





Rev Dr David Silas Laweh Konotey-Ahulu

MY BROTHER'S LAST SUNDAY ON EARTH

BY PROFESSOR F I D KONOTEY-AHULU

Febbruary 19 2017 was the last Sunday on earth for my younger brother Laweh – Braa Laweh as I called him. I had arrived the previous Friday night from London and, determined not to go to bed without visiting him at home I let the hotel reception ring Joanna, Laweh's wife and say "A big parcel has arrived from London for you; call to collect it." Promptly came the reply - it was late, and not easy to get a taxi in the middle of Teshie. Could she not come on Saturday morning instead? "No, it must be tonight".

She agreed to come, and I hovered at the reception. As she eventually emerged, and I hopped across to hug and kiss her she was flabbergasted! "Take me to your husband; I must see him before I go to bed tonight." Armed just with a stethoscope, and some gifts from England I sat beside Joanna-yotor (Joanna-dear) listening to how dangerously ill her husband had been, how our loved ones had been very, very, helpful, how hard Korle Bu doctors had been working on him, how Laweh needed transfusion urgently with a rare type of blood which our Specialist relative at the Military Hospital (Dr Appiah, grandson of the great Mr R P Djabanor) procured for him, and how Laweh had now gradually gone downhill, neither eating nor drinking anything.

TESHIE

Joanna was first into the bed room and announced excitedly "**Your Braa Domeno is here to see you from Ablotsi!**" The look on Laweh's face was a study – combining incredulity, amazement, and joy. He blinked three times as if to say "Am I dreaming?" Then, using as my greeting what GOD instructed Moses to ask Aaron to bless with, and which we both heard our dear late father Rev D A Konotey-Ahulu use often from the pulpit, I announced:

YEHOWAH ajɔɔ bo, in Eto bo.	[JEHOVAH bless thee, and keep thee;
YEHOWAH ahã ehie akpɛ ye onõ	JEHOVAH make His face shine upon
Ni Edro bo	thee, and be gracious unto thee;
YEHOWAH awo Ehie ye onõ	JEHOVAH lift up His countenance upon
Ni Ehã bo hejɔɛ	thee, and give thee peace]

All the time emphasising the "**bo**" meaning you (**thee**) singular and not you plural.

After giving this blessing from Numbers chapter 6 verses 24 to 26 I passed on warm greetings from my wife Rosemary-yotor and family in England, and I said I wanted to examine him thoroughly, which I did while he was supported to sit up. I concluded that Laweh was on his deathbed, and I anticipated he would ask me leading questions. We talked about other things (or rather I did the talking because he could not say much) - like the family, his books, his property, lands, plus our rooms at Odumase, then I prayed. It was now quite past midnight into Saturday, and the kind taxi-driver was still waiting to drive me back to Accra before himself returning to Teshie to bed. I therefore announced to my brother and Joanna: "Tomorrow is The LORD's Day, and I have decided to come to church in this home. Get the Gã Hymn books ready. I have at least 4 hymns for us to sing, the first of which I had been singing in my head on the plane".

The Inevitable Question: "Braa Domeno How Long Have I Got?"

Just when I bade them Good Night way past midnight, my dear brother asked in barely audible tones: "So, Braa Domeno how long have I got?" Much that he trusted my clinical judgement he did not question

the ready response I had for him and Joanna who was also listening: “You know the Scripture don’t you? Psalm 31 verse 15: **My times are in Thy hands**. Therefore, your time table on this earthly pilgrimage, and my time table, are not in the hands of doctors. When HE calls, we go”.

I departed after 3 am praying that Braa Laweh was not taken HOME that Saturday before I had the privilege of worshipping with them the following day. And my prayer was answered

My Brother’s Last Sunday On Earth 19th February 2017

I said privilege of worshipping with my brother on his deathbed because, talking from experience, the blessing I myself had in the past from interactions with some believers in **The Lord Jesus Christ (Nuntsɔ Yesu Kristo)** while on their death bed, eg. 26-year-old Achimota School Maths teacher Franklyn Dove, and Auntie Dora Gboloo in her 70’s, blessed me so much – even more than they were blessed I think - that I have always considered it a privilege whenever I remember those days on my Medical Floor Two at Korle Bu Hospital as these believers faced their last enemy – death. Throughout the journey back to Accra Central I was rehearsing in detail what form the Sunday Worship the next day would take. I would not preach, just as I would not want anyone to preach to me on my deathbed. I would just major on one word this Sunday, and the word would not be “Preach”, but “Remind!” Oh, how I would long to be reminded of certain things on my deathbed!

“**Bo**” – You singular. How GOD particularises His blessing! HE loved me, me, me!

“**Grace**”= **God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense=MãũDromi/NyõŋmɔDromɔ/NyameAdom** This amazing word meaning GOD’s Favour shown to the utterly undeserving I shall dearly love to be reminded of on my deathbed. It needs mention in worship tomorrow.

“**Divine Voluntary Amnesia**” (DVA): The term I coined [GOOGLE it and read full article] is the wonderful promise GOD made about my sins in Jeremiah 31 verse 34: “*And I will remember their sin no more*” Now, until my dying day, I shall remember things I have done which I now *terribly regret, yet I hear that GOD whose memory is infinite, tells me that HE voluntarily* will not remember my sin anymore! All because my Dear Lord Jesus Christ bore the punishment of my sin in his body on the tree at Golgotha [1 Peter 2 v 24]. That is why GOOD FRIDAY, and not Bad Friday. I need to be reminded of this on my deathbed. And so would Braa Laweh in worship tomorrow.

“**Confronting GOD’s Enemy**”: If Satan left us believers alone on our deathbed he would be unemployed. He is the “accuser of the brethren”. I need to be reminded how to face GOD’s enemy, and ours. John Newton’s hymn “Approach, my soul, the mercy seat, where Jesus answers prayer” has a marvelous verse which goes like this: “*Be Thou my shield and hiding place that, sheltered in Thy side, I might my fierce accuser face, and tell him Thou has died!*” Poor John Newton had left his wife in Liverpool and took a concubine in the Gold Coast where he collected slaves to ship across the Atlantic. If they were sick, he threw them overboard and killed them. The church-going Newton was a murderer as well as adulterer. He repented and became a true believer in The Lord Jesus Christ. But Satan kept accusing him of his past sins. Quickly he fled to the Saviour, asking that he would shelter in His side so that he might boldly face Satan and say “*Look here, away with you! The Lord Jesus has paid for all my sins!*” Oh, how I need reminding of this on my deathbed! I shall be doubly blessed as I recount this to Braa Laweh tomorrow – I thought.

This is not my Home. Please remind me of this when I am dying. [Hebrews 13 v 14]. I am on a pilgrimage. Remind me that the Christian life is not a picnic. It is, as my Klogbi (Krobo language) puts it, “**Pɔtɔ (Portor) kɛ Denjme**” – Toil, sweat, tribulation, pain and tears. Advise me to look forward to GLORY guaranteed us by the Resurrection of The Lord Jesus Christ.

GLORY: Tell me what my Saviour said – “*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes on me though he were dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever lives and believes on me shall never die. Do*

you believe this?" [John 11 vs 25 & 26] Tell me also of the many mansions that He has gone to prepare for his own. When pain is severe, weakness is extreme, and tears become habitual, may I be reminded of Revelation chapter 21 verses 3 & 4 *"And GOD HIMSELF shall be with them, and be their GOD. And GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."* This really is superlative. Will Braa Laweh be alert enough to take all this in when we worship tomorrow, God willing? That phrase *GOD HIMSELF* is not as powerful in the English as in Krɔ̀bɔ̀/Đǎngme: **Mǎũ Nitse!** Marvellous.

I got to Teshie early. My brother was alive. I thanked GOD and took courage and pronounced **YEHOWAH** ajɔ̀ bo, in Eto bo ...! We sang the first of the 4 hymns I chose: **YESU** kɛkɛ ni ma hala [JESUS alone is my choice] and my heart was warmed when I saw the lips of Braa Laweh moving with the Chorus **s: d t l s f m r: s f m:- r: s f m:- s: d: r: m: r: r: d:- YESU ba! Oba ɲɔ̃ mi; Ba ɲɔ̃ mi; Bo kɛkɛ mi dɔ O he.**

[JESUS come! And take me Home; Take me Home; Thou alone do I worship]

Having reassured Braa Laweh that I was not going to preach as part of our Sunday worship, but would just remind him of things he already knew and preached about – I found him listening intensely as I rehearsed one by one the truths listed above. After a couple of hours, I decided to examine him for no apparent reason. "He needs admission again, Joanna-yotor," I said to his hearing and we began to ring Korle Bu.

Admission to Korle Bu Teaching Hospital Sunday 19th February 2017

We prayed and carried Braa Laweh into the air-conditioned car on the hot afternoon, and made our way to Korle Bu without having been able to reach the doctors who were in church. We left text messages and hoped they would get back to us. But nothing came, so we parked at the Medical Block where I last parked some 38 years previously. Waiting in the car proved a blessing because I continued to remind Braa Laweh (and myself) of the wonderful realities of life in The Lord Jesus Christ right until when text messages told us which ward to take him to. Joanna looked for a wheel chair and we carefully placed Braa Laweh in it.

While I pushed him gingerly into the lift and upstairs Joanna supported the right leg which was so weak it was dragging the floor. The ward was ready for him, and the first doctor to emerge was Dr Timothy Archampong, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians London, the Physician Specialist son of Laweh's twin sister Mrs Catherine Awula-Ata Archampong. Things got moving fast, with intravenous fluids in place. Joanna was happy, and so was I.

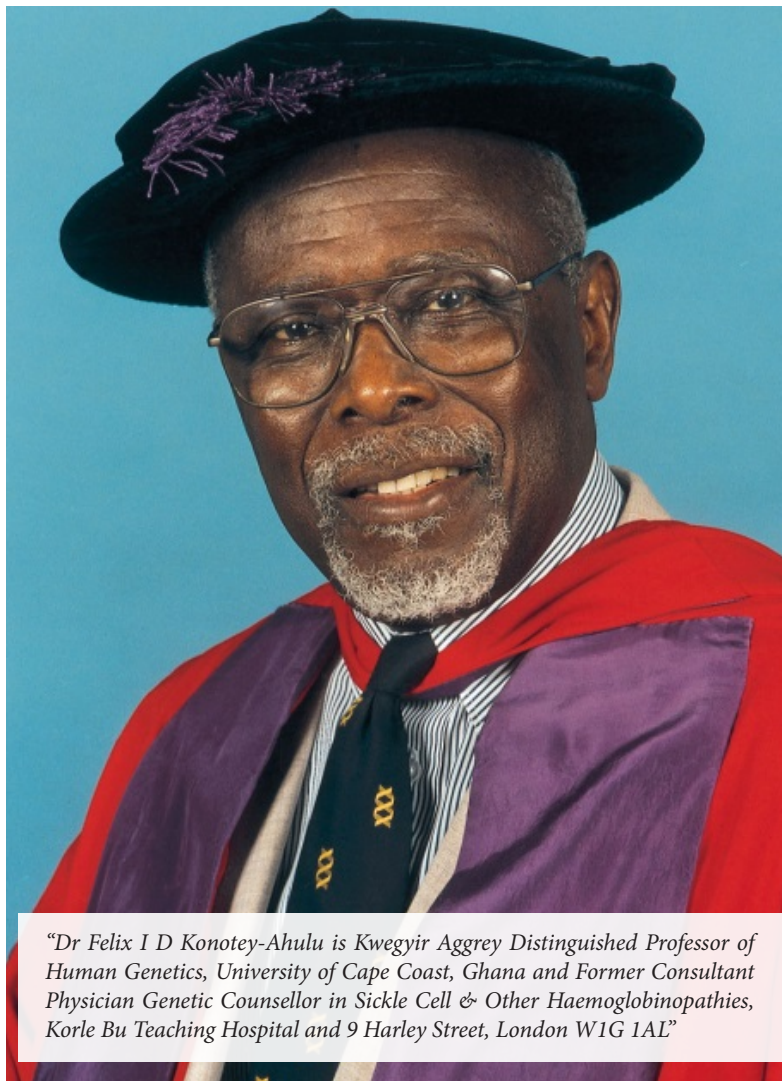
Two Encouraging Comments of Braa Laweh

Next day Monday 20th February I was somewhat late visiting my brother. As I entered his room after visiting hours, Joanna who had been present with him around the clock whispered excitedly to me "Do you know what your brother said about an hour ago?" She quickly added that he asked *"Has F.I.D. been and gone?"* I was greatly encouraged because I (F.I.D.) was missed, which meant my hours with him the day before were not wasted. I certainly was enormously blessed as I talked about **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**, and reminded myself of the transient nature of my earthly pilgrimage. The second comment which Braa Laweh, looking straight at me from among the pillows, made in English when his voice became stronger the same Monday, was **"Braa Domeno, I can't be too grateful to you!"** To which I could only reply in my head, smiling at him, *"I am also very grateful to you for letting me remind myself of these remarkable spiritual truths"*. My last view of my brother in this life was when I went to tell him I was catching the Tuesday night plane back to London. With his right elbow anchored on the bed he raised his forearm and waved Goodbye. That was after Timothy Archampong and Aristotle, Laweh's son,

joined his mother Joanna and me in prayer. Tears welled up when I walked out of the Medical Block to go to the Airport. Within 3 days Braa Laweh would be called to GLORY Friday February 24.

LESSONS LEARNT

Not having been to Ghana since 2014 GOD let me be there at the precise time my brother was being called to Heaven so I could encourage him, and he me. Braa Laweh has defeated his last enemy, death. I have yet to defeat mine, but *I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything in all creation shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD in The Lord Jesus Christ.* [Romans 8 vs 38 & 39].



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