

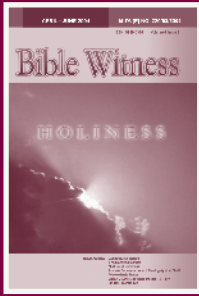
Bible Witness

HOLINESS



Inside Articles:

- Call to Sanctification
- The Road to Holiness
- Nurture of Godliness
- Are We Concerned About Sinning Against God?
- Prevention is Better
- Can A Loving God Send People To Hell?
- Do Not Tolerate Sin



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Publisher

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Singapore

Printer

Stamford Press Pte Ltd

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SUBSCRIPTIONS INFORMATION

1 year subscription (6 issues)

All rates inclusive of postage

Singapore: S\$14.00

International

***Surface Mail: S\$16.00**

***Air Mail: S\$24.00 (Asia)**

S\$30.00 (All Other Countries)

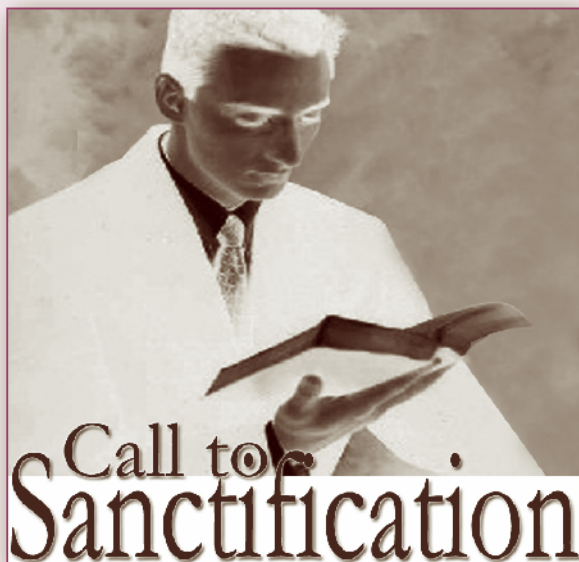
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George Skariah

Believers live in a depraved world, and are constantly in danger of being enticed by sin. How do we face the challenge? We have been chosen and called to sanctification. It is God's will for us (1 Thessalonians 4:3). For the rest of our lives, we should no longer live by our own wishes and passions, but by the will of God (1 Peter 4:2).

In the Bible, the concept of holiness is of paramount importance. It begins with God's holiness. God's holiness signifies His unblemished righteousness as well as His singular and radiant majesty. The Holy God cannot have communion with unholy men. Sinful men can only approach God if they have been sanctified, i.e., made to correspond to His holiness (Leviticus 19:2).

In the Old Testament, the term "sanctification" connotes both cleansing and consecration. It applies both to the ritual (e.g., for the Temple practices, Exodus 19:22) and moral (e.g., cleansing of the hearts, Leviticus 20:7-8; Psalm 51:16ff) sphere. In the New Testament, the emphasis on sanctification is more on the moral sphere. Jesus confronted the Pharisees and Scribes over their rules of purification and said, "For out

of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" (Matthew 15:19-20). Similarly, the apostles hold that people must be sanctified by a cleansing of the heart (Acts 15:9) and conscience (Hebrews 9:14) as well as actively living out sanctification in moral conduct (1 Peter 1:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:1ff). Paul appropriates the technical language of ritual for the spiritual consecration of man to God and His service (Romans 15:16; Colossians 1:28); for him, sanctification is the moral equivalent to sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). In summary, sanctification is the act or process by which people or things are cleansed and dedicated to God, ritually and morally.

Three Phases of Sanctification

Positional Sanctification: Our sanctification is understood first as a saving event in the past in which believers were sanctified 'once and for all' (Hebrews 10:29, looking to the cross of Christ; and 1 Corinthians 6:11, looking into the baptism). It takes place instantaneously at salvation. Therefore, we are addressed as the sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 20:32; 26:18; Romans 15:16).

Progressive Sanctification: Sanctification is also seen as an ongoing work of God in the lives of His children (1 Thessalonians 5:23). In John 17:17, in our Lord's high-priestly prayer for His disciples, He prayed for the practical or experiential side of sanctification: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Although the Lord had been ministering to His disciples for three years, and 11 of them had indeed already been sanctified (positionally) by grace through faith in Him, He still prayed for their sanctification through the application of the Word of God in their lives. Through progressive sanctification, we conform

more and more to His image in holiness with each day.

Perfected Sanctification: This is to be realised in the future, when we shall see Him face to face. There will be no more sin in thought, word, or deed—and no “old man” to make us even want a shred of that old, shoddy condition. John says in 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

God’s Role in Sanctification

The sanctification of believers is seen primarily as the work of God (John 10:36), of Christ (John 17:19; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 2:11; 10:10, 14; 13:12) and especially of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; and 1 Corinthians 6:11). It is not merely in regeneration that we depend on God’s grace, but all our Christian life is dependent on God extending grace to us continually. God has made provision for forgiveness by means of confession of our sins. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The Indwelling and Sealing of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Romans 8:9). He never leaves us. Moment by moment, He resides within us. He seals every believer for eternity (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). God’s seal can never be broken. Once we are saved, we are saved forever. This eternal security generates within the believers a sense of gratitude. Gratitude is a powerful motivation for us to pursue holiness.

Praying for us: The believers must have the comfort and confidence that both the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ pray for us regularly. “The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the

Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26). “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

Empowering us: God empowers every believer to obey Him. No believer can legitimately claim that he is unable to live a holy life. Peter says, “His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). This does not, of course, guarantee that we will live godly lives. Rather, it guarantees that we can. Whether we do or not depends on the extent to which we give “all diligence” to godliness (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Directing us: God has not left us without direction. He has given us clear direction as to what we should and should not do to please Him. God directs us through His written Word. Paul says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Chastening us: When God’s children depart from the way, He confronts and disciplines them. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, “My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” God does this in various ways: (1) By convicting us of sin: God causes us to feel guilty as He makes clear to us what we have done (Ephesians 5:8-14). God does it through His Word, or even at times through a human mediator (e.g., in David’s case, prophet Nathan). (2) By sending us temporal difficulties: Whenever the nation Israel fell into idolatry and rebellion against the Lord, she experienced God’s chastening (Leviticus 26:14-39).

Believers' Responsibilities in Sanctification

We have seen from the Scripture that the ongoing sanctification in the life of believers is the work of God. At the same time we should also understand that man has an active role to play in the present sanctification. This is the balanced view on the doctrine of sanctification. The role of man is just as clear in the Bible as the role of God. In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul says, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." In John 14:15, the Lord Jesus says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." In 1 John 2:28, John says, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

However, what we have to play is not an independent role. Apart from God taking the initiative and giving us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," no growth would take place. The point is that since God has done this, we can respond.

Living a life by faith: Even after our regeneration and positional sanctification, there is a possibility that believers may take their eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to continue to grow as a Christian, we must continue to look to the Saviour, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Paul says in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Counting the cost: Discipleship is costly. One cannot follow the path of obedience without paying a price. We must be willing to give up many things that we have

been cherishing in our lives. It includes anything that we give more attention to than Christ and His Kingdom (Luke 14:26-33). In Romans 12:1, Paul calls, "Ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." He goes on to verse 2 which says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Receiving the Word: Growing in sanctification takes place with the knowledge of God's Word and the obedience to it. The Apostle Peter instructs his readers in 2 Peter 3:17-18, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This knowledge comes through the partaking of God's Word. The Psalmist says in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Conclusion

Believers' sanctification is a process by which we are more and more being consecrated to the Lord in true purity of life and our hearts are formed in obedience to the commandments of God by the work of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is the restoration of the image of God in us. We are called to sanctification. It is part of the purpose of our election and remains the indispensable condition for our communion with God. When God does His work in us, it is our responsibility to respond to Him in holy living and consecration. Since we are living in an unholy world and facing the challenges of secularism, as God's redeemed and set apart children, pursuit of holiness is the only alternative for us to be victorious in our Christian living. ■

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:14-16).

This injunction by the Apostle Peter is given to every truly converted, born-again Christian and not to nominal, i.e., Christians in name. Being bound to their lusts, which the Chinese proverb declares chiefly to be in womanising, gambling, drinking and smoking, how can they live a holy life? As for drinking, it is not Pepsi but whisky, beer and brandy; and smoking refers to opium and today, to all kinds of drugs you can name, not forgetting cigarettes.

Still bound in ignorance, they are going down the road of destruction. They are like those who travel on uncharted footpaths or cart tracks full of potholes and bumps. Used by other unconverted people, the journey becomes even rougher. Their road ends right down into the pit of hell.

But the Road born-again Christians travel is the Road to Holiness. Now, a born-again Christian is a new creature. Paul says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). A born-again Christian is saved to a

holy life and not one who keeps the holy commandments in order to be saved.

The Road he travels is a new road. It is paved by our Saviour Jesus Christ and leads to the City of Heaven. This Road is not like the uncharted footpath or cart track that sinners tread but a solid and strong one founded on the Rock, Jesus Christ Himself.

On the Road to Holiness which leads to heaven, there are Ten Traffic Lights. These are the Ten Commandments. Given in the Old Testament, they are the STOP signs. Briefly stated they are:

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.

THOU SHALT NOT MAKE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE AND BOW DOWN TO IT.

(TAKE NOTE IF YOU ARE A ROMAN CATHOLIC.)

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

(FOR REST AND WORSHIP)

HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER THAT THOU MIGHT HAVE LONG LIFE.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOUR.

THOU SHALT NOT COVET.



In the New Testament, they are the GO signs given under Two Great Commandments, which are “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

The Ten Commandments, whether stated negatively in Ten Commandments by Moses, or positively under Two Great Commandments, loving God and loving men, given by Jesus, are One. Both STOP and GO signs come from the same traffic light.

The Ten Commandments given in the Old Testament in the negative are quite clear, “Thou shalt not, Thou shalt not.” To live a holy life we must not sin against God or man. When we come to the STOP sign, we must stop and not cross it.

Now, we come to the GO signs, the positive side of the commandments. Briefly stated, they are:

- I. WE MUST LOVE GOD IN HIS BEING (Person).*
- II. WE MUST LOVE GOD BY GIVING HIM RIGHT WORSHIP. (No images)*
- III. WE MUST LOVE GOD'S NAME.*
- IV. WE MUST LOVE GOD'S DAY (of rest and worship).*
- V. WE MUST LOVE OUR PARENTS, GOD'S REPRESENTATIVES.*
- VI. WE MUST LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR'S PERSON.*
- VII. WE MUST LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR'S CHASTITY. (We cannot commit adultery with his wife or any woman.)*
- VIII. WE MUST LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR'S PROPERTY.*
- IX. WE MUST LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR'S REPUTATION. (We cannot practise character assassination.)*
- X. WE MUST LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR'S PROSPERITY.*

By following the STOP and GO signs accordingly, we will have a safe and pleasant journey all the way to the City of Heaven.

But we are encumbered with our sinful nature still. We may thus be driven to go against our Traffic Lights. For example, our friend has entrusted us with a sum of money. Under temptation, we spend it all. This is theft according to the VIII Commandment: “Thou shalt not steal.” In civil law, this is criminal breach of trust. We will be jailed for the offence. This brings shame to our Lord and Saviour.

In another case, we may fall into sin against the VII Commandment. Divorces between Christians are quite common nowadays. In so-called Christian America, one out of two marriages ends on the rocks. This brings trouble to the home, especially the children, and shame again to God's Name.

The only solution is repentance and confession to our Lord Jesus Christ. By side-stepping the issues, these culprits go church-hopping. O the burden of unforgiven sin that the guilty parties carry through a miserable life!

The Road to Holiness to the devout is a happy road to travel. Why do we go to Church on Sunday? Because God has called us to worship, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). So we not only remember to keep His day holy in Sabbath rest and worship, but also give thanks for saving us forever. When you miss one Sunday in Church, it is a great loss.

Finally, because it is written, “Be ye holy, for I am holy,” we must make every effort, with God's help, to obey all His holy commandments.

One question is, will you arrive safely there? ■

Nurture of Godliness

An exposition of 2 Peter 1:3-4

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. 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 1:3-4).

The Prospect of Godly Life

Christians struggle daily with temptations and sins that easily beset them. Is it then possible for us to live a godly life? Can we live a life that is holy and pleasing to God? Regardless of our doubts about the possibility of living a godly life, Peter firmly asserts that it is possible to live a godly life because "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

Like Peter, Paul also says that the grace of God given to the believers will urge them on to a godly life. In Titus 2:11-14, Paul teaches us that "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; . . . Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Godliness is possible only because of God's gracious provision for its nurture in us. If we reject what God provides for this purpose, we cannot be godly.

The Power for Godly Life

It is known to us all that, like most of us, Peter also has a story of failure and full restoration to a godly life to tell us. He had tasted the bitterness of failure in the spiritual pursuit. Though he made bold claims about being loyal to Christ, when the time of testing came, he denied his Master three times. However, he had been changed by the divine power of the Lord. As he repented, he received the power of the Lord to be a loyal minister of God's truth. And now he declares to believers who have been struggling with temptations, failures and disappointments that godliness or true piety is possible through the power of God. His message for all of us is that we should stop self-pitying and doubting, but start thinking about the provision of the unmatched divine power. That's why he assured us that it is "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

Now read how Paul's pen writes about the greatness

of the divine power made available and the results of it in our lives (emphasis is added):

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:10-13).

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is

his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:19-23).

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; . . . Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:16-21).

The Perspective of Godly Life

". . . through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3b).

To be godly, we can have no other perspective about our life than that which Christ's life would grant us. Without a thorough and intimate knowledge of Christ, none can lead a godly life. To be godly, we need to follow our Master. Whatever He counts as glorious and virtuous, we must strive to attain. Then we shall inherit the glory and virtues of the Son of God. In short, a godly person is one who is preoccupied with the glory and holy virtues of Jesus Christ.

Paul's life illustrates this – "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20-21; cf. 3:7-10).

The Promises for Godly Life

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4a).

In order to help us to stay the course, the Lord has given us many promises. These promises are unmistakable assurances, because God will always keep His word. They are better than silver and gold, which are perishable. God's promises are never affected by circumstances. As God is unchanging, His promises are also

unchanging. So their value is indescribable, indeed "great and precious."

His promises help us to overcome temptations and trials, and walking in ungodly ways. Trials will normally compel us to reject godly ways. But when we think of the great and precious promises of God, we realise that if we patiently wait on the Lord, He will help us to overcome them. This helps us not to forsake godly ways.

Peter leaves us to wonder at the blessedness of men who live by God's promises by pointing to the promises they inherit as "exceeding great and precious promises." Their blessedness is as great as the value of the promises they inherit from God.

No wonder Paul urged, "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" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

The Purpose of Godly Life

"... that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4b).

The ultimate purpose of living a godly life is that we may be partakers of the divine nature, and thus overcoming the corruption of the world and lust. The pursuit of godliness purges a man from uncleanness of this world and fleshly lust. A carnal lifestyle must be a thing of the past for a person who pursues godliness. "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3).

Divine nature and worldliness cannot co-exist. Thus the grip of lust and worldliness decreases steadily in the life of a godly person. At the end, we shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). ■

"A holy life will produce the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns; they only shine."

Dwight L. Moody

Are We Concerned About Sinning Against God?

Tan Kian Sing

**“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts”
(Psalm 139:23).**

David was much concerned about sinning against God that he earnestly pleaded with the Lord repeatedly to search his heart and his thoughts to see if he had some wicked way in him. It was not just some obvious sin that he had committed but he was conscious of some hidden sin which he might have harboured in his heart and mind. And so he cried before the thrice Holy God to try him till he knew what sin he had in his inner being so that he could confess, repent and be blameless to walk in God’s everlasting way once more.

Are we concerned that we may be living in some way of sin? David was, and he made utterly sure that he settled whatever sin he had with the Lord by asking Him to check on him. We should follow the example of David to seek the Lord in prayer and ask Him to search us if we have violated His commandments. One thing that we must know of ourselves is whether we are living in some sinful way which we must quickly repent, that we might walk right with God again.

When we were unregenerated, sin did not bother us. We could go on sinning without feeling guilty whatsoever. We did not care if we had wronged God for that was our nature. We were bent on sinning, under the power and dominion of sin, sold under sin, being servants of the Devil. But now that we are born again into God’s holy

family, do we become more conscious of sin? Have we noted that we feel guilty at the slightest yielding to the lust of the flesh and of the eyes? We ought to be concerned if we are entertaining ourselves with gratification of some lustful action or thought. Is there less pride in our hearts? We need to humble ourselves before the Almighty. Are we concerned if we reject or do not fulfil our duty before the Lord in humble service to Him as He requires of us? Is sin mortified in us? Are we becoming more holy like Christ? Do we care if we have been offensive and displeasing to our dear Lord and Saviour by our words and actions?

The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:5 exhorts believers, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” A reprobate will not care to examine himself for he has not Christ in him. We who have received the Lord Jesus Christ must constantly examine, prove and know ourselves if we have indeed the faith of the Lord in us. The Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:10 also exhorts the same, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

Are we certain that we are children of the Almighty? It is not enough to think that we are godly because we read the Bible, attend prayer and fellowship meetings, and go to church on the Lord’s Day. We must be sure of the foundation of our

salvation. Are we anchored safely in Christ Jesus? Do we have a true faith in the Lord? Without faith it is impossible to please God. Do we live our lives acceptable and well-pleasing to God? Does sin easily prick our conscience? Yes, although the sin nature is still in us, we should be sinning less and less with the help of the Holy Spirit as He sanctifies us in our close walk with God and through His preserved, precious and perfect law. He is always convicting us of our sin each time we sin against the Almighty. How do we respond to the reproving of the Spirit of God? Do we harden our hearts against it and choose to carry on with our sinful ways?

If there be anyone who professes to be a believer but is still living in sin, let the words of the Holy Spirit breathe through the Apostle John who admonished us, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot

sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 John 3:1-10). A born-again Christian does not live his life in sin. He may fall into sin, but he does not practise sin. He may fall into sin occasionally due to the weakness of the flesh, but though he falls, he is not utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with His hand. He will be picked up quickly and continue to walk in righteousness in the Lord. He will quickly confess his sin before God knowing that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Sin is not the work and business of his life. He is a son and servant of the God of all righteousness, and the thoughts of his heart are no more continually evil like before when he was a servant of Satan.

We ought to be concerned if we are indeed sons of God and long always to be faithful children who love our Father in heaven. The last thing we will want to do is to dishonour His holy name by living in a sinful way. We ought to highly regard God's holy name, to walk in every way in obedience to His law, to live justly and in holiness, to scrutinise our ways that they be not evil, to give due diligence in making amends, and to live in great care as sons of God.

Brethren, are we concerned if we have not put away sinning completely? Let us be put under the spiritual microscope of the Almighty and be subject to His scrutiny daily. We take our temperatures daily to check if we are infected by the Sars virus. Should we not check our spiritual temperatures daily to see if we are carrying sin in our hearts and minds? It must be our grave concern if we do not do so. ■

There is nothing better than prevention, when it comes to sexual sins. If sexual sins occur, there can be severe consequences of various kinds. Most certainly, God will forgive those who repent of such sins. Nonetheless, the consequences of such an action can linger on for a long time. So the best is prevention.

One of the sad things about those who commit sexual sins is that they often live in serious denial about their sin. They believe that they will never get caught and somehow, life will continue to move toward a happily-ever-after ending.

But let us take heed to the old saying, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (cf. Numbers 32:23).

The Scripture Prescribes Prevention

Our attitude toward the Scriptural admonitions and counsels should not be, "When all else fail, read instructions." Many

often try to assemble or operate things that they buy, even without taking a look at the manufacturer's instruction manual. They only refer to it, when they are in trouble. If we take such an attitude toward the biblical instructions

will certainly realise that nowhere does He counsel us to try it once and then think of how to get out of it. On the contrary, the Scripture repeatedly warns us not to engage in any sexual conduct outside marriage. It calls for total abstinence from sexual

activities outside marriage.

"Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (1Corinthians 6:13).

"Flee fornication" (1Corinthians 6:18).

"Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22).

"But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and

from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20).

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Ephesians 5:3).

"Mortify therefore your members which



given to us by our Great Creator, we will not be able to prevent many tragic and disastrous events. This is especially so with regard to sexual sins.

If you have carefully read the Scripture to find out what God says about sexual sins, you

are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1Thessalonians 4:3).

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

"For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3).

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; cf. Galatians 5:19-21).

The Scripture's clear message to the unmarried is "Wait, till you get married;" and to the married, "Don't - with anyone other than your spouse."

The Scriptural Reasons for Prevention

Sexual sins distort the purpose of God concerning Christians' bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:13-14 says, "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power."

Believers' bodies, according to God's design and purposes, are not just for biological functions. It is also for the Lord (cf. v.13). Verse 14 reminds us that our bodies are not only for the service of the Lord in this world, but also for heaven to come. God will raise our bodies one day as glorified or heavenly bodies to serve Him for ever and ever in that sinless world. Since our bodies are for the Lord forever, we must not pervert its purpose by polluting it with sexual sins.

Sexual sins desecrate the spiritual body of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 6:15-17 records, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall

I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

Believers' bodies are not only for the Lord's service, but are also parts of His own body. Romans 12:5 says, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ." So for Christians to commit sexual sins is to use a part of Christ's body to commit immorality. Because sexual relationship involves a union, the Christian who commits adultery or fornication joins Christ's members with the members of a harlot. What an abomination to corrupt the Lord's holiness by association!

Sexual sins damage Christians' bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:18 warns, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Paul is saying that sexual sin is more destructive to the body than any other sin. From the experiences of many, we know that sexual immorality not only brings horrendous diseases, but also can drive one to suicide.

Sexual sins desecrate the temple of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 admonishes, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The bodies of Christians have been made the temple of the Spirit. He rejoices in indwelling and sanctifying our bodies to be a glorious temple for Him. But sexual sin will rather desecrate the bodies that are consecrated. Sexual sins are, in other words, sacrilegious.

The Scriptural Advice for Prevention

Refrain from flirtatious comments and gestures:

Godly wisdom advises us to "deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead" (Proverbs 2:16-18; cf. Proverbs 7:5, 21).

"To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart;

neither let her take thee with her eyelids" (Proverbs 6:24-25).

Guard your eyes and

ways: The Scripture warns us in Proverbs 7:6-21 by describing how an unrestrained man sinks deep into sexual immorality. This description is given that we may avoid such events. "For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: and, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved

works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: he hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him."

Avoid places of temptation. During courtship, young couples must not be alone in quiet places that they may be tempted to sin. Married people must be deliberate in not developing close or intimate friendships with people of opposite sex.

Remind yourself of the severe consequences:

The Scripture warns us in Proverbs 7:22-23 of the serious consequences of sexual sins. "He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." Do not forget also that the Scripture warns the unrepentant of eternal judgment. ■

"The neglect of prayer is a grand hindrance to holiness."

John Wesley

Introduction

The biblical doctrine of hell is under attack today. The troubling thing about this renewed attack on what God says about hell is that it is not coming from liberals or modernists—those who deny Christ, but those who claim to be evangelicals. For instance, Clark Pinnock of McMaster Divinity College in Canada says, “Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine. ... How can

Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely, a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God.”

What blasphemy! Pinnock denies the existence of hell, and advocates annihilation for the finally impenitent. There is a tendency for annihilationists to become inclusivists. At the Evangelical Theological Society meeting in Boston in 1999, Pinnock argued that Jesus is not the only way to heaven. A person can get to heaven without knowing Christ. What does the Bible say? “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). That name of course is JESUS.



Jeffrey

Another example is Billy Graham who takes the fire out of hell. To the question “What is hell?” Graham answers, “The only thing I could say for sure is that hell means separation from God. ... That is going to be hell. When it comes to a literal fire, I don’t preach it because I’m not sure about it.” Unbelievers are already at present separated from God. Are they going through hell right now? Some of them may be enjoying the earthly pleasures of life right now. Hell is surely not simply a separation from God. It is more than that; it is a literal place of torment and suffering. But Graham says he, like most people, has “a hard time believing God is going to allow people to burn in literal fire forever.” What does the Bible say? Make no mistake about it; the Bible tells us that hell is a place of punishment “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44,



Khoo

46, 48). In Luke 16, the rich man in hell said, “I am tormented in this flame.”

The question is raised: Can a loving God send people to hell? Those who deny the existence of hell, or eternal punishment in hell for those who reject Christ do so based on these two main assumptions: (1) People are generally good, and deserve better. And (2) God is all love, and only love. Let us examine these assumptions one by one in the light of the Bible. The Bible is God’s Perfect Word—our sole and supreme authority of faith and practice. It is not what man says, but what the Bible says that counts.

1. Are people generally good, and so ought not to be punished forever in hell?

Well, God says that if we think that we

are generally quite decent and upright people, we deceive ourselves. 1 John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” We may see ourselves to be good and decent people, but how does God see us? Genesis 6:5 says, “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” In Jeremiah 17:9, God says this about our hearts,

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” What is the conclusion of the matter? God says, “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one, there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10-12, 23).

But some of us here may say, “I am not so bad. I am a good citizen. I am not a criminal. I am not a thief or a murderer or an adulterer. Surely I do not deserve hell.” What is God’s reply? Jesus in Matthew 5:22 says, “But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (i.e., Idiot), shall be

in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool (lit, Moron), shall be in danger of hell fire.” In verses 27-28, Jesus continues, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” How many of the Ten Commandments have we broken already? The Apostle James tells us that when we break one, we break all (James 2:10).

But some may argue, “But I have done a lot of good works to help people. Don’t they count for anything?” God says in Isaiah 64:6, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” All our seemingly good deeds are “as filthy rags” to God. Our good works are rubbish to God because we are in the first place not right with Him. God sees our hearts, and He knows the selfish motives behind our display of righteousness or goodness. Man cannot see it, but God sees right through us. Furthermore, God says, no amount of good works we do can save us. Good works do not save. Only Jesus saves.

The Bible says that all of us are born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and bent on sinning. What is the penalty of sin? “The wages of sin is death.” It is eternal punishment in the lake of fire. It is known in the world that “crime does not pay.” “If you do the crime, you do the time.” The most serious crimes like murder bring capital punishment, i.e., the death sentence. If we as human beings send criminals to jail or to death depending on the severity of the crimes they have committed, and yet do not see ourselves as being unloving or unkind for doing so, why do we accuse the thrice holy God of being unloving or unkind for punishing those who break His laws in hell? To accuse God of cruelty for sending sinners and law-breakers to

hell is not only fallacious, but malicious. If we can punish criminals, why can’t God? This leads us to our second point.

2. Is God only love, and no justice?

Of course not! The world has a warped concept of love. Love is all candy and no pain. We are told by so-called experts in child psychology that if you love your child, you would not use the cane to teach right from wrong. What does God say? Listen to the wisest man who ever lived on earth—King Solomon, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Proverbs 13:24).

Solomon received such wisdom on child discipline from God Himself. And do you know why God says, “Use the cane?” Proverbs 23:13-14, “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.” How true this statement is! How many a spoilt son or daughter has ended up being delinquent, in jail, or dead?

God is love, and it is precisely because He loves us that He sent His only begotten Son—the Lord Jesus Christ—to die a most painful and cruel death on the cross to save us from our sins. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Romans 5:8 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus paid the penalty of our sins on the cross to redeem us. He shed His precious blood on the cross so that our sins might be washed away. He died and was buried, but on the third day rose from the dead so that we might have life through His name.

God loves you. Christ died for you. But you know what the problem is? We hate God. Christ says, "Believe in me, and you will be saved." But we tell Him to get lost. To reject Christ is an unforgivable sin. All kinds of sins are forgivable, but the sin of unbelief in rejecting Christ as Lord and Saviour is unpardonable.

God is love but He is also a God who is holy. He is a Saviour, but He is also a Judge. Sin must be punished. And the greatest sin that anyone can commit is to reject Christ. The greatest sin demands the greatest punishment—eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

We end up in hell not because God sends us there, but because we ourselves choose to go there. Contrary to what Pinnock says about God, that He, like Satan, enjoys watching people suffer, the Scriptures tell us in Ezekiel 33:11, "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." In 2 Peter 3:9, we read, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God desires you to live, to enjoy Him, to be in heaven! Hell

indeed is a horrible and terrible place. It is a place of intense darkness inhabited by the devil and his demons. It is a place where tormenting worms do not die, and the fire cannot be extinguished. It is a place of great pain and suffering where people will be weeping and gnashing their teeth. God does not want us to go there. Sometimes I think one reason why God made hell is to shock us into heaven.

The only way out of hell, and into heaven is the way of Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Salvation is today! Don't wait! Believe in Jesus now!

Conclusion

Can a loving God send people to hell? The answer is a definite Yes. He sends people to hell because they deserve it. He is a God who is holy and just, and must punish sin accordingly. Is He then a loving God? Yes, He is indeed for He sent the Lord Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. If we believe in Him, we will be saved. Believe God! Believe the Bible! And if you choose not to believe in God or the Bible, and you end up in hell, don't blame God, blame yourself! ■

"True holiness does not consist merely of believing and feeling, but of doing and bearing, and a practical exhibition of active and passive grace. Our tongues, our tempers, our natural passions and inclinations - our conduct as parents, children, masters and servants, husbands and wives, rulers and subjects - our dress, our employment of time, our behaviour in business, our demeanor in sickness and health, in riches and poverty - all, all these are matters which are fully treated by inspired writers."

J. C. Ryle

Do not tolerate

SIN



This generation of Christians is increasingly tolerant of sin. A lot of believers consider preaching against sin and confronting the sins of believers as unloving, ungracious and harsh. Many churches are reluctant to preach against the sinful behaviour and lifestyle of our modern society because of the fear of people leaving the church.

The people-sensitive, seeker-friendly philosophy of the modern church is doing greater damage to the spirituality of the believers than ever before. Today's churches are more concerned that people feel good than do good. Shame of sin caused by its condemnation is thought of as a greater evil than the tolerance of sin in people's life. As a result, there is a lack of understanding concerning the vileness of sin everywhere.

Sin in our lives must be dealt with. We must have a holy hatred of sin. We must mortify our sins. There must be conscious efforts from the church, as a corporate

body, and also from the individual believer to drive sin away. Every one who handles God's Word for the edification of another must speak against sin. Otherwise, we will be bringing up, in our church, a generation that is blind to sin. There is no greater sin than ignoring or condoning the sins among God's people.

No matter how much shame it may cause us, we must deal with our sins. Didn't Peter fall on his face before the Lord and say, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8)? Didn't David confess his sin of adultery and murder and pray for forgiveness, when he was confronted by the prophet Nathan (Psalm 51)? Paul described himself as chief of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Isaiah, a man who diligently pursued the righteousness of God in a time when the whole nation of Israel was engaged in sins, cried out saying, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). All great saints of the

past felt deeply ashamed of their sins, and continually confessed and repented of them.

True saints are not those who are without sin, but those who deal with their sins according to the grace of God given to them. God's grace that is given to us, sinners, is not at all a licence to sin. On the contrary, it is our strength from above to overcome the guilt and power of sin in us.

Sin is very deceiving and its existence in us constantly causes our spiritual sensitivities to degenerate. Sin's tendency is always to initially make it appear less dangerous. Sins in saints' lives will, firstly, tarnish their chief desire to glorify the Lord through holy living. As soon as our affections are not firmly set on the things of God, our imaginations, thoughts and desires will run wild with all the lust and pleasure of sin which are naturally inherent in us. Minds which rationalise sin as harmless and given to all its vile passions will soon be overpowered by grievous and horrible sins. If this 'chain' of sin's conceit is not broken, we will rush into sin even without any warning from our own conscience.

Sin has this encroaching nature; and if it is tolerated in any way, it will certainly creep into our souls. Thomas Brooks eloquently warns us against the invasion of sin into our souls with its deceiving colourful appearance:

Ah, souls! When you shall lie upon a dying bed, and stand before a judgment seat, sin shall be unmasked, and its dress and robes shall then be taken off, then it shall appear more vile, filthy, terrible than hell itself; then, that which formerly appeared most sweet will appear most bitter, and that which appeared most beautiful will appear most ugly, and that which appeared most delightful will then appear most dreadful to the soul. Ah, the shame, the pain, the gall, the bitterness, the horror, the hell that the sight of sin, when its dress is taken off, will raise in poor souls! Sin will surely prove evil and bitter to the soul when its robes are taken off. . . . Till we have sinned, Satan is a parasite: when we have sinned, he is a tyrant. (Thomas Brooks, Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices, (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984 (reprint), 35-36).

So, all Christians must put to death their sinful habits (Romans 8:13). Certainly, we cannot eradicate sin totally from our lives. Sin will remain as the greatest problem of the saints of Jesus Christ till they reach the side of the glory land, where there is no sin. Until then, the sinning saint ought to tremble before the Most High and Holy God for having offended His holiness, abused His grace, and dishonoured His glory. In order to weaken the power and vigour of sin in us, we must walk prayerfully according to the guidelines in His Word. This is our sanctification. ■

“He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world. Unless this is seen, nothing is seen that is worth seeing; for there is no other true excellence or beauty.”

Jonathan Edwards

Genesis 1 & 2

Questions

True ☒ False

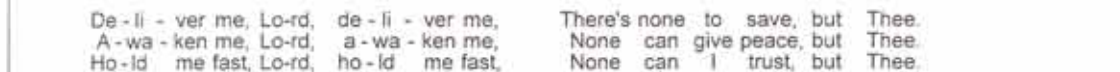
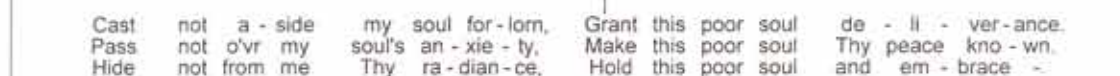
- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. On the first day of creation the earth was spherical in shape. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The Spirit of God was seen at work on the first day of creation. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. God created light and divided it from darkness on the first day. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. On the second day, God created a firmament to divide the waters that covered the earth. Then there was water above and below the firmament. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. On the third day, God moved the water that covered the earth to one place that the dry land may appear. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. On the fourth day, God created great light to rule the day, and lesser light to rule the night. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. God created the sun, moon and stars for sign, for season and for days and years. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. God created the birds before sea creatures. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. On the sixth day, God created animals and man. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. God made man in His own image. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Only on two days of the creation week did God assert concerning His creation that "it was good." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. God sent rain frequently to wet the ground that herbs and plants may grow. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. God commanded the man that he could eat from every tree of the Garden of Eden, even of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Whatsoever Eve called every living Creature, that was the name thereof. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Match the following

(DIFFERENT ITEMS IN THE **LEFT** COLUMN MAY REFER TO ONE OR THE SAME ITEM IN THE **RIGHT** COLUMN)

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Day and night | <input type="checkbox"/> First day |
| 2. Man | <input type="checkbox"/> A living soul |
| 3. The day God sanctified | <input type="checkbox"/> Seventh day |
| 4. Every thing he had made | <input type="checkbox"/> Very good |
| 5. God formed man | <input type="checkbox"/> Of the dust of the ground |
| 6. God formed woman | <input type="checkbox"/> From man |
| 7. One river | <input type="checkbox"/> Out of Eden |
| 8. Pison | <input type="checkbox"/> Havilah |
| 9. Gold | <input type="checkbox"/> Gihon |
| 10. Ethiopia | <input type="checkbox"/> East of Assyria |
| 11. Hiddekel | <input type="checkbox"/> Euphrates |
| 12. Fourth river | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree of the knowledge of good and evil |
| 13. Thou shalt not eat of | |
| 14. Adam called his wife | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman |
| 15. Woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Because she was taken out of man |

Forgive Me & Restore Me



Lyrics & Music: Prabhudas Koshy
Music arrangement: Angeline Wong