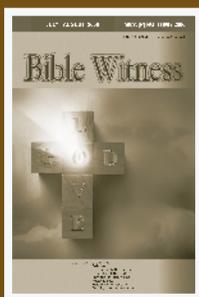


Bible Witness



Articles Inside: God is Love
Self-Love
Love God with All Your Heart
O How Love I Thy Law!
Speaking the Truth in Love
Restoring Love
Bible Trivia - Genesis 22
Enduring through Humiliation



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God is Love

Prabhudas Koshy

“God is love.” Though short, it is a statement of eternal magnitude and significance. Never was more meaning encapsulated in so few words as in this short sentence – “God is love.” The Apostle John stated this truth twice in his first epistle (cf. 1 John 4:8, 16). The message of this short verse is splashed across the Bible.

Some clarifications are necessary before any further elaboration of this glorious statement is attempted. When John wrote that “God is love”, he was not saying that “love” is the complete revelation of God. In fact, he has already written in the same epistle that “God is light” (1 John 1:5); and that refers to God’s holy nature (cf. John 3:18–21; 1 John 1:5–10). So love is not the only attribute that adequately describes God. God cannot be fully explained by one of His attributes alone. Love is not the only perception we ought to have of Him. Neither was the Apostle John implying that “love is God.” The emphasis of the saying, “God is love”, is that in God alone can one fully view what true love is; and only by His enablement that one can have the power to express true love.

God is Essential Boundless Love

The declaration that “God is love” not only reveals God as a loving God, but also portrays love as natural and essential to His divine glory. All of God’s will and all of His works are draped in His glorious love. In nature and

essence, He is “God of love” (2 Corinthians 13:11).

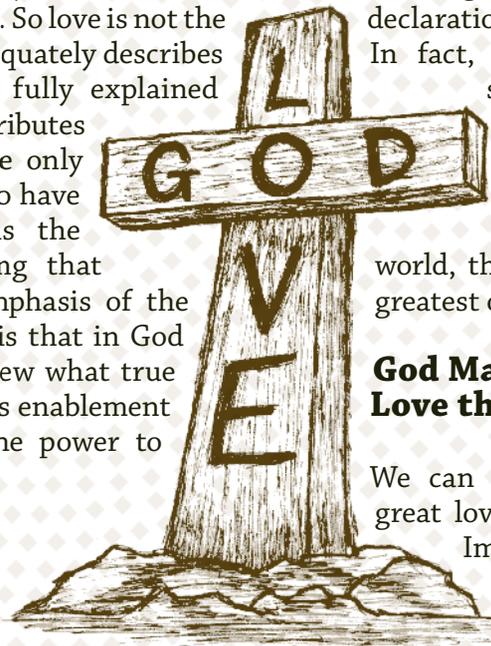
God is perfect, and His love is perfect too. God is unfathomable, and hence His love is beyond our full grasp. But the knowledge that God is full of perfect and infinite love enables us to draw near to Him with full assurance of faith for pardon and redemption.

In this dark world of hatred, sin and sorrows, we have the assurance that a God of infinite love rules over all. Though we may not be able to reconcile all the cruelty and tragedies that occur around us, yet by exercising faith on this marvellous declaration, we can find consolation. In fact, amidst all the sadness, sin, and sorrow, there is abundant evidence that God is love. Among all the manifestations of His love in this dark world, the gift of a Saviour is the greatest of all.

God Manifested His Love through His Son

We can know God, because His great love is manifested unto us. Immediately after making the assertion that “God is love”, the Apostle John wrote, “In this was manifested the love of

God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us,





and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10). God’s love has sent the Son of God to bear all our sins so that we may know Him intimately.

How amazing it is that God should love vile mortals like us. Who can fully comprehend that the eternal God, who is holy, would love ungrateful rebels such as we? What a great mystery and a grand miracle that the divine love would send His only begotten Son into the world for us! If this is not love, what then is love?

John says, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). God’s sending of His Son is so unusual and such an unprecedented expression of love that the Apostle says, “Herein is love”. God loved the world so wonderfully, so amazingly, and so incredibly that He sacrificed His only begotten Son as the ransom for the redemption of sinners. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

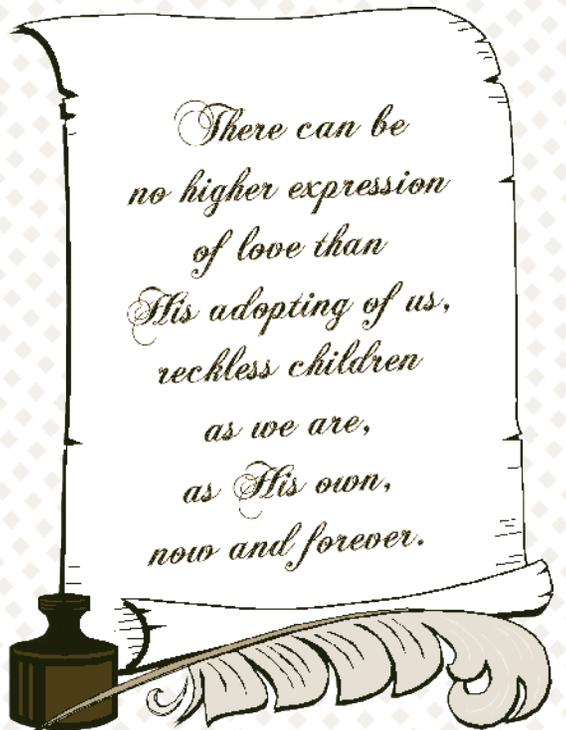
God’s Matchless Love

Being moved by the love of God manifested through Christ, the Apostle John exclaimed, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1a). John encourages us to contemplate the greatness of God’s love. He points us to God’s love as peculiar. It is out-of-this-world kind of love. There is no act of love in this world that can ever be compared to God’s love that received us as His children, though we were once His enemies.

The apostle was so astonished at the greatness of God’s love that he wrote,

“What manner of love”. The Greek words *potapên agape*, used by the apostle, point to both the quantity and quality of God’s love. Its length, breadth, depth and height are beyond description.

How can we ever describe the love of God that allows us to call Him, “Father!” There can be no higher expression of love than His adopting of us, reckless children as we are, as His own, now and forever. There can never be any greater act of love, even from God, than that which He manifested through the sacrifice of His Son so that we may be reconciled to Him as His children. “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” (John 3:16).



He loved us, when we had no love for him. He lovingly came to us, even when we had wandered away from Him. When we lay down in our sin, guilt, and misery, His tender love sought to redeem us. When we were undeserving, ill-deserving, polluted,



and unclean, in love He stooped down to wash us from our sins with His sacred blood. While we were dead in trespasses, His love for us affixed Him on the cross to die that we might live forever through Him. He loved us, the wretched sinful mortals, that we might live in heaven, live with God, and live in eternal glory and blessedness with Him and through Him: O what love has reached us here on earth!

Conclusion

All those who have tasted His love, in receiving the salvation by faith in Christ, must praise Him for His eternal love. When we remember how insignificant we are as creatures, and how ungrateful, rebellious, and vile we have been as sinners, we may well be full of adoration and worship at His love which had adopted us into the holy family of God, so that we may be regarded and treated as the children of the Most High. The love of God that surpasses all finite conception will be the theme of adoring praises from multitudes that no man can number, for ever and ever. Moreover, we should declare His love to

every creature that others may also come to Him and rejoice in His love.

Even in this world of animosity, bitterness, violence and suffering, we have sufficient evidence to prove that He is benevolent. Let us always behold the cross where the love of God shines through the injustice, travesty and violence of human sin. The gruesome experiences of this earth tend to mask our perception that God is love. The full glory and meaning of His infinite love will be fully understood only when we reach heaven. Meantime, let us hold on to the truth that God is love. Let us believe that He sincerely desires our good, and that what seems dark to us may be designed for our welfare; and amidst all the sorrows and disappointments of the present life, let us be rest assured that our interests and our destiny are in the hands of the God of love.

There is none who is infinitely perfect in love as God. O what astonishing goodness and condescension from the Almighty God towards us who believe on His Son. God is love! 🌟

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Self-Love?

Jeffrey Khoo

Does the Bible teach self-love? No, it does not! The Bible teaches not self-love but self-denial. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” But did not Jesus command, “Thou shalt love ... thyself” (Matthew 22:39)? Some might quote Jesus like this, but it is quoting Jesus out of context. Without the words in between “love ... thyself,” the meaning of the text is changed. The whole command reads, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” It is clear in Matthew 22:39 that Jesus was not speaking of loving self before and above others. Note that “neighbour” is mentioned first before “thyself”. The order is significant: others first, not self! This is because by loving others, we love ourselves as well.

Jesus’ command to love one’s neighbour is a positive reaffirmation and restatement of the second half of the Ten Commandments. Commandments VI-X of the Decalogue have to do with our duty towards our fellow men: “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 thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s” (Exodus 20:13-17).

If we think of ourselves first and love ourselves above others, then we would have no qualms taking another person’s life, being unfaithful to our spouse, stealing from others, and so on. Surely, we do not wish for others to do such wicked things to us. As such, we should not think of doing such wicked things to others. Confucius said, “Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you.” These wise words of Confucius are stated in the negative and speak of non-action, but we have the superior and wiser words of Jesus, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

Jesus also taught that loving our neighbour includes loving our enemies. Against the Jewish rabbis who erred by adding hatred into God’s law of love, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy,” Jesus commanded, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44). Such love is not human but divine, for God was the first to show such love in a most perfect way, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8).

How should we love others? We should love others in the same way we love ourselves. It is important to note that our Lord who is the perfect Author and Interpreter of the Law did not command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour above or more than thyself.” That would have been unjust and unreasonable. In Ephesians 5:28-29, the Apostle Paul explained what Jesus meant by loving others as ourselves: “So ought men to love their

wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” Loving our wives as we love ourselves is good and pure enough. What a perfect and peaceful rule for a blessed husband and wife relationship!

Let us learn self-denial and not self-love. Christ first, others second, and self last of all! This divine rule and order does us good, and by keeping it, we truly and rightly love ourselves to the glory of God. 🧩

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Love God with All Your Heart

Dennis Kwok

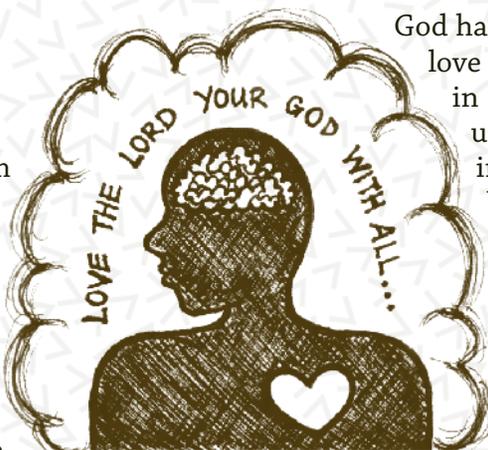
Mark 12:30, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

Can Love be Commanded?

Jesus was quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5. And He said that to love God with all our heart is the first commandment. But can someone be commanded to love a person? Is not love supposed to be spontaneous? Is not love something that mystically happens? Can love be commanded? It must be so because, if left on our own, it is impossible for us to take that first step to love God. Because of sin, we have chosen to love anything and everything except God.

The Bible teaches us that our love for God grows as we know more and more of His love. 1 John 4:7-10 exhorts us: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live

through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”



God has taken that first step to love us. Our love for God is in response to His love for us. On our own, we are incapable of loving God. We love Him because He first loved us. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). When we are most sinful, most wicked, most ugly and unlovable, God loves us. And God’s love is so constraining that we can do nothing else but to respond with love for Him.

We are to Give God Our Priority

In reply to the scribe who asked the question ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’ Jesus replied, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” These verses are called the ‘Shema’. The Jews would recite these words many times a day. The ‘Shema’ reminded them



of Jehovah God whom they served. Hear how the same scribe responded to Jesus' answer, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength..." (Mark 12:32-33).

To love the LORD our God with all our heart is the summary of the first table of commandment. We are to put God first in our life. But giving God the first priority is not going to be easy. There are many people and things around us vying for that first position in our hearts. It is indeed a great struggle to give God the first place at all times. Some of us have tried to manage our time in the best way we know how so that we can spend time with God first thing in the morning, but very often the newspapers seem to always get our immediate attention. Similarly, we decide to spend time with the Lord during our lunch break but a phone call or SMS immediately claims our attention. At last, we hope to spend the final minutes before we hit the bed to read the Bible and pray, but by that time, we are just too tired to do so. "The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

But could it be that we have not really put God as our first priority in life? If we want to know whether God is truly number one in our life, just look at our calendar and year planner. These will tell us what our true priorities are. Where is God on our list of priorities? Does God get the best of our time? Do we really love the Lord?

To Love God is to Surrender Our All to Him

Just as the small word 'alone' is very important when evangelizing to the Catholics of the kind of faith we ought

to have in Christ, the small word 'all' in loving God "with all our heart" is also very important to Him. Our Lord Jesus did not say that we shall love God with part of our heart, some of our soul or a piece of our mind. It is the word 'all' that matters most to Him. All means all. We are to surrender our all to God: all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength.

The Apostle Peter's answer revealed what it means to surrender his all to Jesus: "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). People, who have truly surrendered their lives to God, obey His Word, even if it does not make sense. Surrendering your life means following God's leading without knowing where, like Abraham – waiting for God's perfect timing without knowing when, like Noah – expecting a miracle without knowing how, like Moses – trusting God's purpose without knowing why circumstances happen, like Job.

We do not like the word "surrender" because it means to give up. It is also seen as a sign of weakness. The biblical use of the word is to yield or submit. When we surrender our lives to Jesus, we are asking Him to take control. Some believe that God is our Co-Pilot. But He is more than our Co-Pilot. He is the Pilot and all we need to do is simply comply and follow His instructions.

Will You Love Him?

We sing often how we love God, but do we really love Him? Have you responded to God's love by inviting the Lord Jesus to be your Saviour? Will you surrender your entire being to God? Will you love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? May God help us. Amen. 🧩



“O how love I thy law!”

Dennis Kabingue

Psalm 119 portrays the heartbeat of the man after God’s own heart. God who searches the secrets of the heart knew these volitions in David’s heart very well. Through verbal inspiration, it pleased Him to transcribe David’s affections into the pages of the Holy Scriptures. By His verbal preservation, these holy passions were kept intact and safely guarded for the devotion of all His people throughout all ages.

The Law: The Object of the Psalmist’s Love

In the midst of his lengthy discourse on God’s Word, the Psalmist could no longer suppress his personal love for it. So in the thirteenth section of the Psalm (i.e., Psalm 119:97-104), he exclaimed to His God a praise, thanksgiving and adoration of His Law, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97). What a confession! It must have been stirred by a recollection of lifelong experiential knowledge of what the Law has accomplished in his life. An observation difficult to deny because of the way David developed this opening declaration throughout this section of the Psalm.

The law of God was offered repeatedly to all the Jews as a surety for prosperity in the Lord. The word “law” comes from the Hebrew word, *torah*. It is a term that was derived from a verb that means to direct, to teach, to guide, to instruct. In the Old

Testament, it was used to assimilate the ceremonial, civil, and moral laws of Moses and all that were revealed by God to the fathers. That is why the Pentateuch (i.e., the first five books of the Bible) was called The Law.

It is interesting to note that the first occurrence of the word *torah* is found together with a pronouncement of blessings to Isaac on account of Abraham’s obedience of it. God said, “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Genesis 26:4, 5). The message was simple. Submissiveness to the direction, teaching, guidance and instruction of the law will only lead to blessedness of life. Because, as someone has written, “The law is an expression of God’s love for and commitment to His people. While enjoying a special relationship with Yahweh, the Israelites received the privilege of conducting their entire lives in accordance with his standards of conduct, which are themselves reflections of His character.”

David loved the law of God. His passions were just to know more of it. He was neither contented to study the law superficially nor just glance at it in its entirety. He studied the law and rightly divided it. While he was disclosing to God how much he loved

His law, spontaneously he remembered its different designations and he recalled six of them throughout the remaining seven verses as: (1) thy commandments (Psalm 119:98), (2) thy testimonies (Psalm 119:99), (3) thy precepts (Psalm 119:100, 104), (4) thy word (Psalm 119:101), (5) thy judgments (Psalm 119:102), and (6) thy words (Psalm 119:103).

In the enumeration of those designations, the Psalmist did not pick and choose what were convenient for him. Those terms reflected his belief and experience of God's Word. His way of life was to learn the Word of God and to live out the Word of God. Dear Christian, how about you? Do you love the law of God? If at this time, you are not excited about it, ask the Lord to grant you the grace to love the law. Also, think about the consequential blessings of the law. Remember, God uses His Word to work in our lives "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). To ignore the Word of God is to forsake the good pleasure of God. As you begin to taste the goodness of the law, you will love it more and more. Soon you will declare like David, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103). Honey was a favourite food and a highly appreciated gift. When that day comes, no food can relish your taste buds than the entrance of the Word of God into your soul. As Spurgeon stated, "Familiarity with the word of God breeds affection, and affection seeks greater familiarity."

The Proof of the Psalmist's Love for the Law

Nowadays, people either do not say what they mean or they do not mean what they say or even both. This mentality is the breeding ground of false brethren, false prophets and false Christs. With

the propagation of the wealth and health gospel and the tolerance of carnality in the church of Christ, majority of the people in the church have no qualms to proclaim that they love God and His Word. The Lord Jesus condemned this hypocrisy. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). David was different. He said what he meant and he meant what he said. When he exclaimed to God how much he loved His law, it was not a lip service but a twofold testimony. He spent his life studying the law, as he spent his life obeying it and vice versa.

The first proof of the Psalmist's love for the law: David spent all his life studying the law. This principle is seen in the second part of verse 97. "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). There are two important elements that must not be missed: (1) what he was meditating, and (2) the time he spent meditating on it. In the original, the emphasis was on the time he spent. Literally, Psalm 119:97b can be rendered, "all the day it is my meditation". That means throughout the day, he was occupied meditating the law of God. The word, meditate, simply means to study. He was determined to study the law of God. Nothing could take away his attention from it. This is remarkable. Remember that David was not a Levite. He did not have the privilege to just spend his time reading and studying the law, for his profession was to minister to the king. In the fulness of time, when he became king, his responsibility was to run the affairs of the nation of Israel. He must have been a very busy man. Nonetheless, from his lips, he testified that he studied the law throughout the day. You may ask, how did



he do that? Matthew Henry made a good comment on this. “A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.” This is how a Christian should conduct himself. In his handling of his daily chores, the law of God must be his rule.

David’s daily habit of studying the law became his lifelong practice. Notice the parallel phrase in the second part of verse 98. “Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.” Literally, this can be rendered, “for forever they are with me.” Though this statement completes the thought of this verse, it also develops the thought of “it is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97b). Similarly, the emphasis was the span of time that David spent in studying the law. However, the parallel phrase was intended to extend the idea of a daily activity to a lifelong study. This is the secret of spiritual growth. Many Christians always like to boast about extending and defending the faith. But, they could only sprint not run a marathon. Why? They do not keep up with the habit of evaluating their daily engagements with the Word of God. There is no easy way to be persistently zealous for the Lord’s work. David’s formula is what really works.

The second proof of the Psalmist’s love for the law: David spent all his life obeying the law. Honest meditation of God’s Word demands obedience to His will and obedience encourages more meditation. These are complementary elements working together in a cycle to produce spiritual growth in our lives.

In David’s case, his obedience was qualified by his meditation of the law. Firstly, while he was under the tutelage of his teachers,

he set aside time to confirm their teachings like the Bereans (Acts 17:10, 11). For as much as he was respectful of all of them, he was always mindful that only the Word of God is perfect (Psalm 19:7). This was his conviction. He was committed to keep God’s precepts (Psalm 119:100). The word, keep, was translated from the Hebrew word, *natsar*. It means guarding with fidelity. In other words, David’s fidelity was to guard what God said, more than the opinions of the ancients. As Matthew Henry once said, “The written word is surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients, of the church; and the sacred writings kept, and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.”

Reformation was founded upon this principle. The Roman Catholic Church had been manipulating the minds and souls of Europe for over a millennium (i.e., 1,000 years). Everyone was subject to the infallibility of the Pope. No one dared to question the authority of the church, for the people accepted them as the ancients who were the only ones capable of comprehending the things of God. But, nothing can be further from the truth. Only the Word of God can bind the conscience of man and is the rule for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16). In these days, we need people of David’s calibre. Are you the one God’s people are looking for?

Secondly, David was resolved to despise sin in order to obey the Word of God. He said, “I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word” (Psalm 119:101). The focus of this statement is in the phrase, “that I might keep thy word” because this is the purpose of his act of refraining himself from every evil way. Here, the word, keep, comes from the Hebrew word, *shamar*. It is very closely

related to *natsar*. But, the emphasis now is more towards obeying a command. Evil men are good in orchestrating something to force good men to react wickedly. King Saul tirelessly and relentlessly chased David to kill him. If you were in David's shoes, would you not rather pre-empt the situation if given an opportunity to protect yourself? David had many opportunities to kill Saul but he refrained himself from the evil way. Instead, he appealed to God to bring justice. "The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee" (1 Samuel 24:12). One may ask, how did David spend all his life obeying the law? David's formula is the same. He started small. He controlled himself from every evil way. In other words, he applied his knowledge of the law as temptation came one by one.

This is a good lesson for us to learn. If we are always on guard daily, this habit will sustain us in our pilgrim journey.

The Blessings of Loving the Law of God

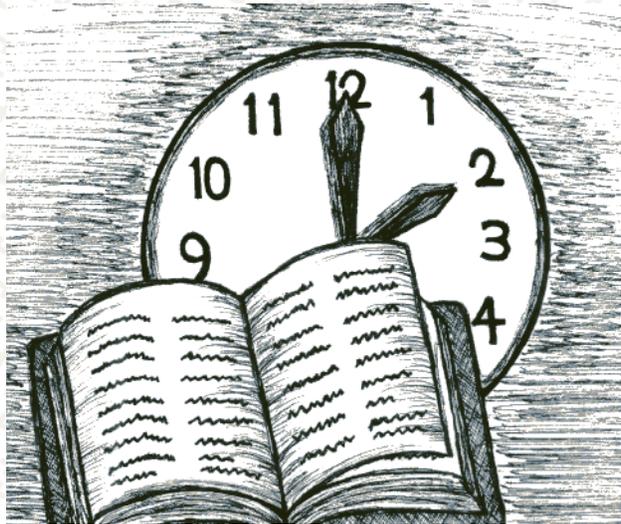
David did not regret choosing to love the law of God. To the carnal mind, living out the law is a boring life. He finds the law a tyrant and sin a freedom. Is it true? Let us examine what David said, "I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me" (Psalm 119:102). This was the most significant blessing he received. Imagine, God the Almighty was his Teacher. Is it not true that the success

of the student depends a great deal upon his mentor? David was overwhelmed by the fact that he was not following the guidance of the best teacher one could hire on the face of the earth. Rather, he was a disciple of the Creator of Heaven and Earth! Such was his conviction that he was motivated not to depart from his Tutor's judgments. In this case, the negative "not" is the strongest possible means to negate an action. It was the one used by God to prohibit Adam from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It seemed David managed

not to depart from the judgments of God on his own. However, David confessed to God "for thou hast taught me." What a great blessing? If you grasp this fact, it will not be difficult to understand how David was blessed to be wiser than his enemies, to gain more

knowledge than all his teachers, even the ancients, and how he was empowered to hate every false way. Is this not a blessed and fruitful life?

Let the Scriptures give us God's conclusion about David's life. "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Psalm 78:70-72). From a humble beginning to the highest office of the land, David became the greatest king of Israel. All because, he loved the law of God! 🏰





Speaking the Truth in Love

Ephrem Chiracho

(Ephesians 4:15; cf. 2 John 2:1)

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). The context of this verse is of paramount importance to understanding what is being taught therein. In Ephesians 4, Paul emphasizes two major themes that are interrelated: keeping the unity of the church (vv. 3-6) and walking worthy of the Gospel (vv. 1-3, 17-32). These themes are marks of Christian maturity. He also explains how Christ gave different gifts and offices to the church (4:7-16) in order to build up the believers till they fully grow in the likeness of Christ (vv. 12-15) so that they may walk worthy of the Gospel and keep the unity of the spirit. It is in this context that we find these inspiring words: “speaking the truth in love” (v. 15a) which form the subject of our discussion.

The Need to Speak the Truth

The Greek word translated “speaking the truth” is the present active participle of *aletheuo* which means continually and steadfastly speaking forth the truth that one professes to believe. Verse 15 is connected with the previous verse by the conjunction “but”. Verse 14 states that one goal of Christian instruction is to guard believers against being deceived by crafty false teachers who present their erroneous doctrines in the most plausible way. Believers, instead of remaining like children in their knowledge of the truth

and being “carried about with every wind of doctrine”, must grow into Christ by “speaking the truth in love”. This means, when believers speak the truth, they are not only kept from deception of error but also will be able to maintain their spiritual unity and live a life that is well pleasing to God.

Note here, “the truth” is contrasted with the deception of error that is described as “wind of doctrine”. Thus, the content of what is to be spoken forth is biblical truth in contradistinction to error. Jesus Christ has given us the scope of our message in making disciples for Him. He said, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). We, all believers in Christ, are responsible to speak forth all the truth, without adding thereto or subtracting anything from it. While in Ephesus, Paul, in obedience to Christ’s command, “kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,” and therefore, he was pure from the blood of all men since he taught them all the counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27). The whole truth is the balanced spiritual diet that enables believers to grow into perfection in Christ. Selective preaching that focuses only on a favourite subject is detrimental to the growth and spiritual health of the body of Christ.



Likewise, today, pastors and teachers of the Word have this awesome responsibility of faithfully declaring the whole counsel of God at all times. They must speak the wholesome, sound and unadulterated biblical doctrines in order to build up the believers in their most holy faith. When they refuse to speak the truth, they expose God's flock to error that destroys their faith. That is why Paul exhorted Timothy to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13); and again, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" from error and destruction (1 Timothy 4:16). Pastors and teachers have no business of inventing "new truth" or modifying the truth to please men. Their duty is to speak forth, faithfully and passionately, the truth of the Gospel that saves sinners and builds up saints; strengthening their bonds of love with Christ and other members of His body.

The Manner of Speaking the Truth

The manner of speaking the truth is as important as the matter. What is the right Christian spirit we need to have as we declare the Gospel truth? The answer is plain: we need to "speak the truth in love". Our speech should be seasoned with the grace of love so that it edifies and heals those who hear us (cf. Ephesians 4:29). We need to cultivate a meek and compassionate spirit whereby we speak forth the truth. That was the spirit with which Christ preached and taught the truth when He walked among men (cf. Matthew 11:29). He taught, corrected and rebuked firmly, and yet, with such tender love that even His enemies testified, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). We need to have genuine love for the

souls of men. Then, it will be very natural for us to entreat, admonish, correct and instruct them with a gracious spirit.

A harsh and unfeeling spirit will do more harm than good to the souls of men. But when the truth is declared with tender love, our speech will be a healing balm to our hearers, as the Holy Spirit makes the spoken truth effective in their hearts. Albert Barnes rightly said, "Where a minister pronounces the awful truth of God about depravity, death, the judgment, and future woe, it should be in love. It should not be done in a harsh and repulsive manner; it should not be done as if he rejoiced that men were in danger of hell, or as if he would like to pass the final sentence." We must speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and yet, we must do this in the spirit of love and with a sincere desire to do men the highest good possible.

The Relationship between Speaking the Truth and Loving Others

Some people assume that speaking the truth firmly without compromise means not showing love. Therefore, they talk about seeking a middle ground, emphasizing what seems to be the common value while winking at differences, though they involve the vital doctrines of the Christian faith. But the biblical view is diametrically opposite to this popular view. Biblical love and truth are coherent; that is why we are exhorted to speak the truth in love in order to grow up to the likeness of Christ in all things (Ephesians 4:15). When the Apostle John wrote his second epistle to a home church, he said, "whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth" (2 John 1:1). Thus, it is evident that biblical love is grounded in the truth



and truth is demonstrated in love. We cannot love men at the expense of biblical truth. If we are attempting to show love by compromising biblical truths, it proves that we do not have love for the truth as well as for the souls of men.

Loving the truth does not mean being arrogant and harsh. On the other hand, loving men does not mean tolerating sin, evil and rebellion against God's Word. True love inflicts temporary wounds on the conscience and hearts of men in order to bring spiritual healing and turn them into the path of righteousness. The Bible says, "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds

of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful"

(Proverbs 27:5-6). We observe that true love and false love are contrasted in this passage.

True love is expressed in the "open rebuke" that is explained by the parallel line saying, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." And false love is expressed as "secret love" that is defined by the parallel line saying, "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Therefore, an enemy is one who kisses or commends a man who is in error and thereby sinning against God under the pretence of love. And equally wicked is the man who keeps quiet while observing a brother or a sister falling into grievous sin, for fear of displeasing him or her. On the contrary, a faithful friend, a true lover, inflicts wounds on the conscience of that

person by rebuking and correcting him so as to turn him away from his error into the path of obedience and commitment to God's Word. That is what it means to speak the truth in the spirit of love. And this is the pathway to spiritual maturity unto the Head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

Let us learn this from God. God is love and yet He corrects and chastens us. And we should not be weary of His correction because God corrects those whom He loves (cf. Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:5-11). But how does God correct us? By speaking the truth, that is, by telling us plainly our

spiritual condition and calling us back to submit to His

Word (cf. Proverbs 1:20-33; Psalm 119:71;

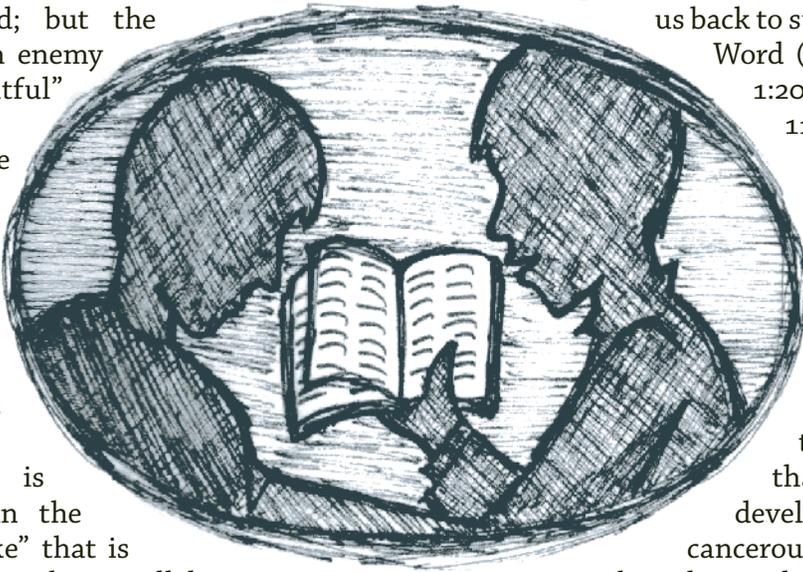
Matthew 23:13-39).

A doctor, who truly loves his patient, does not only tell the sick that he has

developed a

cancerous tumour but also applies a surgical

knife, painful though it may be, to remove that life-threatening tumour. Likewise, a minister of the Word, who loves the people, must apply the sharp knife of the Word to deliver souls of men from destruction and turn men from greater spiritual disaster (2 Timothy 4:2-5). Everyone of us has the moral duty and spiritual responsibility to speak forth the truth, and we must do this in the spirit of love. Speaking the truth and loving the souls of men are coherent spiritual principles that always go together. ✚



Restoring Love

Paul Cheng

The Need to Restore a Backslidden Christian with Love

There are times in the life of a believer wherein he is overcome by the flesh and the lust thereof. It is a sad reality that every Christian must ponder upon. This experience is commonly known as “backsliding”. The term is applied to Christians who have fallen into sin, but it can also apply to those who have failed to grow spiritually. The cause of backsliding is the desire to do things our way rather than God’s way. Christians backslide when they live their lives in disobedience to the Lord and become worldly.

The Struggle with Backsliding

Everyone is prone to fall into sin. Christians, though dead to sin, still have the capacity to serve sin by putting their bodies at its disposal, by yielding to their own sinful lust. “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14, 15).

When a person becomes a new creation in Christ, it does not mean that his thought processes are also made new, as though someone has deleted everything in his memory bank. All the vices and immorality that he had engaged in prior to conversion are still stored in his memory and should he continue to dwell on those sins, surely those sins will overcome him. That is why the struggle with the flesh is an ongoing

battle that every Christian has to face. “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:19). When a Christian begins to neglect his spiritual life, he allows his thoughts and way of life to be dominated by the old worldly self. Therefore, Christians should always be careful to follow the Lord closely and grow in grace to avoid backsliding.

It is of high priority that we deal with sin within the family of God, as the Apostle Paul sets the moral standard for the church, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6b). The church must keep herself pure and chaste, purging all moral and doctrinal impurities. The spiritual leaders have a great responsibility to maintain the purity of the church; to be zealous for good deeds and to confront sin in whatever form it takes as 1 Timothy 5:20 says, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” Christians are to be sanctified vessels that are fit for the Master’s use (2 Timothy 2:20-21). Sin is never to be tolerated.

So when people sin, we confront and discipline them; when they repent from their sins, we forgive them; but when they are forgiven, do we restore them? As much as dealing with sin is important, we must not neglect the ministry of restoration which is also of great importance.

When we see our fellow brethren living in unredeemed flesh, it is our responsibility to restore these backslidden brethren. Often, Christians have been accused of being cold or indifferent in responding to the need of restoring backslidden



Christians. Many a time we can be so sharp in confronting sin, so quick in exercising discipline but so lacking in the application of love within the ministry of restoration. Indeed faith without works is dead, and doctrine without love, life and power is also useless. In this perspective, let us look at the need to apply love in restoring backslidden Christians.

The Application of Love in Restoration

Restoration, though a vital ministry, is either seldom practised, or sometimes not properly administered and is often lacking in many churches today. To restore someone is to bring him back to his former or original condition, and love is a key factor in this tedious process of restoring and rebuilding. Let us consider Galatians 5:26–6:5 in the application of love within the ministry of restoration.

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone,

and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.”

Love is void of vain glory (Galatians 5:26) – To be desirous of vain glory is to presume that you have some reasons for your conceit; you have a right to claim glory and honour. There will always be the danger of some Christians who supposedly have reached some spiritual maturity and yet look down with disdain on those who are backslidden Christians. As such, friction will arise between those who are spiritual and those who are fleshly, leading to provocation and ultimately, an envious spirit. We are in the ministry of restoration and not division, so “vain glory” should never have a part in it. We must constantly uphold the spiritual unity amongst the brethren in the church, just as Paul urged the Romans, “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification” (Romans 15:1-2).

Love seizes the opportunity to help (Galatians 6:1) – In this verse, there is this major implication on the ministry of restoration. The church is a place where we mutually minister together; those who are spiritual to help those who are fleshly; those who are in the Lord to help those who are in sin; the strong helps the weak. When a Christian who is spiritual, sees a backslidden brethren, he also sees



the window of opportunity being opened for him to help, and to put into rightful application what it means to have the fruit of the Spirit, and to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26). Christians ought not to forget the words of James, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

Love is to be meek “...restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1b). We restore our backslidden Christians, not in a haughty spirit, but in a spirit of meekness or humility. Instead of looking down on our backslidden brethren, we should consider ourselves that, if not for the grace of God, we could be in a similar backslidden condition. The body of believers within the church is made up of Christians with different levels of spirituality; it should never be a place of pride and vain glory, but a place where the spirit of meekness is evidently manifested. As we consider meekness, let us not forget the supreme example of humility in our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:1).

Love is to bear one another’s burden (Galatians 6:2). To bear is to support. In our Christian walk, some brethren may stumble and fall because of troubles, weaknesses or burdens. Sometimes, the burdens can be extremely heavy for our backslidden brethren. The ministry of restoration is not just to pick them up, but it also includes bearing that particular burden which is spiritually too heavy for them. One way to be mutual bearers is to be accountable to one another and so fulfil the law of Christ which is the law of love (John 15:12).

Love will not shun (Galatians 6:3) – Some Christians have the “holier-than-thou” mentality, and they tend to shun those backslidden Christians because they

consider themselves as more spiritual. They refuse to be stained by their sins. Instead of being their brother’s keepers, they shun their fellow brethren. This is the sin of self-deceit.

Love does not rejoice in iniquities (Galatians 6:4; cf. 1 Corinthians 13:6) – Every Christian ought to examine his own works, by way of his conduct, virtues, deeds and life. True joy does not come from comparing one’s moral standard with the weaknesses of others, but in realising that one’s standard is in accordance and obedience to God’s truth. “For every man shall bear his own burden” (verse 5).

Indeed, the ministry of restoration can be very trying. Apart from disappointments and discouragements, there may be times whereby our good intentions are misunderstood. But let us not be weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9), be encouraged by the words of the Apostle Paul, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thessalonians 5:14), and fulfil all righteousness. ❏



“A new commandment

I give unto you,

That ye love one another;

as I have loved you,

that ye also love one another”

John 13:34



BIBLE TRIVIA - GENESIS 22

Sarah Yong

ARRANGE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS IN ORDER BY PLACING THE NUMBERS 1 TO 12 IN THE BLANKS PROVIDED. THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF THE STORY HAVE BEEN DONE FOR YOU.

God spoke to Abraham and told him to take his only son Isaac, whom he loved, and go to the land of Moriah to offer a burnt offering.

___ And the angel of the LORD spoke a second time and promised to bless Abraham and multiply his seed.

___ The angel of the LORD called unto him not to lay his hand upon the lad, for God was pleased that Abraham did not withhold his son.

___ Then Abraham, Isaac and two young men journeyed unto the place which God had told Abraham, and on the third day he saw the place afar off.

___ Then Isaac asked his father about the lamb for the sacrifice, and his father replied that God would provide it.

___ So Abraham rose up early in the morning, saddled his ass, and prepared the wood for the burnt offering.

___ After they had reached the place and built an altar, Abraham bound Isaac and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

___ Abraham instructed the young men to wait there while he and Isaac went yonder to worship.

___ And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

___ Then Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a ram caught in a thicket, and he took it and offered it for a burnt offering.

___ Isaac carried the wood while his father carried the fire and a knife.

___ Abraham called the place Jehovah-jireh.

___ He promised that because Abraham obeyed God's voice, through Abraham's seed will all nations of the earth be blessed.

So Abraham and Isaac returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba.

Answers to Vol. 6, Issue 3 - Bible Trivia - Genesis 20 & 21.

Pg. 25 – (1) south; (2) sister; (3) prophet; (4) silver; (5) 100; (6) days; (7) bread; (8) well; (9) Egypt; (10) Abimelech.

Enduring through Humiliation

A real experience of young Jonathan GoForth which taught him that even in extreme adversities, he can find opportunities to glorify his Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Knox College, Jonathan Goforth had to face very unfamiliar way of life and experiences. He was utterly unacquainted with the habits, fashion and ways of the college students.



Not too long after his arrival in the college, he realised that his homemade garments would not measure up to the fashion in the college.



He became very conscious of his appearance. He wanted to quickly make an outfit that would appear like what others are wearing.

But Jonathan was poor; it was not wise to ask his father for help, for it would put him under much stress.



He decided to maximise the little money that he had in his possession. He purchased a large piece of cloth to bring it to a seamstress who could make a few outfits for him.

But before he could do so, the students got wind of Jonathan's plan. One night, a number of fellow students came into his room, and held Jonathan at one corner of the room while they cut a hole at one end of the cloth that he purchased.



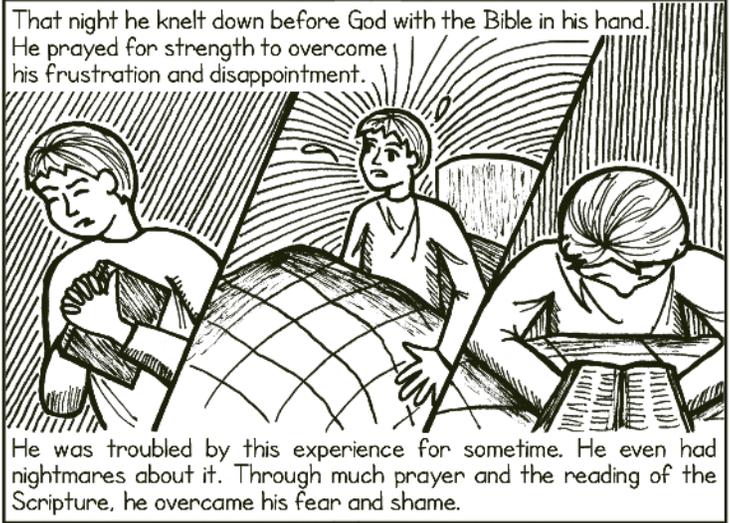
Then they put his head through it and made him run up and down the corridor. This became a hilarious scene for many students.



Jonathan felt humiliated. This was his greatest humiliation thus far in life.

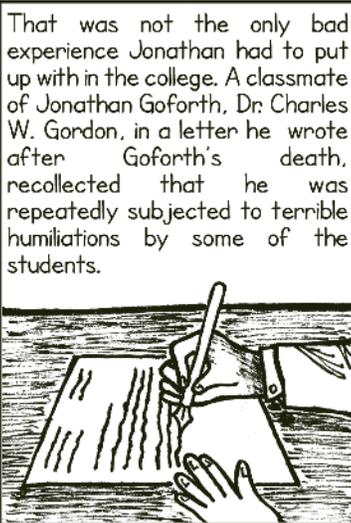
An illustration showing a young man in the foreground looking down with a distressed expression. In the background, two other figures are shown throwing stones at him, symbolizing humiliation.

That night he knelt down before God with the Bible in his hand. He prayed for strength to overcome his frustration and disappointment.

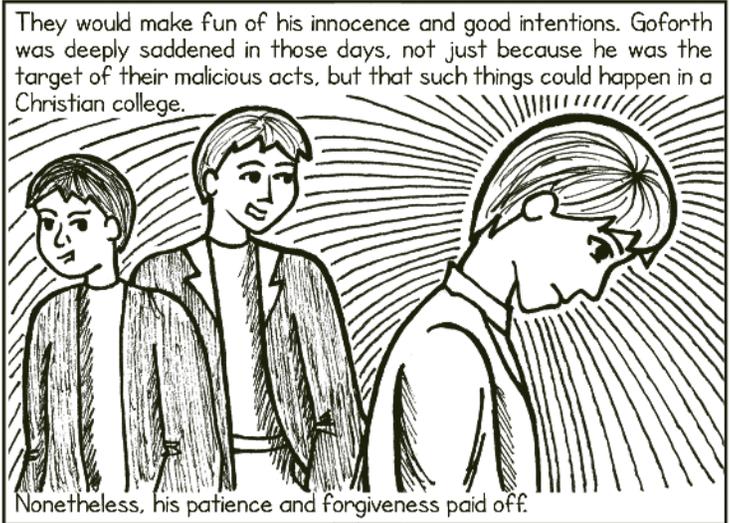
An illustration of Jonathan kneeling in prayer, holding a Bible. He is shown in a state of distress, with sweat or tears on his face. In the background, another person is seen reading a Bible.

He was troubled by this experience for sometime. He even had nightmares about it. Through much prayer and the reading of the Scripture, he overcame his fear and shame.

That was not the only bad experience Jonathan had to put up with in the college. A classmate of Jonathan Goforth, Dr. Charles W. Gordon, in a letter he wrote after Goforth's death, recollected that he was repeatedly subjected to terrible humiliations by some of the students.

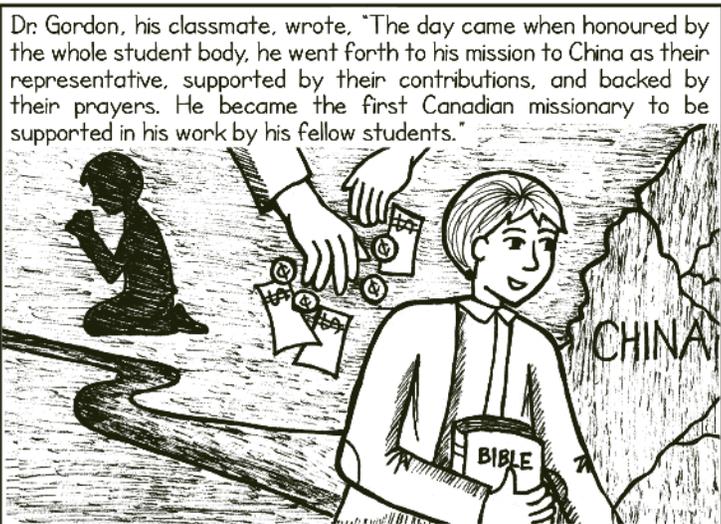
An illustration showing a hand writing a letter on a piece of paper with a quill pen.

They would make fun of his innocence and good intentions. Goforth was deeply saddened in those days, not just because he was the target of their malicious acts, but that such things could happen in a Christian college.

An illustration showing Jonathan looking sad and being surrounded by other students who appear to be mocking or laughing at him.

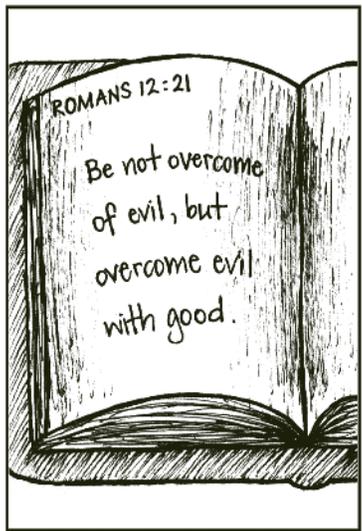
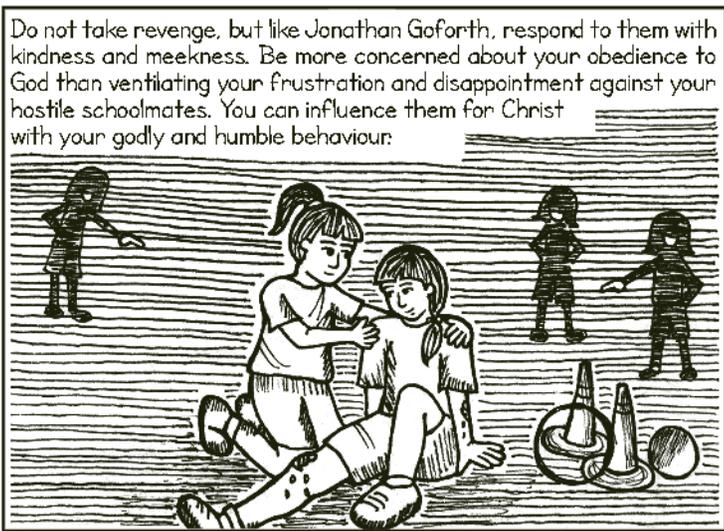
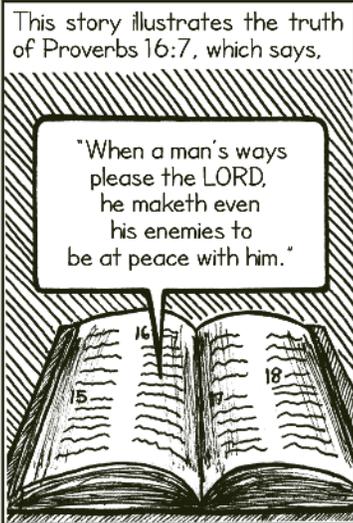
Nonetheless, his patience and forgiveness paid off.

Dr. Gordon, his classmate, wrote, "The day came when honoured by the whole student body, he went forth to his mission to China as their representative, supported by their contributions, and backed by their prayers. He became the first Canadian missionary to be supported in his work by his fellow students."

An illustration showing Jonathan as a missionary in China. He is holding a Bible and standing in front of a building labeled 'CHINA'. In the background, a person is kneeling in prayer, and hands are shown offering money to support his work.

He also wrote, "Without exception, every student who had taken part in hurting and humiliating him during those early days at Knox College, had, before he left the college, come to him expressing their regret."

An illustration showing Jonathan sitting at a table, and another person sitting across from him, looking down and appearing to be in a state of regret or apology.



Bibliography: "GoForth of China" by Rosalind GoForth. The stories are written by Rev. Dr. Prabhudas Koshy. Illustrations are done by Sis. Sharon Ng.



Children's Sermon

"How to conquer evil": — One of our most familiar proverbs tells us that "two blacks do not make a white," which means that whether other people do right or wrong, we must always try to do right. We must try to conquer badness by goodness."

- **Biblical Illustrator**



A New Gospel Door Opened

Bohol, The Philippines

30th July 2006



Bro. Edsel
in front of
the Church



Inauguration Service of
Gethsemane B-P Mission Church

The Mission Team from Singapore
with Bro. Reggor and Bro. Edsel



Our Elders
with the First Convert

2nd Anniversary of Gethsemane B-P Mission Church, Cebu



Mission
Church
Choir

2nd Anniversary Thanksgiving Service



Children's
Sunday
School



Baptism of a
New Believer

