

THE TRIAL OF MR. CHRISTIAN

By Mrs. Petra Pierre – Robertson

The sound of music is heard in the background as reports from the High Court is provided. A case has just been summed up and the verdict is imminent. The picture of the reporter is seen on the screen as her voice is heard. Voices can be taped or a cordless microphone used by a hidden reporter.

Reporter: We are reporting live from the High Court where the verdict is about to be given in the trial of Mr Christian.

Both sides have presented their cases. For the prosecution Temptation, Guilt and Doubt provided incriminating evidence against Mr. Christian who has been charged with lifelong counts of cheating, lying, robbing, and fornicating. The prosecuting lawyer summed up his deeds as sin, the penalty of which is death. The case of the prosecution is strong. The lawyer was aggressive, accusing and cunning. He is very witty.

The case of the defense was based on one premise. Substitution. The lawyer claimed that not only was he willing to pay the sentence for the accused who, incidentally, has pleaded guilty, but he claimed he had already done so. The accused was never brought to the witness stand. No witnesses were brought forward on behalf of the accused though one witness named Grace was constantly by his side during the trial. With every accusing claim made by Temptation, Guilt, and Doubt, Grace stepped forward on behalf of the accused blocking the accusing trio from hurling their poisonous darts at him.

It has been an interesting case to say the least. Both lawyers have desisted from commenting to the Reporting Team. As we await the verdict, we would provide recaps from the day it started with the arrest of Tom Berringer, later called Christian during his stint in jail.

Music: *There's A Fountain.*

On Screen: 'The trial of Mr. Christian' is displayed.

A man is seen sitting in chains or in jail. He is depressed. He gets up, rubbing his hands anxiously.

Tom: I must escape these chains. I have been labeled cheat, liar, robber, adulterer, and gambler. I have been sentenced to die. How can I escape? Suicide seems a better option; but since I am so closely guarded, that is not possible. Furthermore, I have no belt and shoelace. I have nothing. I am nothing. (He sits and rests his head in his hands nodding side to side). I am in big trouble. My future looks bleak almost non-existent.

Temptation: 'You are Nothing?' (Laughs) That is a joke. (To audience) He is worse than nothing. Lower than an 'it'. Lower than a worm. And he has no one but himself to blame! You wonder how I know that? Well let me tell you about me. My name is Temptation. I have been a close companion of his through up to this point. I have encouraged him to do several things and he has always yielded.

Grace appears on the scene.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Grace: But there was always a way of escape provided. I was with him too. I spoke to him a lot. I was sufficient for him. I was all he needed.

TEXT FLASHES ON SCREEN

1 Corinthians 10:13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

Temptation: But he never wanted you. He listened to me. You were always in the background nagging him. He complained to me about you. Don't you get it? He did not need you.

Grace: You had your chance. He needs me now. *(Pointing to Tom)* Look at him.

Temptation: But did he invite you? Did he ask for your help? Let me answer that for you. NO! He didn't!!

Grace: He hasn't yet, but he will. *(Raises hand)* Now flee Temptation and leave him be!!!! Flee!!!!!!

Temptation scurries away.

Grace freezes.

Song: *Marvellous Grace*

A prison officer is seen approaching Tom's cell.

Prison Officer: Tom, we have some good news for you and some bad news. Which do you want to hear first?

Tom: *(Looks up sullenly then sighing says)* It doesn't matter. I could use some good news first and then the bad.

Prison Officer: *(Nonchalantly)* The good news is that a lawyer has been assigned to your case and he is the best lawyer in the whole world. The bad news is that the prosecuting attorney is the best prosecutor in the whole world.

Tom is silent.

Prison Officer: This lawyer must be crazy to think of defending you. Be that as it may, he's here now. Do you want to see him?

Tom: You have the keys, let him in if you want.

Prison Officer: He said he doesn't go where he is not invited.

Tom: Well tell him come. It won't make much of a difference whether or not he comes anyway. I am a lost man.

Lawyer comes forward. Prison officer leaves.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Defense Lawyer: I understand you're looking for a lawyer to take your case?

Tom: And I suppose you have come to take me out of this mess. Tell me your qualifications. They have to be good to accomplish that mission. The prison officer says that you are good. If you are so good may not be able to pay your price.

Lawyer: I have some good news for you and some bad news.

Tom: If I hear that phrase one more time I would throw up. I am sick of this good news and bad news crap, just tell me.

Lawyer: The good news is that I have never lost a case. I can guarantee the outcome of the trial if you place yourself in my hands.

Tom: And the bad news is the price, right?

The lawyer nods.

Tom: Okay, so tell me. Get to the point. How much is it going to cost?

Lawyer: It is free.

Doubt: (*Rushing onstage*) Free!!!! Free!!!!!! Impossible. Nothing in life is free. There is always a cost attached. That Tom there, he never accepted what anyone had to say if in so doing he needed to change his lifestyle. Place his life in that lawyer's hands? The Tom I know? No way. And in any case he has to come out of my hands before he does that. And he won't. He and I are close. Whenever he has a concern about something he consults me. I am his advisor. You don't believe me? Watch and see.

Doubt freezes over Tom

Tom: (*Shocked*) I beg your pardon? What did you just say?

Doubt smiles in satisfaction.

Lawyer: I said it is free. I am offering you a gift.

TEXT FLASHES ON SCREEN

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Tom: Impossible. I don't believe you. Nothing in this life is free. No one gives gifts just like that especially to someone like me; a common criminal in chains. I may be imprisoned but I am not stupid. I just don't believe you. There must be some cost attached.

Doubt laughs loudly behind Tom.

Lawyer: (*Smiling kindly*) There is no cost attached. If you want my help, you must accept it as a gift. You cannot pay me for any part of it. It is totally and completely free. It is one of the conditions for taking your case.

Doubt: (*To congregation*) He will never believe him. He will never accept his so-called gift. I have

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

firmly and completely bound. (*Stretches out hand*) I have him in the palm of my hands.

TEXT FLASHES ON SCREEN

Romans 6:23 ...the gift of God is eternal life...

Song: *How can you say no* (Heritage Singers)

After the song, Tom is silent for a few minutes then asks.

Tom: What are the other conditions for receiving your help?

Grace approaches and hovers over Tom protectively. Doubt who was anxiously awaiting Tom's answer flees in shock and embarrassment saying:

Doubt: I don't believe this. He was mine. I had him.

Lawyer: Well I have some more good news for you and some bad news.

Doubt and Temptation hover by the door looking on anxiously.

Tom: (*In annoyance*) I am tired of hearing that you have some good and bad news. Can't you find some other phrase to use?

Doubt moves closer to Tom after his outburst.

Lawyer: The good news is that all you have to do if you want me to take your case is to ask me. I'll take it immediately. The bad news is that if I take your case, you'll have to plead guilty.

Tom jumps to his feet, his mouth dropping open incredulously. Guilt approaches sheepishly pushing his way between Doubt and Temptation who give the thumbs up for the entrance of Guilt.

Lawyer: Aren't you guilty?

TEXT FLASHES ON SCREEN

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Tom: Yes but I am not sure I want to admit that I am. If I plead guilty to all charges made against me, I won't have a ghost of a chance. They'll slap a death sentence on me. How can you possibly think you'll be able to help me if I plead guilty?

As the lawyer opens his mouth to speak Tom says

Tom: (*Wearily*) Oh don't say it, please, allow me...

Lawyer and Tom (together): I have some good news and bad news for you.

TEXT FLASHES ON THE SCREEN

Romans 6:23 *The wages of sin is death...*

Lawyer: The bad news is that if you plead guilty of course you'll be convicted. And if you don't plea

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

guilty, the prosecuting attorney has sufficient proof that will convict you anyway. Either way, there is no doubt that you will get the death sentence.

Tom: (*Nervously*) Then why even have a trial? Why bother? Just let me die. I deserve it as you said, and will get the death sentence anyway.

Lawyer: You've forgotten that I have some good news. The good news is that I am willing to take your sentence and let you go free.

TEXT FLASHES ON THE SCREEN

John 8:36 *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Tom: (*In shocked disbelief*) No way! You must be crazy! Are you really a lawyer or is this some kind of prank for reality TV? Should I smile, am I on Candid Camera? Listen man, whatever your story, you aren't the one who has lived the rotten life. I am the one. I've done nothing good. I don't deserve anything but death. Even though there is a possibility that your offer is genuine, there's no way I could let you pay for my crimes, tempting though it may be.

Lawyer: Tom, I have already paid. All that remains is for you to accept my substitution on your behalf. It is yours if you accept it. It will cover all your crimes completely.

Song: *I should have been crucified:*

TEXTS ARE FLASHED ON SCREEN DURING THE SINGING OF THE SONG.

Romans 5:18 *...by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men ... justification...*

Romans 5:8 *God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Tom: (*Quietly*) Is there anything else I should know before the trial? (Pause) Oh, let me guess. It is the good news and bad news part, right?

Lawyer: (*Patiently*) Yes.

Tom: Well...

TEXT FLASHES ON SCREEN

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Lawyer: The good news is that once you plead guilty you will be pardoned. There is no question about that. You'll be able to stand before God and man as though you have never sinned. But there may be some bad news for you too.

Tom: What's that?

Lawyer: You won't be a criminal anymore.

Tom: What do you mean?

TEXT FLASHES ON SCREEN

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...*

Lawyer: You will be a new person. You'll have a new direction. There is more to my work than simply paying the penalty for your misdeeds. I have even more to complete in your life. While you are waiting for your trial to take place, you won't continue to lie, cheat, steal and fornicate. You will become pure, honest and trustworthy. We will work together closely, you and I. We'll become good friends. As we associate together day by day, you will come to hate the things you once loved and love the things you once hated. You will become a new person altogether.

Tom thinks with his finger propping up his chin.

Doubt, Temptation, and Guilt converse, afraid to approach Tom in the presence of the Lawyer.

Temptation: Become a new person and leave us out of his life? He must be crazy!

Doubt: Tom will never give us up. He has known us and associated with us for too long.

Guilt: I have stalked him all his life. He won't be able to survive without me.

Trio continues to listen attentively as the Lawyer and Tom converse.

Tom: I'm not so sure about that. The prospect of pardon looks pretty good to me, but what if I want to go my own way? Can't we just arrange it so that I can be released from the penalty of my actions? Isn't that complete enough? Do I really have to stop being a crook?

The trio laugh loudly.

Doubt: I know he couldn't do without me. See already he has invited me back in. He cannot change.

Temptation: The thought of separation from us is too painful for him.

TEXT FLASHES ON SCREEN

2 Corinthians 5:17 *...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

They continue listening.

Lawyer: The pardon is good only for those who are willing for me to give them a new life.

Song: *What will you do with your life?*

The trio is seen rushing in to Tom. Grace and the lawyer step back to give Tom a chance to think during the singing of the song. Tom stares at the floor while the lawyer and Grace wait patiently for his decision. He raises his head after the song is completed. At his response the trio withdraw as Tom beckons to the Lawyer.

Tom: I would like to ask you to take my case. I admit that I am guilty and I really don't want to keep on being a criminal. I accept your help.

The lawyer holds out his hands. Tom takes it firmly. The contract is sealed.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

TEXT FLASHES ON SCREEN

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

The trio is angry and they express their anger loudly.

Temptation: If he thinks we would allow him to get away so easily then he is a fool!

Doubt: We'd have to intensify our attacks. We can't let him escape our grasp so easily.

Guilt: I will keep reminding him of who he was everyday. I will wake him up with the memory of his deeds and I will haunt him all day. And at night I'll be with him. I'll follow him into his dreams. I won't let him forget. I'll torture him mentally.

Temptation: Good thinking Guilt. And we will need to call in reinforcements like Trials, Tribulations, Adversity, Distress, and Misfortune. He won't hang out long once those chaps join in our struggle to win him.

Tom: Is there anything else I should know before you leave?

Lawyer: Yes, there is one final thing. I have one last bit of good news and bad news for you.

Tom: *(In contrition)* Give me the bad news first and get it over with, although all of a sudden it doesn't seem as though any of your bad news have been that bad.

Lawyer: *(Smiling)* All right. The bad news is that we have set the date for your trial. And, until your case is called, Temptation, Doubt, Guilt, Distress, Misfortune, Adversity, Trials, Tribulations and others like them will assail you. Just remember one thing. My Grace is sufficient for you.

TEXT FLASHES ON THE SCREEN

2 Cor. 12:9 *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

Colossians 2:6 *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him...*

Tom: Well that's not bad news at all. With a lawyer like you, do you think I would want to stay here in this place? The news of the coming judgment is terrific news! Your good news will have to be pretty good to outdo that.

Lawyer: *(Looking into Tom's eyes for a moment, gently)* The good news is this; when you come to trial, I will not only be your lawyer, I will be your judge as well.

Freeze

Song: *One drop of Blood*

Back to screen where the check of the reporter is heard. Because of static the first part of the report was not heard so we hear the voice of the reporter as she continues. Her picture is on the screen.

Reporter: ...This is unbelievable. Never have I witnessed such a case. The Judge... The Judge... The Judge bore striking resemblance to the Defense Lawyer. If I didn't know better I'd say the Judge was the Defense Lawyer. When the Judge pronounced the sentence the Prosecuting Lawyer and his

witnesses retreated. The Judge returned the verdict - Not Guilty. He specified that that sentence was ONLY possible because of the presence of Grace facilitated by the substitution of the Defense Lawyer. Substitution alleviated a death sentence in the life of a criminal! Amazingly, despite the fact that the Accused was exonerated of all the claims, sentence was still pronounced; it was pronounced against the Prosecuting Lawyer. His sentence was the death sentence. He was unmasked as the accuser of the brethren. His false witnesses: Doubt, Temptation, Guilt, Misfortune, Adversity, Distress, Trials, and Tribulation were also sentenced with him.

Never before have I witnessed such. But the most amazing thing was when the Judge turned to those of us looking on and asked if we required the services of the Defense Lawyer. I opened my mouth to say I was not guilty but Guilt had free reign in the courtroom that day. Right now the Defense Lawyer is taking cases. He said he always has the time. I have to end my report here. I have to catch him before he leaves. The Prosecuting Lawyer, Guilt, Temptation, Doubt and their cohorts seem in desperate need of acquiring victims. I need the protection of Grace available only through the Defense Lawyer.. And guess what? You need it too.

This is Shannon Carter...M.S.D.A. News...

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