms 121:4)

I decided not to visit our local church anymore and attended our 'head office' church in another town. During one of these services God spoke to me through an old prophet and said that I must not worry, as this person was inspired by jealousy and venom. Thank God for prophets who speak the words of God unfettered.

There were eight main points which I learned from this :

1. Never believe any prophecy which is in conflict with Scripture, nor any church dogma which is in conflict with Scripture:

Gal 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Many people died in vain because they believed their spiritual leader instead of Scripture. The Davidians of David Koresh and Charles Manson are two examples, but there are many.

If you are in doubt - get another faithful witness.

2. Judge the prophecy or let it be judged if you are not able to.

1Co 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

In my case I consulted scripture, one of its stipulations being never to take a statement (or prophecy) as fact, unless there is at least one other witness, be it a prophet, a scripture or a vision - and I got two scriptures from God.

3. Do not succumb to the empty threats of church officials - they killed millions over millennia. If you believe in something and you have witnesses, be prepared to stand or fall for it - or even die for it - many old pilgrims did just that.
4. Remember, the Church has NO authority over you, other than what you personally give it - you are there by your own free will and you can leave by your own free will.

You can read my article : 'Towards an understanding of the role of the Church' here :

<http://what-a-friend-an.blogspot.com/2009/06/what-friend.html>

If you feel you cannot concur with the dogmas and doctrines of your Church, leave it and search for another - there are 38 000 protestant denominations in the world - I am sure you will get one you like.

You can read my article about choosing a Church here : 'A Litmus test for the Church'

<http://what-a-friend-an.blogspot.com/2010/09/litmus-test-for-church.html>

However - do not go from one Church to the other for any dispute. Even the Apostles had disputes - and that is why there are 38 000 denominations now. I did not leave this church because of this incident. God was busy with me, not with the Church - or maybe both - on reflection.

5. Trust no human being. There is only one who can help you in times of persecution, in times of doubt, in times of tribulation - and it is Jesus Christ. Remember the now often repeated words of 'What a fiend we have in Jesus'.

[Have we trials and temptations?](#)
[Is there trouble anywhere?](#)
[We should never be discouraged—](#)
[Take it to the Lord in prayer.](#)

In my case almost the whole Church was warned against my speaking out against its false dogmas and doctrines, but that did not bother me - it only intensified my resolve to carry the reproach of Jesus Christ - a wonderful rare opportunity which I relished and welcomed with arms wide open.

This resolve followed from two visions, neither of them shown to me, but to two sisters in the Church, one prophecy delivered to me personally, and

two scriptures which God gave me. So I had five witnesses - it does not get much better than that.

The end of this is easily foretold. The demise of the Church and the establishment of the sovereignty of God - and so it was in this case.

6. Talk to God directly and do not let the Priest, Pastor or Prophet intervene between you and God. I am not talking about intercession - I am talking of intervention. The veil of the temple was rent in the midst - meaning we can approach God directly through Jesus Christ, our High Priest, and not through a Church Priest.

I have never found any church official more concerned about my personal relationship with God, than myself. So why entrust it to them?

7. Do not get cross with church officials - or anybody for that matter - and do not hold grudges or bitterness. It did not take me long to forgive this Pastor and set him free, as I have told him many times subsequently. I am quite sure he was not aware that God wanted to teach me a lesson. However, I know, from speaking to him, that he still carries the offence he rolled into my way : Luk 17:1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! v:2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.
8. When God wants to teach you a lesson, there are no holds barred. Enjoy the ride. I got out of it unscathed. Psa 121:3 **He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.**

And at last - as always - He worked in ways I still cannot understand, but today I have faith and I have learned a precious lesson. Do not ask me how it all happened. In fact I have much more than faith - I have the full (blessed) assurance.

Half Truths

And what if I am responsible to serve His word? When I am on the other side of the fence. Do I have the courage, wisdom and compassion to do it properly - I do not think so.

Once it happened to me this way :

I have a sibling brother some four years older than I am. A few years after my conversion, God spoke to me earnestly about him, and told me to take a message to him. The message was short and sweet, as it usually is :

Repent now while the saving grace of God has come upon you, because, who says you will get another chance.

The first thing I hear, after sending him this message from the Great Postmaster, is that his wife went to consult the Dominee - he was still in the Dutch Reformed Church which I have left by then. The Dominee told his wife that there was no need to listen to a message brought by me, being from one of 'those' sects.

On these grounds he ignored the message - and that was thirty years ago. The saving Grace of God has not appeared to him again, to my knowledge, and I am not so sure it ever will.

Tit 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, v:12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; v:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; v:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. v:15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Some years later when I saw him again (our family sees each other once a year - and sometimes less often - on a faint black and white photo, by inclination), he told me that the Bible says "the wages of sin *is* death" - and he will have to pay that price for his sin. This is a typical half truth one hears in many churches to intimidate you.

I just told him that if he had had the time and the inclination to read it for himself, he would see that : Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is the same type of half truth I heard in the DRC - one I iterated before : 'God is in Heaven, and you are on Earth - therefore your words should be few'.

There are many others - religion is rife with such. Even the Islamic Jihad is a half truth of their own making.

We often hear someone quote the scripture : Mat 7:13 ... for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat - but few of us remember or quote the other one : Mat 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish - and Luk 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Another incident I experienced was with my brother in law, which I usually saw more than once a year on a faint photo, although he has now passed away. One day while I was testifying to him about salvation and I talked something of the baptism with water, he said that I was wrong because his Dominee - of the Reformed Church - told him that 'the circumcision of the Old Testament was replaced by the water sprinkling of the New Testament'. So naturally I asked him where in scripture I will find that? to which he replied that he did not know, but he will ask his Dominee, who always says so. But he never did it, probably because of his untimely death soon thereafter. I told him in no uncertain terms that he should not leave his salvation to the Dominee, as his Dominee might not be found to be a reliable witness to testify for him at the Last Judgement. Every layman knows judges throw out unreliable witnesses - we do not have to wait for the Last Judgement to find that out. That were prophetic words I uttered without knowing his death was so near.

When I was a sinner in the world, I based my salvation on these same delusions. The first half of this truth is normally scary, but the whole truth leads on to salvation. There is a saying that 'The truth spoken with ill intent, beats all the lies you can invent'.

Yes, his Dominee told my brother's wife only half of the truth - the part that I was from a sect or heresy, but he did not tell her the whole truth which Paul said so plainly and strikingly : **Act 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: ... v:22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against**

Confession of sin.

Back to my testimony ...

I will repeat from an earlier part of this sequel - Part 1 :

I entered into a compact with God when I was thirty years old, that I would serve Him, experiencing that first love and about turn in my life and singing 'I surrender all' after a church meeting in 1977. A year or two later I have become Luke warm and was falling back to my old life of sin and shame, and nothing was stopping me, however hard I tried. I visited many different churches, but found a haven in none. We had a prayer meeting at my house every week and we were praying for a haven on this earth where we could share our faith and spiritual experience - and then one year later, all of a sudden, we encountered a thermal and we got lift.

Now that I read it again, I find it so apt and true, because new truths fit old ones without seams or stitches.

I had been converted about nine months earlier, but I was not sure that I had been reborn. I was also sinking towards spiritual Luke warmness, and I knew something was missing from my armour. I stood in danger of falling back to a life of sin and shame. For one, I was still smoking and partaking of other delicacies of this world.

A friend of mine, who worked under me, told me one day that another employee, working under him, had a strange behaviour, and that he thought this person might be possessed with a devil. He said that he was going to take him to a certain Church where it is known that they exorcise devils - so duly an appointment was made with them. I was not going with - it had nothing to do with me.

On the appointed day, as we walked towards our cars, each to go his own way, I suddenly found myself sitting in his car for no reason at all, and on our way to pick up this soul in bondage. When we arrived at this Church the afternoon, we were introduced to a pastor. The first thing he asked us all, was whether we came to confess our sins. Well, that was a heavy blow with a heavy hammer right between my eyes! We said no - we were here for the exorcism of this poor soul - and what is more, we confess our sins in our bedrooms where nobody could hear or see us!

So this poor soul went into a prayer room, with this Pastor, and confessed his sins. When he had finished, the Pastor came out and asked my friend whether he would also like to confess his sins, to which he replied 'yes'. So I sat there and waited for them to finish, but I knew very well that I was in harm's way - to put it lightly. The Holy Spirit started to argue with me - myself doing most of the

arguing- to do it as well, and when the door opened after what seemed like a lifetime, I jumped at the opportunity.

And that is why my cigarettes and much more is still lying somewhere on the road back home - and that is where I got lift - I was free - I was alive again - Life in the Afternoon.

By God's grace, I did not have to go into intellectual arguments to be convinced of this - I only had to be convinced of my sin, which was not too difficult - carrying that burden had by then just got too heavy for me. I knew it was right, although I still needed to check the scriptures.

It then dawned on me that I needed a reliable witness, for that terrible, or is it joyful day, when I would stand before Jesus Christ during the Last Judgement.

You can read my article on this here :

<http://what-a-friend-an.blogspot.com/2010/09/last-judgment-should-we-shiver.html>

In the end I did not even need the scriptural confirmation in **Jas 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.** I only had to go to the dictionary to find the meaning of confession. I, of all people, who had heard the word 'confession of our faith' for more than a thousand Sundays, in my old Church, when we would all stand up in the congregation and audibly say our confession. Why did I not realise this earlier? Confession is much more than an acknowledgment.

You can also figure out whether Paul said the above mentioned words in his bedroom or whether he stood before the Governor in a hearing : **Act 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship ...**

Next time - the last part - Part 11 - Divine healing revisited - and please don't feed the animals.