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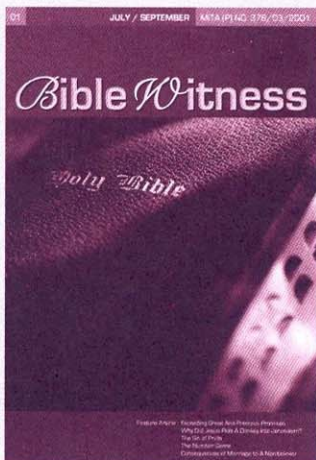
Volume 1 Issue 1

# Bible Witness



*Holy Bible*

Inside Articles : Exceeding Great And Precious Promises  
Why Did Jesus Ride A Donkey Into Jerusalem?  
The Sin of Pride  
The Number Game  
Consequences of Marriage to A Non-believer



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# Exceeding Great And Precious Promises

*Prabhudas Koshy*

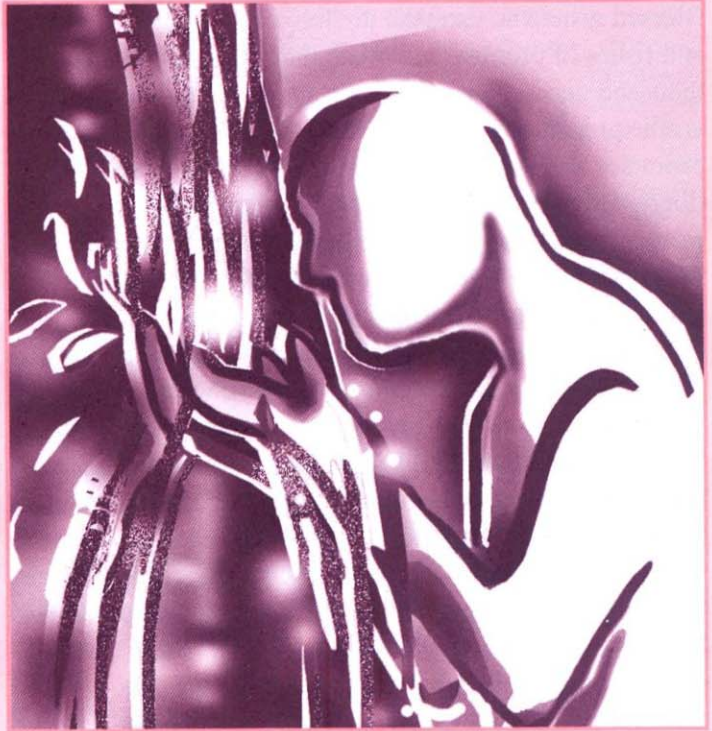
*"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).*

You may have heard the saying, "Promises are made to be broken." In our day of selfishness and promiscuity, it seems all too obvious that many promises are mere meaningless words; not worth the paper they may be written upon. The increase in divorces is clearly a reflection of infidelity permeating culture.

So many social evils of these days result from failure in keeping promises. Broken businesses, bad debts, bankruptcies, divorces and other similar evils reflect the lack of sincerity and dependability in our modern society. All of us can cite many more incidents and practices that reflect the growing trend of unreliability among the people of our time.

But even in the best of times, promises were made and then broken. Those who had promised with the best of intentions also failed to deliver. Sometimes promises were made that could not be kept or there was not enough time to make good on sincere promises. Changing circumstances and unforeseen problems have also made many promises void.

In such a world of uncertain and unreliable promises, where can we assuredly look for help to meet our trials and challenges? Can we rely on anything when life is daunted with troubles?



## **The Exceeding Preciousness of God's Promises**

Godly men throughout the ages have written a great deal about the exceeding preciousness of God's promises in their lives. One of the most eloquent descriptions of God's precious promises comes from the pen of Charles Spurgeon, and it is quoted below for your edification.

"The promises of God are to the believer an inexhaustible mine of wealth. Happy is it for him

if he knows how to search out their secret veins and enrich himself with their hidden treasures. They are an armoury, containing all manner of offensive and defensive weapons. Blessed is he who has learned to enter into the sacred arsenal, to put on the breastplate and the helmet, and to lay his hand to the spear and to the sword. They are a surgery, in which the believer will find all manner of restoratives, and blessed elixirs; nor lacks there an ointment for every wound, a cordial for every faintness, a remedy for every disease. Blessed is he who is well skilled in heavenly pharmacy and knoweth how to lay hold on the healing virtues of the promises of God. The promises are to the Christian a storehouse of food. They are as the granaries which Joseph built in Egypt, or as the golden pot wherein the manna was preserved. Blessed is he who can take the five barley loaves and fishes of promise and break them till his five thousand necessities shall all be supplied, and he is able to gather up baskets full of fragments. The promises are the Christian's Magna Charta of liberty; they are the title deeds of his heavenly estate. Happy is he who knoweth how to read them well and call them all his own. Yea, they are the jewel room in which the Christian's crown treasures are preserved. The regalia are his, secretly to admire today, which he shall openly wear in Paradise hereafter. He is already privileged as a king with the silver key that unlocks the strong room; he may even now grasp the sceptre, wear the crown, and put upon his shoulders the imperial mantle. O, how unutterably rich are the promises of our faithful, covenant-keeping God! If we had the tongue of the mightiest of orators, and if that tongue could be touched with a live coal from off the altar, yet still it could not utter a tenth of the praises of the exceeding great and precious promises of God. Nay, they who have entered into rest, whose tongues are attuned to the lofty and rapturous eloquence of cherubim and seraphim, even they can never tell the height and depth, the length and breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ which are stored up in the treasure house of God - the promises of the covenant of His grace."

Indeed, Christians can find their most assured help in God's promises. When doubts and fears

assail our hearts, God's people must firmly stand upon the promises of God.

It is wrong to allow doubts and anxiety to prevail within our hearts. Jesus taught us, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32). The Lord's instruction to us is that we should have confidence in His promises toward us rather than be troubled by various anxieties.

When anxious moments arrive, we must recall the promises of God. We must learn to appropriate the message of Kelso Carter's favourite hymn, "Standing on the Promises":

*Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
When the howling storms of doubt  
and fear assail,  
By the living word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God.*

### **Exceeding Greatness of God's Promises**

The greatness of the promises in the Scriptures is the greatness of Him that made those promises. As God is great, so are His promises.

The Apostle Paul said, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20). The promises of God are established in Himself, upon His marvellous attributes. He shall keep them to every letter for His own glory. He shall fulfil them in us that His glory may be seen through us.

His great power to bring about all His plans and promises, is our great source of strength and confidence in life. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee" (Jeremiah 32:17). Our Lord Jesus Himself said, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

When God has promised, He will perform,

because it is His word of truth and of power. Every biblical promise from God is absolutely trustworthy because the Promiser is unchanging, faithful, evertrue, all-powerful, and all-wise.

The promises of the Bible are an expression of the fullness and all-sufficiency of God. He performs all that He utters. We can trust Him to keep His promises.

### **Channel for Receiving God's Promises**

The writer of Hebrews exhorts us, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12). Promises are like the pages of a chequebook that are to be signed to receive the blessings. We are to sign it with prayers of faith made toward God who has given the promise. We read about Abraham, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20-21).

To a child of God, the divine promises are a great motivation to live out his life with patience and endurance. He is persuaded to press on, though with trembling legs of faith, till he finds all the golden fulfilment of the promises he has obtained from his God. The more he believes the promises, the more he finds in them to believe.

Spurgeon once wrote, "Faith has to bring all the faculties of the child of God upon their knees, and say to them, 'be quiet; listen while God speaks.' . . . 'Wait, I say, on the Lord.' May that which is written with the ink in the Bible be written with grace on our hearts. May the public promise become a private promise to each one of us by the living experience of our own soul."

### **The Great Purpose Of God's Promises**

Peter told us in 2 Peter 1:4 that God's exceeding precious and great promises are given that "ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Likewise the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves

from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The one great purpose of God's promises is that we may perfect the holiness of God in us. It is impossible to live a godly life without having full assurance in His promises.

Firstly, God promises us His forgiveness if we repent (1 John 1:7-9) that we may leave the darkness of sin and walk in His light. His promises are broader than all our sins and deeper than all our guilt. He who moves deeper by experience into God's promises shall be fully aware that there is yet a lower depth of God's unfathomable grace and love in His promises.

Secondly, God's promises are given to prevent us from the quick pleasure that sin offers. If we take time to study the promises of God, we shall see that the glory of His promises surpasses the attractions of this world and sin. Promises of God provide a greater pull to the holiness of God than the pull of the world to sin.

Thirdly, God's promises make His precepts easy, His yoke is not just tolerable, but pleasant, sweet and comfortable. We will prosper in our faith and spiritual walk if we are able to quote the promises of God to defend ourselves against the fiery darts of the devil.

### **Conclusion**

Isn't it great that our heavenly Father has no difficulty keeping all His promises to His children? He never leaves us in the lurch. He has all the time, energy and ability to bring to pass His promises. There is no shadow of turning with Him.

All that we needed, His hand has provided; and all that we will need in the future will come our way according to His precious promises. Let us be fully persuaded that He is able to perform all that He has promised.

**Rev. Prabhudas Koshy is the pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church and he also lectures at Far Eastern Bible College.**

# The Veracity of Scripture

Tan Choon Seng

## *Veracity : truthfulness*

A church member called me on the phone and referred me to an article in The Straits Times regarding the claim that the Bible is not historically accurate. As I had not read the papers where that article appeared, I did not comment much on it and I told him that I would look up on that article and read what it says. I managed to find and read the article entitled: "Historical accuracy of Bible called into question" (The Straits Times: Monday, November 1, 1999, page 18).

Briefly, what the article was saying is that there is a lack of archaeological proof to substantiate the claim of the biblical accounts, such as the crossing of River Jordan and conquering of Canaan under Joshua. It also challenged the biblical record of the destruction of the wall and city of Jericho. It claimed that the Jericho then had no wall around it. Concerning Israelites, it said that they were natives of Palestine and they did not come from afar as recorded in the Bible. What do I think of it after reading the article?

I would like to highlight a few points in response to the article. The basis and authority to determine the accuracy of the biblical accounts for these people lie in archaeology. Science (in the broad sense of all its various disciplines, including archaeology) has become the world's yardstick and standard for accuracy and truth.

But for the Christian, the Scripture, and not science, is the basis and authority of truth. The Scripture is God's revelation. It accurately reveals to us who God is, what He has done in creation and redemption. It also reveals how God's creatures should relate to Him and to one another rightly. The Scripture also provides significance or meaning to man and all of God's creation.

Science is only but an empirical interpretation of things and events, based on our sensory perception of them. There are many things in this world that science cannot explain, such as death. Why does a person die? What causes deterioration in the human body that leads finally to death? What is life after death? Science can only provide a limited explanation based on human observation. It cannot explain suffering or death scientifically. Many things are beyond the scope of science.

We need not be intimidated by science, be it in the field of archaeology or any other discipline.

Whether this article, which questions the historical accuracy of the Bible, is published by "Ha'aretz, Israel's most prestigious newspaper", or written by "Professor Zeev Herzog, a veteran Israeli archaeologist", or supported by the "scholarly community...entirely in agreement on the dubious historicity of the early part of the Bible", it is of no consequence to the truthfulness of Scripture. The Bible which is God's Word bears witness to itself. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; THY WORD is TRUTH" (John 17:17).

Think for a moment. Suppose, when all the skeptics who now question the historical accuracy of the biblical accounts had died, and some other archaeologists discover that these biblical accounts are true, will it not make us believe that God's Word, the Bible, is true and trustworthy? Science is still discovering new things in the fields of technology, medicine, and even archaeology.

The starting point for the skeptics is their faith in the science of archaeology. When they rely on scientific scholarship, they are resting on a very limited, finite and shaky foundation of human observation and wisdom, which is very much restricted in scope, space and time. After they have passed away, these people will not be around to know the future archaeological discoveries.

Science and scholarship are subservient to Scripture. It is neither superior nor equal to the Scripture. They can be valid and useful only when they represent an accurate picture of people, things and history.

For the Christian, our starting point is in the sure foundation of God's Word, the Bible. The Scripture says, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). Amen.

**Rev. Tan Choon Seng is the pastor of Shalom Bible-Presbyterian Church.**

# Biblical Creation vs Theistic Evolution

Jeffrey Khoo

Theistic evolutionism seeks to compromise the Bible with so-called science concerning the origin of the earth. According to theistic evolutionists, there are not 66, but 67 books in the Bible. The extra book is modern science. The age-old Satanic deception, 'hath God said [that He created the world by divine fiat in six literal days]?', is heard again. This is followed by the Satanic lie, 'No, He did not create, but providentially caused animals to evolve through a billion-year process of change and change till they finally become humans!' The term 'theistic evolution' is really oxymoronic<sup>1</sup>. Evolution is a result of atheistic unbelief. But so-called evangelical scholars have removed the alpha-privative to make evolution theistic, and in so doing, have made God the author of unbelief!

Did the world evolve or was it created by God? Let us allow God Himself to tell us. Since He was there from the beginning, He is our only Witness.

Firstly, God says that the living things on earth are not a result of progressive mutation or natural selection. The world came into existence instantaneously by a supernatural act of God, 'In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth' (Genesis 1:1). Please note the word 'created'. Right at the very outset, God tells us in no uncertain terms, 'it is creation not evolution!' Genesis 1:1 records for us the first creative act of God. Before Genesis 1:1 there was nothing, and God created something out of nothing (see also John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 11:3)! All this was done by the power of His spoken word, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth' (Psalm 33:6), 'for he commanded, and they were created' (Psalm 148:5).

Secondly, theistic evolutionism accepts the 'scientific' conclusion that the world is billions of years old. Instead of understanding the days of Genesis 1 as literal 24-hour days, they consider those days as poetic days (which allows for the

view that they were really long periods of time). Is this correct? Dr Whitcomb, in his book, *The Early Earth*, presents 4 evidences for a literal 7-day creation week:

1. The numerical adjective (i.e. first, second, third, etc.) are attached to the word 'day' (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31 cf. Exodus 20:11). There are times when the word 'day' is used to denote a certain period of time (e.g. 'the day of the Lord'). But whenever the numerical adjective is used with 'day', it always refers to a literal 24-hour time frame.
2. The qualifying phrase, 'evening and morning', suggests the beginning and ending of a day within a 24-hour cycle (cf. Daniel 8:26).
3. The fourth commandment of the Decalogue, that we are to rest on the seventh day, suggests a 7-day creation week (Exodus 20:11). It would be quite absurd for God to use the creation week as a model for the workweek if that week was not actually an immediately successive series of literal 24-hour days.
4. It should also be noted that the word 'days' is used with the word 'years' in Genesis 1:14. If we accept 'days' to mean 'million of years', then what does 'years' mean? Verse 14 would be hopelessly nonsensical if the words 'days' and 'years' do not mean what they exactly were supposed to mean, that is, well-defined units of time as a result of the earth's rotation in relation to the sun.

Thirdly, theistic evolutionists agree with their atheistic counterparts that the apes are really our ancestors. This goes directly against what God has said concerning the creation of the animals and of man. The Genesis account tells us that animal-kind and mankind were made separately. Man did not come from the monkey, and the monkey did not come from man. God made the different types of animals according to their own respective kinds (Genesis 1:21, 24, 25). But God made man in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). The

animals do not bear God's image, we do! It is also significant to note that God did not take one of the animals (common opinion being the monkey) to make man. He used the dust of the ground to make Adam (Genesis 2:7), and He used Adam's rib to make Eve (Genesis 2:21-23). God made man not from any pre-existing life form, but from pre-existing lifeless material, namely, the dust and the rib. Adam and Eve, the very first human beings, were the result of God's direct creative act (see also Matthew 19:4; 1 Corinthians 11:8, 15:39; 1 Timothy 2:13). They were definitely not derived products of evolution.

It is very clear from the Holy Scriptures that the whole universe came into existence by supernatural creation, and not material evolution. The Christian who denies this denies

Christ whom he claims to believe in, for Christ said, 'All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men' (John 1:3-4). In light of this, it is impossible for a person to be Bible-believing, and yet in his understanding of origins, hold to theistic evolution.

1. combination of contradictory terms.
2. removal of the prefix "a" from atheism.

**Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Khoo is the academic dean of Far Eastern Bible College.**

## GOD'S WORD

# Why We Should Regard The Bible As Authoritative

*Prabhudas Koshy*

It is important that we regard God's Word rightly. How well we excel in our Christian life is very much dependent upon how we esteem the Scripture. God spoke through Joshua that, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). Our blessings are directly related to our respect for every teaching of the Bible.

Since the Bible is the record of God's own words, the authority of God is inherent in the Bible. In the Bible, we hear God speaking with all His sovereign authority. If we accept God's authority, then we must also acknowledge the authority of each and every word which He has recorded in the Bible.

The following facts ascertain the supreme authority of the Bible in believers' lives.

## *God's Call to Keep the Bible Unaltered, Ascertain Its Authority*

Every word of the Bible is to be taken with utmost reverence. We are commanded not to diminish or expand, subtract from or add to that which God has already revealed in the Bible. God does not allow any change to His Word, because such an action is against His own authority.

God said in Deuteronomy 4:2 - "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

In Deuteronomy 12:32 the Lord reminds us again, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

In Revelation 22:18-19, the Lord said, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Here God warns us that altering God's Word would simply result in not having a place in heaven.

No king would allow His commands or declarations to be altered, because it is challenging



the authority of the king. When God commanded us not to alter His Word, He was stressing the importance of honouring His authority manifested in it. God seriously views how a man regards His Word. If any one approaches the Bible with carelessness and insubmissiveness, the Lord shall deal with him severely. God will hold the person who distorts His Word guilty on the day of judgement.

### ***God's Call to Obey the Bible, Ascertain Its Authority***

God has clearly expressed the authority of His Word when He pronounced blessings upon all those who obey His Word and curses upon those who disobey it. Because God has given supreme authority to the Bible, He expects all men to come with submission to its teachings. We are told, "Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee" (Deuteronomy 6:17).

God's blessings are extended to only those who obey Him. Read the following passages from God's Word.

"Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess" (Deuteronomy 5:32-33).

God told the Israelites, "And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers: If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 30:9-10).

Besides, God's curse is pronounced upon those who disregard the authority of God's Law, the Bible.

"Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall

say, Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:26).

"Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant" (Jeremiah 11:3).

Startling indeed! If any one does not do "all the words of this law", he is cursed. That is absolute authority.

### ***The Bible Itself Ascertain Its Authority***

The writers of the Bible, often cited one another as authoritative evidence for what they wrote. While they were citing other parts of the Scripture, they often used the phrase "it is written." The phrase "it is written" is used about 80 times to refer to other parts of the Scripture as God's authoritative Word. This expression in the Bible is equivalent to the phrase "The Lord has said" or "Thus saith the Lord." If any one is said to be disobeying that which is written, it actually means he is not obeying that which God has commanded. For example, in 2 Kings 14:6 the books of the Bible written by Moses are referred to as "... that



which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the LORD commanded . . ."

In short, the Bible regards every portion of it as God's authoritative Word.

### ***Jesus, Apostles and the New Testament Writers Ascertain Its Authority***

Jesus often quoted the Old Testament as God's authoritative Word. One classic example of Jesus asserting the authority of the Scripture is seen when He used the Scripture to ward off the temptations of Satan (c.f. Matthew 4:3-10). Jesus

cited verses from Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13, 10:20. Jesus' citations of the Scripture in His preaching and in His spiritual battle prove to us that He considered the Scripture as authoritative.

Like Jesus, the apostles also acknowledged the Old Testament as God's authoritative Word. (See the underlined parts of the following verse which indicate the apostles' belief that the Scripture is the authoritative Word of God given by the Holy Spirit.)

While explaining the death of Judas who betrayed Christ, Peter saw the fulfilment of a verse in Psalm and he acknowledged it as authoritative - "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." (Acts 1:16).

The New Testament writers recognised their own writings as from God. Moreover, the first Christians acknowledged their writings as God's authoritative Word. In his epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul wrote that "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 14:37). Likewise we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:2 - "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus."

The New Testament writers regarded each other's writings as authoritative words from God. For example,

In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul prefaced his statement with "the Scripture says," and then quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 - "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." In quoting from both the Old and New Testaments, Paul regarded them as equal in authority.

In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter equated Paul's writing with "the rest of the Scriptures." Peter wrote: "As also in all his (Paul's) epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction"

In 2 Peter 3:2, the Apostle Peter affirmed the authority of both the Old and New Testaments,

saying, "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."

### **Conclusion**

God expects every believer to esteem His Word very highly. The authority of the Bible is affirmed by the following facts which we have already noted in detail:

- (i) God's command not to add to or subtract from the Bible;
- (ii) God's call to obey all that the Bible commands;
- (iii) The Bible's own claim of authority (e.g. "It is written");
- (iv) Jesus, Apostles and the New Testament writers affirmed the authority of the Bible.

The last book of the Bible also exhorts us to regard His Word rightly - "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

The Lord spoke through Jeremiah about the miserable and hopeless situation of the Jews who left God for idols and counsels of other religions and that of the world - "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). When the Jews left God's authoritative and powerful Word, they actually left the very source of a satisfying and meaningful life. Whatever they had accepted in place of God's Word were useless, like a broken cup which cannot hold water. Their thirst for a purposeful and blessed life was not quenched by other sources. What God requires of us is not to look for other sources, but to search into what He has already revealed in the Bible for help and blessings.

Acknowledging the authority of God's Word is like recognising the right source of the 'springs of life.' Submission to the authority of the Bible is like drawing from the right source of happiness and blessings.

**Rev. Prabhudas Koshy is the pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church and he also lectures at the Far Eastern Bible College.**



## God Our Everlasting Father

Charles Seet

Few religions in the world allow their adherents to use such an intimate term of address for God. It is only in the Scriptures that God reveals Himself as a personal Father. Jesus referred to God as His Father or our Father a total of 51 times. And the actual term that Jesus used is the Aramaic word "*Abba*". This is a term of endearment, that a little child normally used to speak to his father. The Talmud says that "*Abba*" was one of the first words that a Jewish child learned to speak. Arabs today still use the term *abba* to refer to 'daddy' or 'papa.' As our everlasting father, God wants us to look up to Him and depend fully upon Him. As our everlasting father, God takes delight in hearing our prayers and our cries for help.

In Luke 11:9-13 Jesus said, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that

seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

These verses present a very wonderful, heart-warming picture of prayer: a picture of a good father who desires his children to gather themselves to him and ask him for their needs, and he is ready and willing to grant what they ask of him for their good. Those of us who are parents will perhaps understand this a little better. How do you feel when your little children come to you for help to do the things that they cannot do on their own? Would you not feel disappointed if they were to stop coming to you, and look instead to someone else for such help?

I believe that the Lord as our heavenly Father would also feel disappointed if we, His children, do not look to Him for help and make our needs and desires known to Him. As our heavenly Father, the Lord longs for His children to come to Him. There are some who wander away wilfully, like the prodigal son. And like the loving father in the parable, when the Lord sees them turning back to Him, He is filled with joy to welcome them back into His presence (Luke 15:20-24).

It is God's fatherly goodness toward us who are His children that causes Him to take great delight in our prayers. He wants us to come with child-like faith, to express our full trust and confidence in Him. Therefore, as expressions of trust in God, our prayers accomplish the important purpose of glorifying God's fatherly goodness. So let us therefore not hesitate to do this, as Hebrews 4:16 tells us, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We can come to our loving heavenly Father without fearing rejection at all.

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# Why Did Jesus Ride A Donkey Into Jerusalem?

*Timothy Tow*

It was Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, when our Lord rode a donkey in Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. He received the Hosannas and worship that the multitude offered Him, especially the children. Jesus received this obeisance in order to fulfil that which was prophesied of Him, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matthew 21:5).

This was a ceremonial entry to signify Christ's consummation of His three-fold ministry of prophet, priest and king. He has preached for three years to His people, and in a few days He will offer up Himself to die for our sins and when He rises again on the third day He will become King. Let us also join the children in singing Hosanna in the highest to welcome our King. When we praise Him in the highest, our Lord and King, then the Holy Spirit descends to bless us with joy and peace. When the King rules in our hearts, all our sins and sorrows are dispelled.

Why did Jesus ride an ass and not a horse? Because He is the Prince of Peace and not of War. He comes in lowliness and meekness as symbolised by the animal He rides. The ass is thought to be a stubborn beast in the West, but far from it, the East regards it most highly as a patient, persevering burden bearer.

When we spent six months of sabbatical in the Holy Land in 1969-70, we came in contact most often with the ass. Except for his loud hee-haws in the morning, we never heard a sound from him while at work the whole day through. These patient and lowly beasts of burden would often carry their masters to market, sometimes with their wives. On the return journey they would go through rough country terrain heavily loaded with goods. We simply loved to see them doing a hard day's work. Because we spoke nobly of them, when we left Israel to return to Singapore, the Palestinian Church presented us with a donkey badge. We understood the significance of this

presentation—we are only servants and we must learn to be patient, meek and lowly like the ass.

Why did Jesus ride a donkey into Jerusalem? According to Paul's statement, He who was equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant (slave) and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Jesus rode into Jerusalem humbly and meekly to die our death in order to give us life. He yielded Himself completely to His Father's will. He obeyed His master like a slave, doing not His will but the will of the Father. When nailed to the cross and reviled, He opened not His mouth. He prayed to the Father to forgive those who reviled Him for they knew not what they did. He gave His life to suffer for us to the uttermost.

Beloved, it is through His obedience and meekness that He has saved you and me from our sins. All our tears will never avail us if it were not for His death to pay for all our sins. Let us love Him the more as we realise how much He loves us.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" by raising Him from the dead. For on the third day, He arose in great power and glory. He showed Himself to the disciples ten times. He ate with them. He talked with them. He commanded them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. After forty days, He ascended in broad daylight to heaven, and now sits on the right hand of God the Father. He is soon coming again to judge the world, the living and the dead.

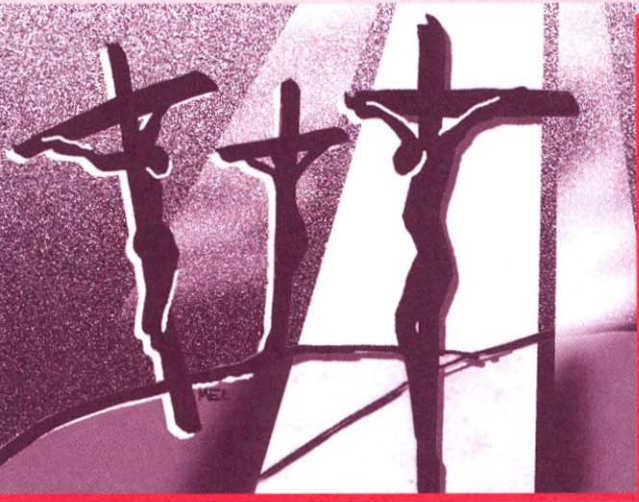
Yes, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). When Jesus comes again He will be seen riding a white horse (no

more an ass) in great power and glory to subdue His enemies, "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Revelation 19:14). When He comes down to earth all His vanquished foes, all who rejected Him, must bend their knees to worship Him. We who are His people, who have undergone temptation with Him, will rule with Him on earth for a thousand years (6 times mentioned in Revelation 20). Can you say that of yourself?

In the light of His exaltation and our part with Him in heavenly places, why do we still set our affections on earth? Why do we so live as if we are living forever on earth? Why do we make ours

a long-term policy? But I have only a short term policy. While we must work and earn a living, let us not regard our earthly life as if it is everything. Let us give God a portion of our time, energy and resources. Let us serve Him full-time, should He call us. I thank God for those who gave their lives to serve the Lord forever more, and they do not regard their earthly life as precious. They want to serve Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What will you do for Jesus? Is He who rides a donkey in Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem your coming king?

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## Today Shalt Thou Be With Me in Paradise

*James Chan*

In our Lord's second statement (Luke 23:39-43) from the cross, He turned to a repentant sinner who was crucified on his right and gave him the assurance that he was going to heaven. Let us consider the events that led Christ to utter, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

### **Christ Was Numbered With the Transgressors**

Note the amazing situation at Calvary where our Lord was crucified. Two thieves were crucified,

one on each side of Christ. In fact, they could have put the two thieves together and that would have been the natural thing to do, since these two thieves were partners in crime. Instead, they put the Lord Jesus between the two thieves.

This was the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:12 that "He was numbered with the transgressors" and Mark 15:27, 28 tell us so. So remember that at Calvary not only was the hand of man at work but also the hand of God. Thus, the Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled.

It is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus was born for the transgressors. Matthew 1:21 says, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." He lived for the transgressors. Matthew 20:28 says, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

### **Christ Was Implored by the Thieves**

Jesus was hung with the thieves. His position in the centre indicated that the crucifiers considered Him the worst criminal of the three. At this point, something happened: the thieves appealed and the Saviour answered.

We sometimes fail to note that both thieves were appealing to Jesus. Two very different kinds of

### FATHER AND SON

prayers were uttered aloud for His attention. The unrepentant thief was asking for self-preservation: "Save thyself and us." The penitent thief was urging self-sacrifice. His words amounted to this: "Stay on the cross and win the kingdom."

Both bandits manifested a sort of faith. The first thief asked: "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us" (Luke 23:39). There may have been ridicule in his voice, but this expression in the original Greek text shows that he expected Christ's affirmative answer.

Here the unrepentant thief wanted Jesus to admit that He is Christ and wanted it for a purpose. He wanted Christ to save Himself, his companion and himself. That was all that he wanted Christ for - to escape the cross and death that he might continue his wicked life. There was no shadow of repentance, nor any trace of genuine faith in Christ for salvation.

The penitent thief was different. His prayer had to do with the King and His kingdom. His prayer was one of the most amazing prayers in the Bible.

He admitted that he feared God (Luke 23:40). He was not an atheist. Neither was he an agnostic. He admitted his guilt, saying they were there justly (Luke 23:41). He admitted that he deserved this punishment, when he said, "We receive the due reward of our deeds" (verse 41). He also acknowledged that Jesus was innocent, when he said, "This man hath done nothing amiss" (verse 41). Then he acknowledged that there was life after death. "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (verse 42). What an amazing confession from the thief on the cross!

His prayer was persistent. The verbal form in the Greek text suggests that the thief prayed repeatedly. He kept praying: "Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom". His appeal kept pounding on the ears of the Saviour: "Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." This is a strong indication of his desire to be saved.

He was bold when he spoke to the Lord. No one was asking Jesus for salvation. The priest and the rulers were mocking Christ and yet this thief dared

to believe in Jesus. The crowd was opposing Him and the soldiers were laughing at Him but the thief earnestly pleaded for salvation. Some do not want to trust the Lord Jesus because they are afraid of people laughing at them. Here was a man who had courage, dared to defy the ruler and the priest, and to trust in Jesus.

### **Christ Granted Forgiveness and Salvation to the Repentant Thief**

"Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (verse 43). The answer was once and for all. The word "said" is in the aorist tense and means His answer was uttered only once - no repetition. His mind was fixed. He was determined to die and to save souls. That was the reason for His coming (Luke 19:10).

The amazing thing about salvation is its security. It was not a hope-so salvation, not a guess-so salvation. Jesus says, "Verily (amen) I say unto thee". Jesus says "Amen" to the penitent thief's appeal. Amen! to the cry of all the sinners who are longing for forgiveness through the ages. Amen! for God's mercy in its outreach to lost souls.

The word "Amen" means "so be it!" It is an expression of commitment, a confirmation and an assurance.

It is as if Jesus had said to the penitent thief, "I will not fail you, I am determined to go through the suffering and die. You can depend on Me. I will bring you to Paradise before the day is over." His salvation was certain and it was secure.

At this point, hope revives, heaven rejoices, the heroes of faith fall on their knees in praise. The penitent thief had received a new life!

Salvation is personal. Jesus spoke to this man personally, "Verily I say unto thee" (Luke 23:43). You see, God loves us personally. Paul wrote, "who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). The Lord Jesus died for us personally and God saves us personally. You ask from Him personally and God will give it to you only. This is a personal salvation given to this thief.

It is a present salvation. "Today shalt thou be with

me in paradise” (verse 43). Note the word “Today”. It is not tomorrow, next week or next month. For tomorrow may not begin. The man had said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (verse 42). It was as though the thief said, “Sometime in the future, you are going to have a kingdom. Please remember me

when that happens.” But Jesus said, “Why wait until the future? I will give you salvation right now - today.” Salvation is a present gift from the Lord Jesus to all repentant and believing sinners.

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# Having A Clear Vision Of God

Stephen Khoo

FATHER AND SON

In the third chapter of his epistle to Christians in Colosse, Paul, an apostle called by the will of God, wrote: “Set your affection (Greek, *phroneo*: mind, thoughts) on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). The verb “set your affection” is a command. It is needful for Christians to obey.

One needful thing that we ought to set our affection, our mind and thoughts on, is a vision of God. We are living in a world that is becoming more and more godless. The belief in a personal God who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the Sovereign Judge, is being rejected and ridiculed. In its place, man has exalted himself and become the arbiter of what is right and wrong. Christians are being exposed to this ungodly and pernicious doctrine. And the antidote to this poisonous philosophy is to have a clear vision of the Almighty God who had revealed Himself in His Word, and of whom the Lord Jesus Christ came to manifest. A clear and correct understanding of God will give us a right evaluation of all other things, like life, work, money, relationships, ambitions and so on.

One of our serious problems is that we fail to see God as GOD. It was said that Luther once said to Erasmus: “Your thoughts of God are too human.” That could very well be our trouble. We think of God in terms of ourselves, just like us. Look at some people who are ruthless and inconsiderate, cruel and crooked and there is nothing man could do, and nothing happens to them, and we think that God, too, is weak and helpless. Sometimes we echo the same sentiment as Jeremiah who went to God and said, “Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: **Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?**” (Jeremiah 12:1).

If this is our thinking and trouble, we must correct

it. So how can we put it right in order to have a correct vision of God? Isaiah has the answer. Read the fortieth chapter of his book. Read it not once, but twice, and again. Let the inspired and infallible Word of God dwell richly in our minds and hearts in all wisdom. Have a vision of the Lord our God as He describes Himself. Here are some excerpts:

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

With whom took he counsel, and who instructed

him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.” (Isaiah 40:12-15, 18, 25-26, 28)

When a vision of God such as what we have just read takes root in our minds and hearts, our lives will change for good. The difficulties and distresses we encounter in life become small. There is meaning and purpose when we worship God and serve Him. We acknowledge that all that we are and have come to experience are because of Him. We see ourselves as stewards of the money and material possessions He has blessed us. We consider it a pleasure and a great privilege to serve Him.

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## SPIRITUAL CHAOS

# Spiritual Confusion

Bob Phee

A leader of a church called and asked me whether our church would like to participate in the “geo-networks for a time of prophetic, passionate and persevering prayer.” I gave a negative reply. Their purpose was to change the world through enthroning and exalting Jesus, united prayer and prayer walking in the community. The participating churches hoped to win 2 million Singaporeans to Christ by the year 2001 and plant hundreds of new churches on our island.

I disagreed to join or give consideration to this activity because it is unbiblical and is a wrong way of evangelism. These churches have adopted a new extra-biblical method of evangelism from Peter C. Wagner, professor of missions and church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary.



Peter Wagner learned much of the new strategy in evangelism from John Wimber, the late founder of Vineyard Ministry. He believed in “territorial spirits” and that Christians must declare war against them and make territorial claims over them through prayer walking, prayer journeys, prayer expeditions and marches for Jesus as related forms of spiritual warfare.



These New Spiritual Warfare Strategies (NSWS) are not found in the Bible. We are not told to take the fight to the devil but be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Neither are we instructed to claim the devil's territory, but to put on the whole armour of God. Prayer walking is a new extra-biblical practice of the late twentieth century but never a practice of our Lord or the Apostles. The pagans do such things with the medium walking and leading the chief idol sitting on a sedan chair.

I disagree with "This Land Is Mine" because their "enthroning and exalting Jesus" over the community is only belittling our Great Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was exalted when He ascended to heaven. Every Lord's day, He has been worshipped and exalted as risen, conquering Son for the last 2,000 years. To enthrone and exalt Jesus on a particular day is to imply that Jesus has never been Lord, reigning the whole creation, but will only be made so by some believers on that day of enthronement. The pastor who introduced and led this movement did not know his Bible.

The practice of enthroning a deity according to ancient rites was found in Egypt and Babylon. Today, other religious groups do yearly enthroning and exalting of their gods.

Our Almighty risen Saviour does not need any man to enthrone Him. He was exalted on the cross and enthroned in His ascension to heaven forever.

### **The Danger of New Spiritual Warfare Strategies**

The NSWS practises not only some form of direct engagement of the enemy but also enters the so-called "devil's testimonies". This erroneous practice is spiritually dangerous, especially, for the young in faith as it will cause them to think that they are spiritually more powerful than the devil. We are told that even Michael the Archangel "when contending with the devil . . . durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee'" (Jude 9). The Bible lays no rule for believers to directly confront the spirits.

The Word of God teaches us to resist the devil: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the

devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) and "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith..." (1 Peter 5:8, 9).

T.A. McMahon wrote, "1 John 3:8 tells us that 'the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' It is the works; not the devil or his demons. Although Satan's fate was sealed at the Cross, God, for His own purpose, has allowed him to continue until the Lord himself binds him for a time, and then casts him into the eternal Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:2-3, 10). The works of the devil are lies and deception with which he 'hath blinded the minds of them which believe not... the glorious gospel of Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan's works began in heaven with his own self-deluded lie: 'I will be like the most high (God)' (Isaiah 14:14). He brought his deceptions to earth to infect mankind. Adam and Eve were seduced by his lies (Genesis 3:1-6), and that has been his modus operandi in every subsequent generation."

Spiritual warfare is not a strategic battle in the heavenlies against spirit entities. The "wrestle" of Ephesians 6:12 refers to disputations over truth (verse 14), not body-slammings demons. It is contending for the truth, vanquishing false teachings, and resisting the lies. Our weapon is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the (written!) word of God" (verse 17). Jesus himself used that sword against the devil; "it is written...." (Matthew 4:4, 6, 7, 10).

The strongholds of the devil to be pulled down are not literal "territories ruled by demons," but Satan's lies, which hold captive the minds ("every thought") of the lost (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) and can even deceive God's "very elect" (Matthew 24:24).

Scripture tells us clearly and simply how we are to deal with such strongholds. "... If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

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# The Defence and Propagation of The Most Holy Faith in the Last Days

*S H Tow*

Exciting days of prophetic fulfilment are with us. What we used to read in God's Book is coming true before our eyes. The days of Noah - days of universal unbelief and violence - and the days of Lot - days of sexual liberalisation and licence - have come upon Planet Earth. The Lord Creator is supplanted by man: this is the age of man's ascendancy.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is hidden from the world because "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). The Church has defected to the god of this world: there is treason in the camp. The betrayal and deception in Christendom was foretold in God's Word two thousand years ago by our Lord Himself and the holy Apostles.

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). Pulpits are filled with men far departed from the faith "giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1), for the time has come, and is now here, "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

The "falling away" of twenty-first century Christendom gathers momentum as the father of lies corrupts the pure Gospel and "the simplicity that is in Christ" by offering another Jesus, and another spirit, and another gospel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light and his ministers appear as the ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 14, 15).

The modern church is filled by men who "received not the love of the truth" to whom God sends "strong delusion that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 10, 11). Everywhere ordained apostates preach "another gospel" and "doctrines of devils," without light and without truth - sure signs of our Lord's soon return.

Christendom at large, having fallen into unbelief, has also turned its back on the sixteenth century Reformation, and is departed from its four doctrinal pillars: (i) Sola scriptura, (ii) Sola fide, (iii) Sola gratia, and (iv) Solus Christus.

It is sad indeed that this generation of Christians knows little of the blessed truths of God's greatest salvation to the Church since Pentecost. The god of this world has succeeded well in blinding the eyes of modern Christians to the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel.

Twentieth century apostasy has given birth to a New Christianity for the twenty-first century. The New Christianity has evolved over fifty years by the defection of Evangelicalism from its Biblical position into the Broadway of accommodation and acceptance of mainline Christendom. Through years of co-operative evangelism and ecclesiastical collaboration with liberals, modernists, Catholics, charismatics and sundry Christian groups, the Evangelicals have turned one hundred and eighty degrees to repudiate the truth of God and to embrace "another gospel."

In 1994 and 1997, by two epochal declarations, Evangelicalism publicly capitulated to the wily craft

of the master deceiver, to tell the world that the faith of our fathers, hard-won with the blood of the martyrs over five hundred years is no more relevant, but now **“Evangelicals and Catholics are Together.”** By a stroke of the pen the Gospel of Jesus Christ was signed over to the custody of Mother Rome. What ecumenical evangelicalism had practised for decades was formally and finally acknowledged.

Dr Billy Graham’s universalistic dream of years was telecast May 31, 1997, when over television Southern California, he told the world that God was calling people out of various religions, and that all faiths lead to God. This New Christianity will carry the Church into the Third Millennium. The adversary has won a major victory.

### **The Most Holy Faith Must Be Defined Anew**

In the midst of the prevailing deception and confusion in Christendom, it is needful for us who stand with our Lord and the Apostles to define anew what we hold to be the faith of the Gospel, the “most holy faith.” For this we turn to God’s Word, our one source of truth.

### **What Says the Head of the Church?**

Heed our Lord Jesus’ words, “Enter ye in at the strait gate ... because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14). That “strait gate” is Jesus Christ our Lord. He says, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved ...” (John 10:9). “I am the way ... no man cometh unto the Father, but by me... he that hath seen me

hath seen the Father ... Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me” (John 14:6, 9, 11).

### **Then We Must Also Refer to the Apostolic Writings**

The Apostle Peter, exalting the name of Jesus declared: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

The Apostle Paul: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). And he says: “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified ... For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:2; 1:18).

The most holy faith speaks of “the simplicity that is in Christ.” We are saved by faith in Christ alone: none but Christ can open to us heaven’s gate. The “preaching of the cross” is the all sufficiency of the Gospel message. In Romans 10:9 the Apostle says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works ...” (Ephesians 2:8,9). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

The foregoing passages from God’s Word clearly spell out the grounds for our salvation and the essential content of the Gospel message. This is the “most holy faith” and summed up by the four cardinal pillars of the Reformation: scripture alone, by faith alone, by grace alone, and by Christ alone.

The most holy faith categorically excludes all that is extra-Biblical, man-made, and false. It excludes sacramental salvation, the mediatorial merit of priests and “saints;” it excludes any salvific role of the church, or the merit of any acts or services for God; it allows no place whatsoever for any sort of “faith” or religion in gaining one’s salvation. Finally, it allows no part for images and idols in worship and it excludes the doctrine of purgatory.

### **How Should We “Defend and Propagate” the Most Holy Faith?**

In this day of massive and universal defection from the faith, God must raise up men of valour, men who are fully committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who are willing to

hazard their all for God's Kingdom in the final stages of the battle for truth.

The Lord must raise up Spirit-filled men, men of discernment, who are able to see clearly the end time issues, to see through the deceptive ecumenical smokescreen, the counterfeit church, the great whore of Revelation 17: MYSTERY BABYLON and MOTHER OF HARLOTS.

That the end time Satanic church will dominate the earth is inevitable and irresistible. Nothing will stop its progression, foretold in God's Word (Revelation 13, 17).

What then can we do? Our immediate concern is to warn our churches, the souls under our care, so that being forewarned they may be forearmed for the battle ahead. Let us catch the spirit of God's servant Paul, and his words to the Ephesian elders: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God ... For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:27-31).

May the Apostle's words speak to the hearts of God's faithful servants everywhere. "He who hath ears let him hear."

Let every pastor, every elder, every leader in the remnant church still holding true to the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, resolve to follow in the steps of the Apostle Paul, to be a good watchman and soldier for God. Clear and forthright preaching and warning must go forth from every pulpit, to the building up of the most holy faith of the believers, so that they understand the issues and the peril of "grievous wolves" seeking to devour the flock of God which He hath purchased with His own blood.

The leader who fails to urgently warn the flock under his care, fails in his duty. Let the words of Paul provoke us unto love and to good works: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:1,2).

In the spirit of Paul, let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). The door of Gospel opportunity will soon be shut, the day

of grace over. The time to propagate the Gospel of Salvation is now. At any moment now we may hear the midnight cry, "The Bridegroom cometh!"

Until then, let us fight the good fight of faith and earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Ephesians 5:11). Have no fellowship with the ecumenical movement or any of its related bodies or individuals. The door of Jesus Christ is the door of separation, the strait gate which leads us on the narrow way which leads to life. Be not disheartened even if no one joins you, because "few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). The way of Biblical separation is a lonely road, but it is the only safe road. At all costs, we must keep clear of the ecumenical Broadway that leadeth to destruction.

We are in a mighty race. Let us run with patience, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Our numbers may be few, but we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1), so we need never feel discouraged.

From heaven our Saviour calls: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

We must work the works of Him who called us while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.

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# THE NUMBER GAME

*Quek Suan Yew*

The world is obsessed with large numbers. People power is the foundation of democracy and communism. Get the masses behind you and you can do what your heart desires. With people power, governments can be overturned. With people power, the economy of a country can be rendered helpless. Count the numbers, this is the difference between success or failure. Is the church any different today? The more you baptize the more blessed you are in the eyes of men. Small insignificant churches with hardly an increase in number are considered a failure in today's context. Churches today need to review this worldly perspective of growth and measure of success and God's blessings or else we are doomed to spiritual failure.

## **The Number Flop**

If there were a person who has every right to number his "successes," that person would be King David. He was the first king to unite Israel successfully. It was during his reign that Jerusalem was made the capital city. He was anointed by God and was called the man after God's own heart. His manner of kingly life became the standard for all other kings that followed after him. He was the one chosen by the LORD through whom our Lord Jesus Christ will become the greater David and will rule as king on earth. The many psalms that David wrote have blessed millions of hearts throughout the ages. The list could go on and on and on. What more could a sinner ask for when he has been used by God in such a mighty fashion!

Yet when David numbered the people in the evening years of his reign, he was severely judged by God. 2 Samuel 24:10-15, "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man. So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men."

## **Beware of the Number Game**

The measure of success in the eyes of God was never the number. Faithfulness is and will always be the measure of success in God's eyes. Matthew 25:23, "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." And in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." There are many more of such Bible texts which point to this wonderful truth.



Is it not true that as God's servants, we can only plant and water but God is the only One who can give the increase (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5-6)? Since God is the only one who can give the increase, then why must man be so concerned with numbers? Man is concerned because he wants to boast. He wants to rob God of His glory. He wants people to think highly of him. He is filled with pride and self. He will use gimmicks to bring people in and to keep them in with new inventions that appeal to their carnality. When man enters the number game, he sins against God and will receive God's judgement for the harm and hurt he will do to God's cause and the many lives he would have ruined.

### Conclusion

Beware of the number game. It is a death trap! All fellowship groups, churches, Bible Study groups and any other ministry, as leaders of your respective groups, seek always to be faithful to God and avoid the number game at all costs. We will not only lose sight of what is right and pleasing to God in our ministries but we will also rob God of His glory! May God keep us true to Him till He comes!

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DEALING WITH SIN

# Do You Speak The Truth?

Tan Eng Boo

The Bible records the story of a Christian couple who lied against the Holy Spirit (Acts 5). Ananias, together with his wife, Sapphira, acted hypocritically and lied about the amount they gave to God's people. Being alerted to their lies by the Holy Spirit, the apostle Peter rebuked them for lying against God. They both fell dead, one after the other. Thus God dealt severely with these two early church members for lying.



I am particularly concerned that today many Christians lie and behave in a hypocritical manner all too often. Many do not tell the truth in their conversations. They hide the truth from the hearer. They tell one story to one person, and then tell another a different story. Sadly, on several occasions I have found out that the person who told me a story about a

matter, reported contradicting stories about the same matter to others.

Thank God that by His great mercy many of us are not struck dead though we are guilty of the same sin. We often lie and act hypocritically. It is truly of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. But we must not take His grace for granted. Who knows, if the Lord would strike us dead the next time we lie?

### Speak the truth

We are told by the apostle Paul to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). The truth is the truth! Jesus said, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37). Paul said, "with

me there should be yea yea, and nay nay....our word toward you was not yea and nay.” (2 Corinthians 1:17,18). And finally James said, “let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay....” (James 5:12).

The following Scripture portions also command us to speak the truth:

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:25).

“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:1,2).

“These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour....” (Zechariah 8:16).

### **Speak the truth in love**

We need not be blunt or rough in telling someone the truth. We can always be gentle and courteous in our approach when telling the truth. Truth can be hurting at times, and there is no need to hurt the person further.

Why must we speak the truth in love? This is one way we can ensure that we will carry the message across effectively. If there is no love in carrying a message across, there may be opposition to the truth. But, on the contrary, if we show someone that we really care and love the person, we will be effective in our task.

### **Do not lie**

As Christians we must not lie. Paul told the Colossian believers, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9). We must tell the truth always. James gave the advice - “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth” (James 3:14). A half-truth is no truth at all. Be consistent with what you say.

“When doing something dishonest, you must do something dishonest to cover up, and your life

becomes hopelessly complex. The same with telling lies. If you’re honest, you don’t have to remember what you said the last time. Speaking the truth each time makes life amazingly simple.” (Ben Carson)

### **Various ways of lying**

When we are not truthful in our answer, we lie.

When we tell different things to different people in order to cover the truth or to mislead, we lie.

When we carry tales, we lie. (“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” - Proverbs 26:22).

When we flatter someone with sweet and flowery words, we lie. (“A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin” - Proverbs 26:28).

When we give false testimony, we lie. (“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” - Exodus 20:16. “A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies” - Proverbs 14:5).

When we fail to honour God with our promises, we lie. (“I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people” - Psalm 116:14).

Such lying takes place in the church as well as in our workplaces, schools, homes, etc. How honest are we?

When someone asks you to lie, you must abide steadfast as a Christian to avoid the pressure to lie. No matter who asks you to lie, you should quickly reject the suggestion to lie. It is better that you honour the Lord than please man (1 Samuel 2:30). This may lead to the loss of job or promotion, or becoming less popular, etc., but our Christian testimony must be held high to honour the Lord’s name.

So let this be our prayer: “Remove far from me vanity and lies” (Proverbs 30:8)

### **God hates lying**

“These six things doth the LORD hate... A proud look, a lying tongue....” (Proverbs 6:16-17).

“Lying lips are abomination to the LORD, but they that deal truly are his delight” (Proverbs 12:22). Make no mistake here that God hates lying. It is abhorrent because it represents something diametrically opposed to the ethical nature of the God who is Truth (Deuteronomy 32:4, Isaiah 65:16).

### Consequence of lying

Our Saviour tells us that the devil is the father of lies (John 8:44). If we practise this vice, we are following the footsteps of the devil. C. H. Spurgeon says, “Every liar is a child of the devil, and will be sent home to his father.” The apostle John tells us in Revelation 21:27 that liars will not enter heaven. In Revelation 21:8, we are taught that liars will have their part in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. If you are truly a child of God, you would not be a liar. Do not take this matter lightly.

“A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish” (Proverbs 19:9)

### Guard your tongue

Guard your tongue against lying. Be slow to speak (James 1:19). D. L. Moody said, “Lying covers a multitude of sins – temporarily.” Martin Luther said, “A lie is a snowball: the further you roll it, the bigger it becomes.”

If believers obey the divine injunction not to lie, as God is the God of truth, we will be outstanding in a world of liars, deceivers, and assorted prevaricators.

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9).

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DEALING WITH SIN

# The Sin of Pride

*Wee Eng Moh*

The Bible has many warnings against the sin of pride. In the book of Proverbs is a list of seven specific sins that God hates: “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief” (Proverbs 6:16-18). In the sight of God, “a proud look” is as odious as the sin of murder!

Man, by nature, is full of pride. This sin literally runs “in the blood”. Our first parents fell because of their pride. In their aspiration to “...be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5), they succumbed to the wily words of Satan, disobeyed God, and partook of the forbidden fruit. Since then, pride has become part of our depraved nature. Many an unwary Christian have often been trapped in its vices. O, that we may be sensitive

to its lure! May we, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, keep ourselves in check.

Pride is the root that feeds all the rest of our sins - envy, contention, wrath, malice, evil speaking and every wicked imagination. Many are the forms of this hateful spirit. Some are proud of their good looks, some of their wealth, some of their achievements, some of their status. Not a few boast of their “goodness”, while others take pride in their spiritual knowledge and maturity.

A haughty spirit can ruin our lives and tear down relationships with others, especially with those close to us. A proud person counts it an indignity to admit his mistake or ask for forgiveness. He indulges in self-flattery and turns a blind eye to his own imperfections. He who is high-minded is like the Pharisees, who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9).



Such a one is not able to love others because he is too focused on himself. Thomas Watson commented on this wicked sin: “Justice comprehends all virtue in itself; so pride comprehends all vice. It is a spiritual drunkenness; it flies up like wine into the brain and intoxicates it. It is idolatry; a proud man is a self-worshipper. It is revenge; Haman plotted Mordecai’s death because he would not bow the knee”.

This desire to exalt oneself is so much in our nature. God knows the pride that is in our hearts and that it is so easy for us to fall prey to this grievous sin. In the preparations to fight against the Midianites, He gave instructions to Gideon to reduce the army from 32,000 to 300 men, “lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me” and steal the glory from the Lord of hosts.

King David, the man after God’s own heart, yielded to this terrible sin when he became puffed up over his many victories. As he dwelt on his successes, Satan “provoked” him to number Israel. Despite the advice of his army general, Joab, against doing so, King David went ahead and “God was displeased with this thing” (1 Chronicles 21:7). In tempting David to pride in his own resources, the enemy of souls successfully tripped up God’s chosen king. As a result of David’s sin, God punished Israel and 70,000 men had to die by the plague.

In writing to the problematic church at Corinth, Paul reminded them not to boast about their gifts which had been bestowed upon them by God’s grace: “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost

thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). The Corinthian believers were showing off their spiritual gifts and desiring public attention. They clamoured for the most prestigious offices and the most glamorous gifts, for example, “tongues-speaking”. They cared nothing for harmony, order, fellowship or edification of the saints. They were more concerned about flaunting their gifts. Each did his own thing as prominently as possible, in total disregard for the others. As a result of their pride and arrogance, there was contention, discord and disunity amongst the believers. That was why the Apostle had to warn against schism in the Body of Christ. The root problem was pride.

Let us examine our lives. If we are honest, we will agree that we fall often into this sin. All it takes is for someone to say nice things about us, and we glow with pride. We take pride in our gifts and abilities and this often leads us to despise those who lack. When corrected or reproved for our wrongdoing, we usually take offence and respond negatively. Pride wells up in us and we are quick to defend ourselves. Consequently, we refuse to admit our mistakes and sins, and to seek forgiveness. Pride is a hindrance to any relationship and a scourge to the Body of Christ. Every Christian must therefore strive to maintain a humble spirit. “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). May the Lord help us to be sensitive to pride’s allurements and guard our hearts against this wicked sin.

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*“The proud resists God; in his understanding he resists the truths of God; in his will he resists the laws of God; in his passions he resists the providences of God; and therefore no wonder that God sets himself against the proud.”*

*Matthew Henry*

# Consequences of Marriage to A Non-believer

*Philip Heng*

God's Word says: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath **righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?**" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

## Breaking God's Clear Command

The Scripture clearly prohibits the union of a believer and unbeliever in marriage. So marriage to a non-Christian is breaking God's clear command.

God warned the Jews in Deuteronomy 7:1-4 that they "...make no covenant with them (heathen nations)...**Neither shalt thou make marriages with them:** thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. **For they will turn away thy son from following me,** that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly". God's command was clear and the consequence of disobedience was also clear.

Generally, those who disobey, miss out on God's blessing. How to have a Christ-centred home when one spouse does not accept Christ? So often the believing partner suffers a guilty conscience for being disobedient to God and also endures unnecessary tension regarding his spouse's salvation till she comes to Christ, if at all.

## Unable to Share Spiritual Experience

The couple will be unable to share with each other some of the deepest and most intimate spiritual experiences of God. Following are some ways in which they will miss the sweet sharing of spiritual experiences.



- When the Christian speaks of the reality of God, the other does not share the same convictions.
- When the Christian speaks of timely answers to prayer, the partner is sceptical.
- In times of crises, when you need your spouse's support in prayer, he will not be able to give it. You will have to bear the spiritual load alone.
- Come the Lord's Day and you want to go to Church, he will plan his own programme.
- If at all he goes to church with you, his mind might not be there. He may go to church just out of obligation.
- His convictions and standards will be very different from yours. His conscience will not be as clear and sharp and his standards will not be based on God's Word for sure.
- He will not have the same love for God, His Word, His house, His day, His people and His servants as you.
- He will not be able to appreciate the hymns you sing nor your zeal for God and His work. He probably thinks you are wasting your time

attending Worship Service, teaching Sunday School or participating in Fellowship Group activities. Do not count on him for any spiritual support. At best, he will try not to be an obstruction.

- It would be like having a weight around your neck for a long, long time. Instead of helping you get closer to God, most likely he will draw you away from God (Deuteronomy 7:1-4).

- Marriage to a non-Christian is a spiritual disadvantage. It is like having the Christian stand on a chair and the non-Christian spouse stand on the floor. Whilst the Christian tries with great difficulty to lift his spouse to a higher spiritual level, it would be much easier for the non-Christian partner on the floor to pull the Christian down.

- Many a couple of different faiths marry and hope to convert each other after marriage. Can you see the tussle as each tries point-by-point, day-by-day to convince the other of his/her faith? At best, they may agree not to talk religion.

- It is true, God is able to turn the non-Christian spouse to Christ but such conversions are few and far between, and there is no guarantee. In the meantime, there will be much tension, agony and uncertainty. The believer is not assured of the spouse's conversion as he has contravened God's clear command. I know of Christians who have broken God's command and married non-Christians who are still praying and hoping "some day" after many long years that their unsaved partner would come to Christ. Sometimes, by God's grace, their prayers are answered. Sometimes, they are not. Why take the risk?

- When a couple is of different faiths, there will be lots of opportunities for conflict. During quarrels, it is so easy to hurt the believer with words like: "You call yourself a Christian, is this how you behave?"

### **Conflict in the Upbringing of Children**

The problems are compounded when the baby arrives. Should baby be baptised the Christian way or be adopted by the "gods"? Should baby be raised in the Christian or non-Christian way? When the time for the child to go to Church and

Sunday school arrives, the non-Christian spouse will either object or at best acquiesce to the suggestion. There is no unity on the matter.

I know of Christians married to Roman Catholics or Seventh-Day Adventists. By what standards should they raise their children? In such cases, it is common to see both parents fight to win their children's religious allegiance. How sad! Here are some illustrations:

- A Christian mother says, "Son, you accompany me to Church and I will bake you a cake". The R.C. husband quickly tells the son, "You come with me to Church and I will take you for a boat-ride on the lake".

- The Christian says, "Children, come and worship with me on Sunday". The Seventh-Day Adventist spouse says, "Children, come and worship with me on Saturday".

- Can you imagine how confused the poor children will be? Both parents have different faiths. Who is right and who is wrong? Which parent to follow? To be committed one way, is to offend the other parent. So, some children never decide.

### **An Hopeless Parting**

Saddest of all, when the time of one's demise arrive, what is the hope of seeing your beloved spouse again? The one with whom you spent the better part of your life on earth is not going to be with you in heaven! Does it not grieve you to know that the one closest to you on earth has gone to a Christless eternity? Or if the Lord should return, how would you feel as you go up into heaven to leave your loved one behind (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)? The one who walked with you on earth cannot walk with you in heaven because you are of two different kingdoms and realms. Is this your desire? Are the bleak prospects worth it?

Who will look after the children's spiritual welfare if the believing spouse is gone? Can you expect the surviving non-Christian partner to raise children the Christian way and the godly way?

### **Sad Example of Lot**

Do not end up like Lot in the Bible. Lot most likely married a non-Christian girl from Sodom or

Gomorrah. Lot was described as “just” [or righteous] (2 Peter 2:7) but nothing spiritual was said about his wife. When they had to leave Sodom, the unbelieving wife looked back and was turned into a “pillar of salt” (Genesis 19:26, Luke 17:32). Lot lost his wife, children, wealth, home and friends except for two daughters who were so corrupt in their morals that they committed incest with their father (Genesis 19). Lot paid a heavy price for marrying a non-believer.

### **Do Not Kid Yourself**

Occasionally, we hear of someone who married a non-Christian who was later converted and became a wonderful Christian and useful for God. These stories are few and far between. Do not use these examples as your hope. Marrying a non-Christian is clearly against God’s Word (2 Corinthians 6:14). Better obey God’s clear command to marry only in the Lord and not take risks by marrying outside your faith.

Do not kid yourself and say that you had no choice but to marry a non-Christian, because all the “good ones” in the Church were already taken.

Do not deceive yourself that marrying a non-Christian is a “method of evangelism”.

I knew a Christian girl who married a non-Christian man “just to prove God’s Word is wrong”. She lives to regret it today – he has abandoned her and the baby!

### **Christ Makes the Difference**

**Marry only within God’s clear command.** Your spouse should be a committed Christian who shares your faith and convictions and who loves the same Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Blessed is the couple who wants to please God and prove God’s faithfulness by setting up a truly Christian home based on Christian principles. They want to raise “godly seed” (Malachi 2:15) for God’s Kingdom. They commit their lives to the Lord and to each other with confidence. They seek God’s Will for their future and pray regarding the birth of their children. They bring the children to Church and Sunday school and teach them from an early age to trust God. How wonderful for the children from young to know Jesus Christ as

Saviour and Lord and have hope in Heaven! What wonderful prospects to know that the whole family will be united for time and eternity. There is no fear of separation because in Christ there is always hope. The family shares the same faith, same standards and same zeal for the Lord and the same spiritual destiny. Surely the Lord would bless a family who seeks to obey Him.

Finally, dearly beloved Christian, the choice is yours. My advice and appeal to you is to keep God’s Word. God’s command in 2 Corinthians 6:14 is very specific and clear. God’s warning in Deuteronomy 7:1-4 is also clear. Our policy on marriage must be to uphold the Word of God. The sad experiences of Christians who have married non-believing spouses bear out the truth of God’s Word. Indeed, many who have married non-Christians have dropped out of Church. There are serious consequences now and in eternity for not obeying God’s command regarding marriage.

My best advice: ***Marry only in the Lord; Do not marry outside the Lord!***

(This article does not apply to those who were married as non-Christians and later, were converted. This article is addressed to a Christian hoping to, planning to, on the verge of marrying a non-Christian. I am also not discriminating between male or female, young or old Christians. All are equally temptable and susceptible. Do not say it cannot happen to me.)

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# Drawing Close to God

*Cheong Chin Meng*

**“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you...” James 4:8**

Christian life can never remain static. We are under constant bombardment to compromise our Christian values. Unless we keep up with our daily appointment with the Lord, we are in danger of backsliding.

If we desire spiritual health and growth, then it is definitely necessary for us to draw nigh to the Lord in prayer and in the study of God’s Word of Life. It is daily drawing nigh. Sundays-only spirituality is definitely not enough.

As we cannot survive through the week on one meal only, neither can we spiritually survive if we miss our weekday spiritual meals. We have to learn to “feed” ourselves daily to stay strong and useful for the Lord. Have you drawn nigh to God daily? In Him is our source of strength and guidance.

## **No Time for Quiet Time?**

Many of you may be busy day in and out with your jobs, children, studies, etc. But surely there is also time for Quiet Time? It may be of 15 minutes duration, or 30 minutes, or 1 hour or 2 hours, or several short frames of time throughout the day. If you prefer, you may like to follow the Psalmist who lifted up his heart and mind morning, noon and evening.

The most important thing in life is to be regular and earnest in seeking God. We must believe its importance to our lives. God’s Word affirms this fact. All godly Christians will also testify that it is essential.

No time for God? Perhaps, it’s more a matter of priorities. Everybody will make time to see a doctor when he is sick. If the things of God are important to us,

we will make time for it. I hope you will believe that Quiet Time is important.

It is also God’s Will that we use our time wisely. We are also to redeem time (Ephesians 5:16). We have only one life to live, then let us use it for the glory of God.

Daily, there may be small segments of time that we can appropriate to turn our hearts and minds heavenward. It may be during your journey to your workplaces, schools, or breaktime. Cultivate a prayerful spirit during the day. It helps us realise that God is near.

## **No Mood for Quiet Time?**

If we do things according to our moods or feelings, then many things in our lives would have been left undone. When we are moody or saddened by some happenings, I suggest we put up a ‘Please do not disturb’ sign and then enter into our “prayer-closet”. It is there that we may be restored, experiencing once again the inward peace and gladness of heart.

Secondly, beware of worldliness that makes dull our spiritual sensitivity. When worldly pursuits and activities increase, you can be sure one’s “appetite” for God’s Word will plunge. As we are living in this world, we are constantly faced with choices. Do not think that our little participation in some worldly activities once in a while is not harmful. It is! It is like the hairline crack that may open up to greater compromises. We have to decide: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

## **No Discipline for Quiet Time?**

This is a problem that all of us face. Sometimes, our desires and achievements do not meet because of this reason - lack of discipline.

Sleepiness and wandering thoughts - these are two chief problems during Quiet Time. Perhaps, taking some practical steps may help. For example, I find it helpful to have a prayer list so that my thoughts will not wander. Many times during prayer time, my mind wandered off thinking of other things. This is wasted time and ineffective prayer. Thus, I have to constantly remedy this.

Secondly, praying aloud (loud enough for oneself to hear his/her own voice) helps us to focus on what we are praying.

Another practical step is to have the right body posture. Some prefer to kneel while praying, others sitting, or standing or even walking to and fro. Let each decide what is best for himself. But the choice should be one that you can be alert and able to concentrate during your prayer time and Bible study.

May our lives be much enriched through our constant drawing nigh to the Lord, who alone is the source of our strength and help.

Rev. Cheong Chin Meng is the pastor of Gospel Light Bible-Presbyterian Church.

# Assurance of God's Love

*Mah Chin Kwang*

Many of us have faced difficulties and trials of one kind or another. While in the midst of them, we might have questioned the Lord, "Why Lord? Is it punishment for some wrong I have done? Or are you testing me to refine me?" And how do people cope with these trials? The unsaved ones may try various ways to divert their minds from problems. Some would perhaps go to the karaoke lounge to sing away their problems, while others drown them with the bottle or go to some exotic places, far away from the people and places that remind them of these pains.

How did you cope with your problems? Perhaps, you found comfort in the encouraging words of older Christians or in books written by godly writers. The best and time-tested way is to turn to the Word of God. The Bible, with all the books fitting together like a gigantic jigsaw puzzle, describes God's grace and love as He reaches out to man - His creature who has turned against Him. Every portion of Scripture should give us comfort as we read and meditate upon it.

In my mind, one particular passage stands out as a priceless gem among the countless jewels in the treasure chest. The book of Romans was written by one who experienced much pain. Paul was credible, not only because he was an apostle who wrote through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but also because he had the personal experience. I would recommend all who are facing difficulties, trials or pains to read Romans 8:31-39. In a series of rapid questions and firm assertions, Paul steers the questioning Christian back to the haven of God's love. The suffering Christian thus accepts his lot with joy as he is reassured of God's unfailing love.

Many truths can be drawn from this passage. It would do us good to be familiar with these truths and be fully convicted by them. The following 8 truths gleaned from Romans 8:31-39 declare God's steadfast love toward us even when trials plague us:

1. When God is for us, no one can be against us (8:31)
2. God will freely give us all things, as He did in not sparing His own Son for us (8:32)
3. We, as God's elect have been justified by His righteousness, and will never be condemned (8:33)
4. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again is sitting at the right hand of God, interceding for us (8:34)
5. Nothing (not tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword) will separate us from the love of Christ (8:35)
6. In fulfilment of scriptural prediction that believers will have troubles, we suffer (8:36)
7. We are more than conquerors over our problems through Christ, who loved us (8:37)
8. Nothing (not even death, life, spiritual beings, present or future things, heights or depths, any creature) can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:38-39)

How wonderful these words of assurance are! They can comfort us in the most trying circumstances. May these encouraging words of Paul help to remind and convince us of God's unwavering love when we meet with difficulties and trials in our daily living. As we bear them with joy and forbearance, may we bring Him honour and glory.

Eld. Mah Chin Kwang is an elder of  
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church.

# Hospital Visits

*Khoo Peng Kiat*

Visits to hospitals are part and parcel of life. At some time or other we may be called upon to visit the sick and many a time we are at a loss as regards the what, why and how of communicating with the sick. Before we make a hospital visit, it is good to have some knowledge of the hospital setting – its environment and hierarchy.

The modern hospital is a highly-complex hierarchical system. Its organisation has a line of authority, rules, regulations and policies that are necessary for its smooth running. Each hospital has its own philosophy concerning its purpose in the delivery of health care.

If we seek co-operation from the ward staff, we must show that we have a definite role to play and a definite contribution to make in order to gain their co-operation. If we leave a patient physically and spiritually comforted after our hospital ministry, there is no doubt that the ward staff will be appreciative of our visits and we will be taken as partners in the care of the sick.

Hospital visits can be a source of comfort and cheer if we always look to the Lord in prayer before making a hospital visit because He knows the needs of those who are going through trial and sickness. He can provide us with words of comfort. Our ministry should always be to comfort. In the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, “The God of all comfort; who comforteth us...that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

Here are some guidelines regarding hospital visits:

- Always make your visit short and sweet. We will be much appreciated by the sick if we use economy of words because we tend to talk too much. This can be quite exhausting for the sick. Short frequent visits are preferable to long visits.
- Try not to have more than two visitors at a time at the bedside especially in the Intensive Care ward in accordance with hospital regulations.



- Always speak in a soft and sympathetic tone when visiting the sick. Put on meekness and gentleness on such an occasion.
- Always seek the permission of the ward staff before seeing the sick because they are in a position to tell whether the patient is in a condition to receive us. Sometimes the patient may be going through a procedure or being examined by a doctor or receiving some private ministrations, etc and so will not be in a position to receive us. Find out from the staff how long it will take.
- It is important to listen with sensitivity the thoughts and feelings expressed by the patient and respond to them in an acceptable or supportive way. Repeating the feelings expressed by the patient to let him know that he has been heard.
- It is best to leave medical advice to the attending doctors. Should such advice be sought, about which we are not knowledgeable, it is important to admit “I don’t know” rather than provide wrong information. It has been said that no information is better than misinformation.
- If you are unwell, please avoid visiting the sick because you may infect the patient whose resistance is already low.
- In hospital ministry, it is important to realise that we must make ourselves available at the patient’s request as far as possible. It is important in a ministering relationship.

Eld. Khoo Peng Kiat, a retired nursing officer, is an elder of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church. He serves the Lord as an itinerant preacher to Bible-Presbyterian missions in Australia, Canada and London.

# LOVE FOR THY WORD

Chords: Eb, Bb, Ab, Bb, Eb

Love for Thy Word, O Lord, Love for Thy - Word,  
 Love for Thy Word, O Lord, Love for Thy - Word,  
 Love for Thy Word, O Lord, Love for Thy - Word,

Chords: Cm, Fm, F, Bb

Thine own dear breath, O Lord, With - in Thy Word!  
 Life giv - ing streams af - ford, From all Thy Word!  
 Make my soul cleave, O Lord, Un - to Thy Word

Chords: Gm, Cm, Ab, Bb

Fill me with zeal to find In each and ev - ry line  
 Let all Thy glo - ry shine Forth, from Thy Book Di - vine  
 Give to my heart this day This bles - sed - ness, I pray

Chords: Gm, Cm, Ab, Bb, Eb

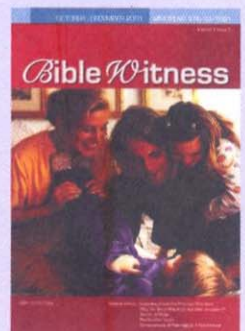
Ric - hes of truth so fine: Gems from Thy Word!  
 In - to this heart of mine Life from Thy Word!  
 Both to hear and o - bey All of Thy Word!

Words: Charles Seet  
 Music: Daniel Chia

## Bible Witness

- A magazine for the nurture of individual spiritual life
- A magazine for every Christian home
- A magazine for Bible study groups

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Next issue : Family