

Letter from Revd. Romans from Uganda, thanking the East Bristol churches for their hospitality during his visit in May 2009

Dearest friends and mentors,

Firstly I regret the 'blackout' since I returned from your beautiful country. I request you to forgive me for that as things have been really pulling me in all directions thus rendering me being all over the place. [please excuse my english too] I had never spoken English until I was thirty, yet now I am ministering and writing in this strange language.

If SEAN is pronounced SHON why is BEAN not pronounced BHON?

I need also to apologise for this very introduction below but have to speak my mind.

This month while flying to the UK, all the dark feelings of psychological burnout crept over me. I was having a full -fledged pity party, feeling sorry for myself and the hard life I was leading. With a start, I began to tremble with fear about things I was going to tell my friends in the UK. What are they going to ask me? What message am I going to preach whilst there? How am I going to ask them for some more money to start project x or consolidate project y, purchase that piece of land at z or complete the building at b. I thought I was becoming too much to my friends and seems like taking them for granted. It is hard on the flesh to be traveling and asking for money day after day and night after night. It was almost becoming a sales operation for me, and I stopped feeling good. I remember when I was still constructing the corn flour mill, some people asked me about its progress. I told them that I had two types of news about the factory - the bad and good- so which one do you want me to start with? They said the good one first. I told them that I had secured all the money I needed to extend the power line to factory and purchase of the three phase transformer. They were so thrilled with the news and then asked me the bad news. I told them that the bad news was that this money was still in their pockets!! God loves a cheerful giver and He says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive". Therefore I should never miss an opportunity to provide people with the chance to experience this blessing. Just like a salesman and making my audience feel guilty!!

Because of this, I was becoming angry and judgmental. As I felt uglier and uglier inside, depression settled in. In the middle of the sea of all those thoughts, suddenly I felt the presence of someone else. I realized the Spirit of the Lord was speaking to me. "I am not in any trouble", He chided, "that I need someone to beg for Me or help Me out. I made

no promises that I will not keep. It is not the largeness of the work that matters, but only doing what I command. All I ask of you is that you be a servant. For all who join with you in the work, it will be a privilege- a light burden for them.”

The words echoed in my mind. This is His work, I told myself. Why am I making it mine? The burden is light, Why am I making it heavy? The work is a privilege. Why am I making it a chore? I instantly repented of my sinful attitudes, God was sharing His work with me, and He was speaking of others who are ready and willing to join me in my ministries. I rejoiced and prayed that my friends and supporters too would find the burden to be light.

I am very very grateful for the meetings I had with Alan and Margret Reader, Rev. Sue and Eric Allman and of course the wonderful time I spent with Clare, Yvonne and Ian Hopton. I learnt and benefitted a lot from these wonderful people of God. They energised, re-equipped, refilled, refueled and re-tyred me for the ministry so much so that even my preaching, approach and attitude now have changed. My posture is different. Today the pressure is off.

Since the work of my ministries in Uganda was initiated by God, it doesn't need the worries and guidance of man. Whether our goal is to help hundreds of orphans and needy children in our schools, or it is starting hospitals, God cares and I still can approach this work without stress. For this is His work, and our burden is easy.

Now friends I ask you to picture this very possible scene. You finish your life on this earth. You arrive in heaven. There, enthroned in all His glory, is our Lord Jesus Christ. The other saints and martyrs you've often read about are there: Abraham. Moses, Peter and Paul, plus great loved ones like Mary Poor and others who obeyed the gospel also are there. They are all welcoming you into heaven. You walk around in bliss, filled with joy and praises. All the promises of the Bible are true. The streets really are gold, and the glory of God shine brightly, replacing the sun, moon and stars beyond the power of any man to describe. Then, scores of strangers whom you don't recognize start to gather around you with happy smiles and outstretched hands. They embrace you with affection and gratitude. "Thank you, Thank you" they repeat in a chorus. With great surprise you ask "what did I do? I have never seen you before. But what exactly did I do?" You ask. Then, like a replay of a videotape, your mind goes back to a day when a widow came to your office with a chap in rags. She told you about her lost husband and the middle of her suffering and how you offered not only prayers but also free education and other

financial and moral support to the boy. She narrates how your help relieved them so much- making it possible for their children to study. Others assert, "We never had a chance to see you face to face in the world. Now we can see you here and spend all eternity rejoicing with you over the victories of the Lord. Now Jesus Himself appears. You bow as He quotes the familiar Scripture verses to you. "I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed Me... Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt 25:35-40) Is this just a fanciful story, or will it be reality for many Christians in Bristol? I believe it could happen as Christians arrive in heaven and see how they have laid up treasure where moth and rust cannot corrupt.

The truth of the matter is this: You have done as a whole family of God to share with one another, as the New Testament church did. The body of Christ in the Third World is looking to the body of Christ in the West to link hands with them in this time of harvest and to support the work with the material blessings that God has showered upon them. Jesus is no longer walking on earth. We are His body; he is our head. That means our lips are the lips of Jesus. Our hands are His hands; our eyes, His eyes; our hope, His hope. My wife and children belong to Jesus. My money, my talent, and friends - all belong to Jesus.

I could list many things you did for me to make me feel at home during my visit but I know that the British people have suffered enough therefore I do not want to abuse you with an endless email. You of course know how much you mean in my life, family and ministries.

Your hospitality was beyond my comprehension. It is my prayers that the Almighty God rewards you a thousand times for the time, love, hospitality, prayers, gifts, and support you "invested" in me.

In our regular prayer meetings, we constantly remember to thank God for your generosity.

May the good Lord reward you all abundantly,

Yours in His service,

Romans