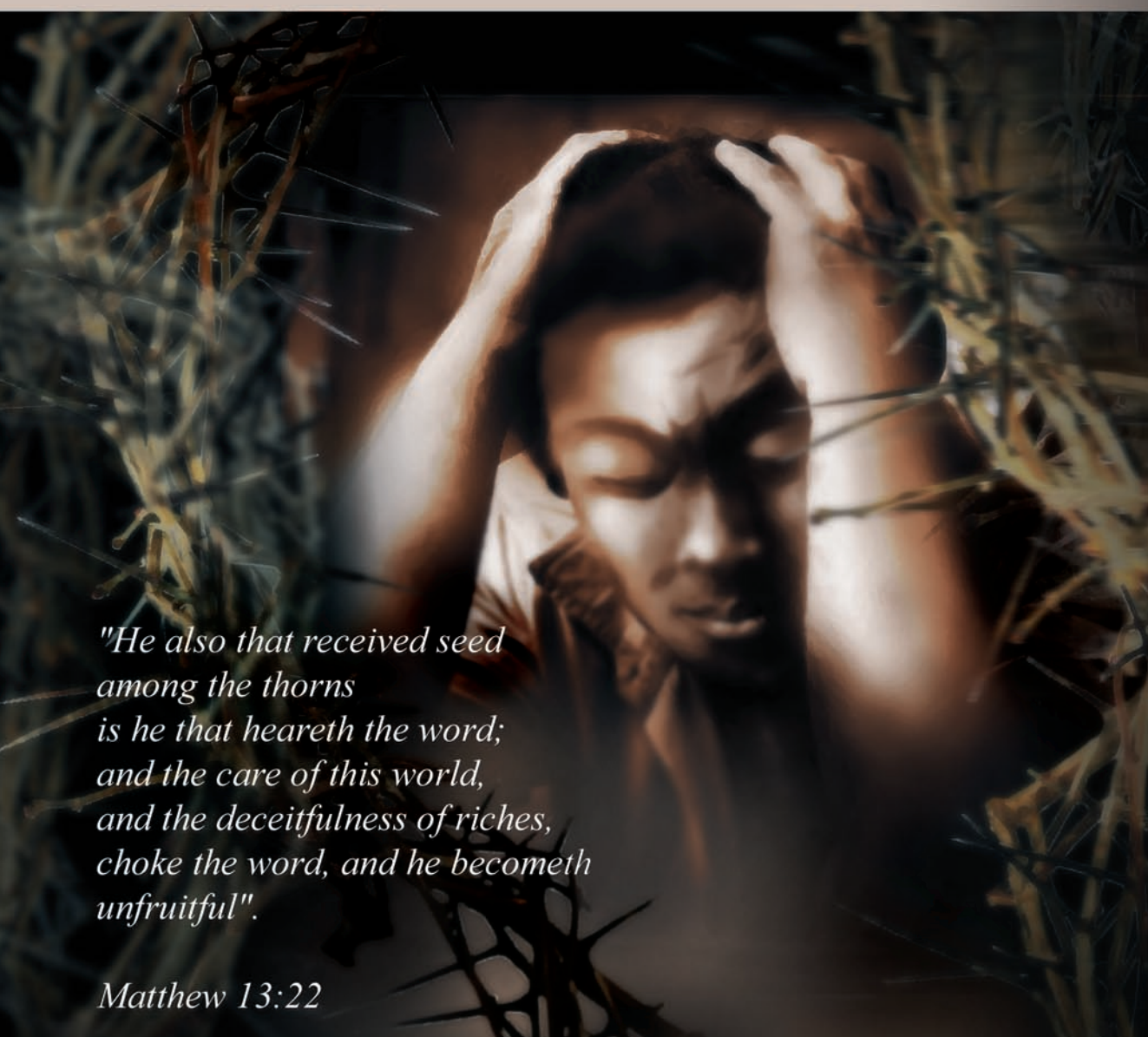


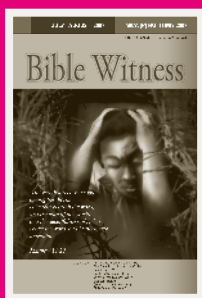
Bible Witness



*"He also that received seed
among the thorns
is he that heareth the word;
and the care of this world,
and the deceitfulness of riches,
choke the word, and he becometh
unfruitful".*

Matthew 13:22

Articles Inside: The World is Crucified unto Me
The Satanic World and the Christian
Fashion and You
Put Fleshly Lusts to Death
Vanity of the Material World
Modest Apparel
Christians in the Fiery Trial
Bible Trivia - Genesis 31

**Editor**

Prabhudas Koshy

Publishing & Circulation**Co-ordinator**

Lok Kwok Wah

Technical Editors

Adrienne Foo, Carolyn Koshy, Jenny Lok
Lok Kwok Wah, Mah Lean Choo

Cover Design

Melissa Neo

Layout

Kenneth Wong

Illustrations

Sharon Ng

Publisher

Bible Witness Media Ministry of
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church,
Singapore

Printer

Chung Printing

Contact Information

By mail:

Bible Witness Media Ministry
510 Geylang Road, #02-06
Singapore 389466

Tel: (65) 6741-1910 **Fax:** (65) 6741-1016

Web-site: www.biblewitness.com

E-mail: editor@biblewitness.com

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THE WORLD IS CRUCIFIED UNTO ME

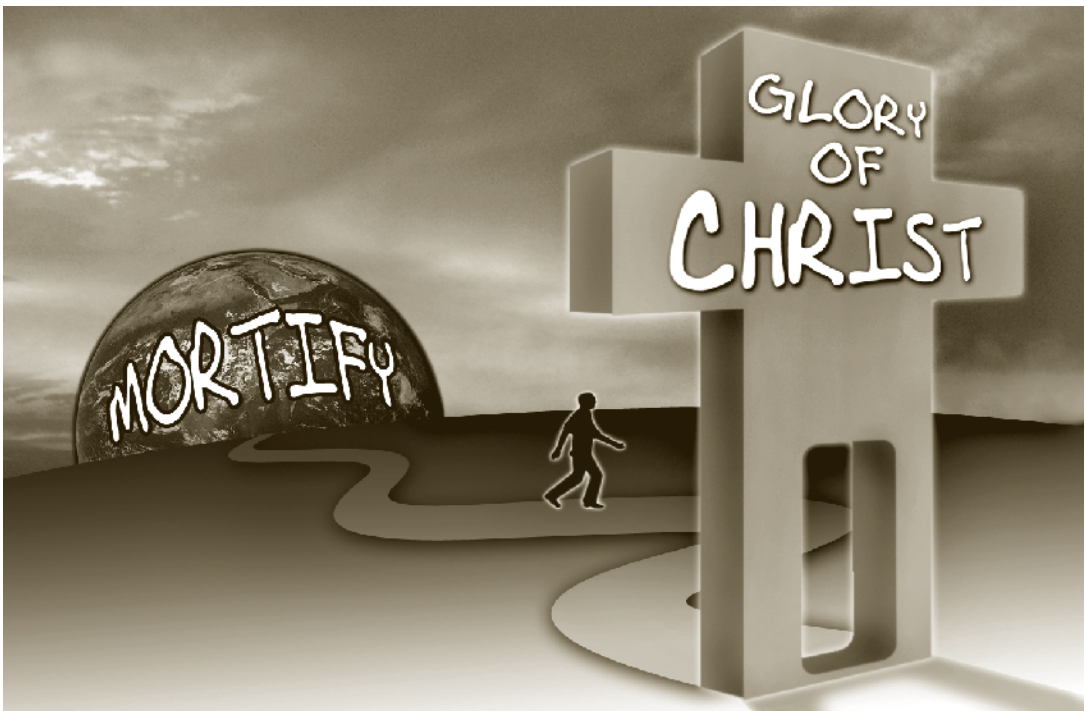
MAH CHIN KWANG

The world acknowledges and honours the intelligent, the talented, the wealthy, the powerful, those who contributed to society, and more. Some awards are honorary in nature while others are accompanied with monetary gains, oftentimes substantive. No wonder organizations and individuals abound to promote the betterment of man in his worldly pursuits. Nor should it be a surprise that those who pursue them for altruistic causes are a minority and that even the best of man among us is ensnared in the mire of self-glory and pride.

By any account, the Apostle Paul should have been recognized and honoured for his intelligence, his profound thoughts, his literary skills, his piety and his many contributions to

the Church and mankind in general. From his background and religious upbringing to his fervour of service, he had an impeccable record. "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:4b-6). For the sake of His beloved Master, Paul laboured and suffered much, as we read in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27.

Paul's Christ-centred life goal is wonderfully expressed in his writing to the Galatians, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross



of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

We are living in an age, set almost two millennia apart from the day of the Apostle Paul. The world has changed and today as never before it is filled with an incredible array of avenues and glittering attractions that allure and draw us into the limelight. However, Paul’s testimony still stands as a standard for the Christ-centred believer to follow after. With God’s help, we must desire to make a conscious, informed decision to lay aside all self-glory for the glory of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the symbol of His redeeming love. And why should we be preoccupied with the glory of the cross?

Christ’s Glory Outshines the World

Firstly, we need to remember the transient nature of all that is in the world. Nothing is permanent and forever. Whether it be a strong, large monument, an invaluable legacy, a growing business enterprise, an award or event to perpetuate a memory, it will all be destroyed and will disappear with time. Some sooner, others a little later, but all will evaporate in the Last Day when the Lord returns. Only that which is of the Lord will transit to and remain in heaven’s glory. All else will melt with that consuming fire that the Bible warns.

The Apostle Peter asked a most pertinent question after describing the event that is to come, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be

dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” (2 Peter 3:10-12).

Secondly, for the love of our blessed Lord Jesus who gave His life on Calvary to redeem us from our sins and reconciled us to God, we should be engaged wholly in the pursuit of godliness. We should be preoccupied with His glory because no one else, indeed nothing in the world, is worthy of our all-consuming love. As the Apostle John exhorted, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). God’s amazing love expressed in the coming of the Lord Jesus is the motivation for our Christian living. “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).

The Battle against the World

Many eloquent and persuasive arguments will be advanced by the world to forsake Christ and join them. Other more subtle ones call for co-existence with the world. Let the words of our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, conclude the matter. “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). The committed Christian is surely in the opposite camp of the world.

The battle for the Christian’s allegiance to His Master and to forsake Satan and all his worldly attractions is a spiritual warfare. It is not an issue to be settled in an academic debate on moral grounds, societal values or norms. Nor

is it a problem to be resolved by addressing genetic traits or natural tendencies, or a matter of economic choices. Our everyday living even in a peaceful environment such as ours is very much a battleground against a real and formidable foe. We therefore cannot rely on our own strengths, abilities and determination in this warfare. It must be fought and won by God's Word with Jesus, our Lord leading us. The Word of God must be the final basis and Jesus the only Arbiter in fighting the spiritual conflict.

Any endeavour that would draw us towards the world will obviously be drawing us away from God. James' warning is most appropriate when he asked, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Our Lord Jesus also warned "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Crucified unto the World

How then does the Christian stay focused and be preoccupied with the pursuit of the glory of the cross and reject the attractions of the

world? How does he overcome? In Galatians 6:14, Paul shared not only what his life goal was but also how he attained it. He wrote, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world". This is the paradox of Christian living – dead to the world and alive unto Christ.

Paul was enlivened and strengthened to strive for Jesus' glory because he was dead to the world. Because he was dead to the world, nothing of the world was able to charm, distract, shackle or weigh him down as he raced on towards his prize, looking steadfastly upon the glory of the cross of Jesus.

Death brings victory. Just as our blessed Lord conquered Satan when He was crucified on the cross, His followers are assured of certain victory by dying to the world. We want to be dead to the world so that we may live for Him and bring Him the glory due to Him because He loved us. With Paul, may we all say, "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" (Galatians 2:20).



**Whilst the world is enthroned in men's heart,
honours and favours have more attraction
than to suffer with the people of God.**

John Owen

THE SATANIC WORLD AND THE CHRISTIAN

JEFFREY KHOO

Who is Satan and what are Demons?

Satan (Hebrew: “accuser”) was originally called Lucifer (Latin: “light-bearer”) (Isaiah 14:12). He was created by God, and was beautiful and morally perfect in the beginning (Ezekiel 28:13). God made him a high-ranking angel with other angels under his charge (Ezekiel 28:12-14). But he became proud and rebelled against God (Isaiah 14:13-14; Ezekiel 28:15-16; 1 Timothy 3:6). In his rebellion, a third of the angels followed him (Revelation 12:4). God cast all of them out of heaven (Isaiah 14:15; Revelation 12:7-8). Satan is also called the devil (Revelation 12:9), and the angels that fell with him are called demons (Matthew 25:41; Ephesians 6:12). There is one devil but many demons.

Satan is a murderer and a deceiver (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:9). His goal is to oppose God and His people, and to destroy as many human lives as possible by blinding them to the gospel (Revelation 12:1-10; 1 Peter 5:8; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan and his cohorts will be defeated by Christ and His saints, and will finally be cast into the Lake of fire to be tormented forever and ever (Revelation 16:13-14; 19:11-21; 20:10).

What is Demon Possession?

Demon possession as the term implies refers to a person whose body has been invaded and inhabited by a demon. Such a person is commonly described in the Bible as one who is “demonised” (*daimonizomai*). In the KJV, the Greek *daimonizomai* is mostly translated

“possessed with a devil” (Matthew 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; Mark 1:32; Luke 8:36; John 10:21). The one who is demonised is also described as “having” or “possessing” a demon or an unclean spirit (Mark 5:15; 7:25; 9:17; Luke 4:33; 8:27; Acts 8:7; 16:16; 19:13). When a person is demonised, he is under the full control of the evil spirit that



has inhabited him. He is not able to resist doing the will of the evil spirit. The demon can speak through him (Matthew 8:28-29, 31; Mark 5:7-10), cause him to be blind, deaf or dumb (Matthew 12:22), empower him with superhuman strength (Mark 5:3-4), cause him to go about naked (Mark 5:15), cause him to hurt himself physically (Mark 5:5), or make him insane (Luke 8:35). The demonized man is totally at the mercy of the evil spirit.

Can a Christian be Demon Possessed?

Christians cannot be possessed by demons. By “Christian” we mean someone who has truly believed in Christ, is born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8, 16). Satan cannot dwell together with Christ. Light dispels darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14-16; 1 John 4:4). Christ has already crushed Satan (Genesis 3:15; Luke 10:18-19; 1 John 3:8). In Christ we are completely delivered from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13, Hebrews 2:14-15). When Christ enters, Satan exits.

However, there are those who claim to be Christians, but in actual fact are not. These are Christians only in name. They may profess Christ, but were never possessed by Him. These are vulnerable to demonic possession, like unbelievers. A biblical example of such a person is Judas Iscariot. He appeared to be a disciple of Christ, but in actual fact was never truly saved. Judas was indeed possessed by Satan. The Apostle John tells us what happened to Judas that night, “[Jesus] was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. . . . He it is, to whom I shall give a sop . . . to Judas Iscariot . . . And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:21, 26, 27).

We can certainly conclude that so-called “Christians” who are demon possessed are still unregenerate. They need to receive Christ as their Lord and Saviour if they are to be delivered from this bondage.

Can Christians be Influenced by Satan?

Yes, Christians can be influenced by Satan and his demons to do their bidding, and to sin against God. That is why Paul exhorted every Christian: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:11-13). Peter likewise warned, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Peter must be speaking from experience. He must have recalled how he fell into Satan’s trap when he dissuaded the Lord from going to the cross. Jesus had to rebuke Peter, “Get thee behind me Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men” (Mark 8:33).

Satan did not possess Peter for sure, else the Lord would have cast the devil out of him. But Peter was certainly influenced by Satan to hinder God’s plan of salvation. Jesus looking at Peter rebuked Satan because He knew that Satan was behind it all. Satan can tempt us to sin when we let our guard down. We need to be ever alert, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). “Submit

yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Satan, the God of this World

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan is called “the god of this world,” and all unbelievers are under his spell. The Lord Jesus calls Satan “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30). Satan’s purpose on earth is to deceive. He blinds the eyes of men with falsehood and error (Matthew 24:24; 2 Corinthians 11:13-14), and tempts them with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Although Satan is the god of this world, he is not more powerful than God. God is all-powerful and He rules over all, including Satan. Satan is but a tool of God, and He makes use of Satan to fulfil

His holy purpose to judge this sin-cursed and God-hating world.

Although the reprobates are doomed to eternal destruction for choosing Satan instead of Christ, the elect are protected and preserved by their Saviour, and will overcome the devil’s deception and the world’s temptations. The Apostle John says, “For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5). In Christ, we have the victory for “greater is he (Christ) that is in you, than he (Satan) that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).



CONTRIBUTORS OF ARTICLES



LEE KIM SHONG
Pastor
Calvary Jaya BPC



PRABHUDAS KOSHY
Pastor
Gethsemane BPC



QUEK SUAN YEW
Pastor
Calvary Pandan BPC



JEFFREY KHOO
Academic Dean
Far Eastern Bible College



MAH CHIN KWANG
Elder
Gethsemane BPC

FASHION AND YOU

QUEK SUAN YEW

The “fashion of the world” has a strong pull, like that of an electro-magnet, in the transformation of our lifestyle. This “fashion” dominates our way of life, which includes our eating habits, the clothes we wear, and how we wear our hair. The reason is that this is a multi-billion dollar business. These promoters of fashion put ideas into our heads by using sports personalities and movie “idols” who are paid to dress in a particular way (with tattoos on their bodies or earrings on the left or right ear for the men) and maybe smoke so that they look “cool”. The world loves to look like these “idols” and so they would imitate them blindly, no matter what the cost.

Advertisements have dictated our thinking so much that we sincerely believe that to possess the latest in fashion is the thing to do! We do not want to be considered misfits in society and so we get the latest handphones or ipods and flash them around. Those who can afford them would be the envy of those who can't. The latter would “sell their souls” to buy them. Young girls would sell their bodies on the internet to buy the latest devices and designer outfits to be “cool” amongst their friends. Some young boys would resort to stealing and cheating.



This fashion stigma is not just on the youths! Adults have fallen for the same “fashion-conscious” stigma! Many have paid thousands of dollars to become members of elite golf clubs, to show their business colleagues that they have “arrived”! Some have even borrowed money to buy these memberships! They drive the latest European cars, buy designer watches and eat at elite restaurants where a meal could come to hundreds of dollars a head. If it is cool to be found in pubs, clubs or bars, they would want to be found there too.

The price of fashion is costly. We are not just referring to dollars and cents. Many have sold their freedom, their loved ones and their souls in order to be fashionable! What is sad is that many professing Christians have also bought

into this fashion conscious lifestyle of the world to the detriment of their Christian witness!

What is the Bible's teaching on this “fashion” issue?

One of the best and clearest teachings from the Bible on fashion is in

Romans 12:1-2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable

service. 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.” The key word (*suschematizo*) in this passage is translated as “conformed”. The literal meaning of this word is “to fashion alike”. It is translated in 1 Peter 1:14 as “fashioning”. “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.” It comes from the root word (*schema*) from which we get the English word “scheme” which is translated as “fashion” in 1 Corinthians 7:31 and Philippians 2:8.

The injunction from Romans 12:1-2 is very clear. The Christian is to go in the opposite direction of the fashion of the world. He is to do it consciously and deliberately. To have this new way of life, i.e., not to be controlled by the fashion of the world, it must begin with a renewed mind. Right thinking will lead to right living! There is only one way to think correctly. It is through the study of the Word of God. The Word of God will sanctify our minds and provide us with a new way of thinking. With the help and enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Christian will then have the strength not to allow the fashion of the world to dictate what is best for the Christian. The world may say: have a tattoo on your body because this is what “cool” people do. The Christian will remember from God’s Word in Leviticus 19:28 that it is wrong! Leviticus 19:28, “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.”

Another example is when the fashion is to dress like the world regardless of modesty and decency, the Christian will remember 1 Timothy 2:9-10, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” When the advertisement shouts at us to “buy-me!” and declares that this is the “in” thing which will last a lifetime, the Christian will remember 1 Corinthians 7:31, “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”



The Christian is to go in the opposite direction of the fashion of the world.



This “renewed” thinking is not an option if the Christian is to please God! This is the basis for living a life that is acceptable and pleasing in the sight of God as Romans 12:1 declares.

The fashion of this world has only one agenda - it is to make money out of you. From the spiritual perspective, it is to cause us to lose our Christian witness and become like the world. Do not forget that this world is controlled by the Prince of this world, i.e., Satan himself. Take counsel from the inerrant, infallible and perfect Word of God when it warns us in 1 John 2:15-17, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”



PUT FLESHLY LUSTS TO DEATH

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Romans 8:12-17

We Owe the Flesh No Sympathy (*Fight against the flesh*)

Some Christians seem to take a very gentle attitude towards sin as though they owe their own fleshly desires some sympathy and tolerance. They think that since they are still in their corrupt body and prone to the lust of the flesh, they must be tolerant and permit some space for sin to exist. But Paul says in verse 12 that Christians do not owe the flesh anything. You have to understand that fleshly lusts must be hated. It's been trying to kill you. Peter warned us in 1 Peter 2:11 that we

must "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Giving in to the flesh is like joining forces with your enemy and pay for your own destruction. You are not a debtor to the flesh.

Until you believe that your Christian life is an active warfare against fleshly lusts that lay wait for your soul, you will probably take an easy approach to your Christian life with no earnestness and vigilance. You got to have a wartime mindset; if not, your life is very precarious. The enemy has lulled you into sleep or into a peacetime mentality, as if nothing serious is at stake. And God, in His

mercy, has led you to read this article to wake you up and enlist you to fight a good fight.

Be prepared for an aggressive, 'no-mercy' approach to your sins. Read what Jesus has said, "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee:

it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire"

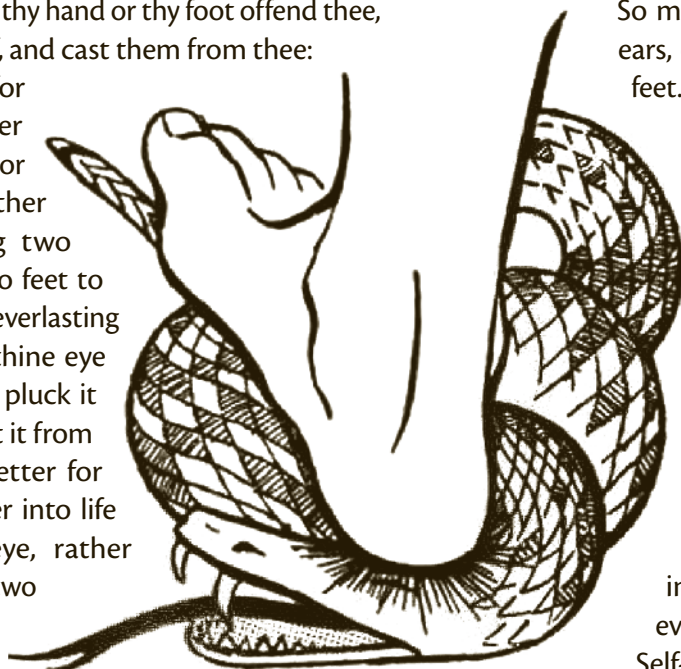
(Matthew 18:8-9). It

is a picture of the most radical kind of assault on our own sin. The Lord is calling you to consider the vanity of entertaining the fleshly lusts, for they will soon give you a deadly blow. So He says cut off your hand or your foot if you must keep it from stumbling your soul. You deal aggressively with your sins, not the sins of others.

Jesus' words call for very intense self-control. You don't let the flesh call the shots. You must have all the passions of your body and mind under control. You take them captive and decapitate them.

There is something about war that sharpens the senses . . . You hear a twig snap or the

rustling of leaves and you are in an attack mode. Someone coughs and you are ready to pull the trigger. Even after days of little or no sleep, war keeps us vigilant.



So make no peace with your ears, eyes, tongue, hands and feet. They will betray you like Judas who betrayed our Lord. If you allow them to control your life, you are permitting them to make war on your soul. Put to death the sinful deeds of your body.

The only way of obtaining self-control is by engaging yourself in an all-out war against every out-of-control desire. Self-control is a declaration of all-out war!

Self-control is a total attack against all the impulses in us that would be destroying our spiritual pursuit. It is a quick slaughter of all the impulses in our own selves that would make peace with our own sin and settle in with a peacetime mentality. It is the immediate crushing of every unwholesome craving. Kill right away the thoughts about the praise of men, fame and power, love for more money, temptations towards pornography, craving for more than food and drinks, desire for sensual satisfaction, etc. It is an absolute snubbing of every violent passion such as anger, jealousy, envy, unforgiveness, impatience, etc. It is also a total eradication of a sluggish or indifferent spirit towards spiritual and moral obligations.

Christianity is war. It is war on our own sinful impulses. Christianity is not a 'settled-in' and 'live-at-peace' with this world and our lust kind of religion. Romans 6:12 commands us, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." A similar call is found in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Christianity is crucifixion of our old self and new life in Christ. Our old self was crucified in order that our body of sin might be done away with! When Christ died, He broke the power of sin. We can kill sin because Christ has died to give us victory over sin. Now that our old self is crucified with Christ, we can mortify fleshly lusts. The Christian life is not a moral self-improvement, but the killing of sin, and living in the Spirit.

We Owe the Spirit Our Conformity (*Fight along with the Spirit*)

Now he continues in verse 13, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." You don't owe the flesh anything, but you owe the Spirit of God everything. He is going to make you alive in the resurrection (verse 11), and even now, you can only have victory over your sins "by the Spirit". Through the Spirit, you can put to death the deeds of the body. You owe your final resurrection life to the Spirit (verse 11); and the perseverance you need to make it to the resurrection as a believer in war with sin, you owe to the Spirit. If you try to survive as a Christian in any way other than "by the Spirit", you will not survive. You will die. This threat is real. The Scriptures demand that you fight to kill the fleshly lusts

by yielding to the Spirit of God whom Christ has given you.

How Can You Kill Sin through the Spirit?

Step One: Set Your Mind on the Things of the Spirit

Notice Romans 8:5-6 and how Paul speaks of the flesh and the Spirit (the same pair he contrasts here in verse 13): "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). For the mind set on the flesh is death (as verse 13a says), but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (as verse 13b says). So the first step in the answer is this: putting to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit involves "setting the mind on the things of the Spirit". You don't just look at the temptation and say "No". But if you are going to put it to death by the Spirit, you have to do more: you direct your mind, your heart, your spiritual focus another way, namely to the "things of the Spirit". So when you refuse lust, you right away engage in spiritual activities that the Spirit wants you to do.

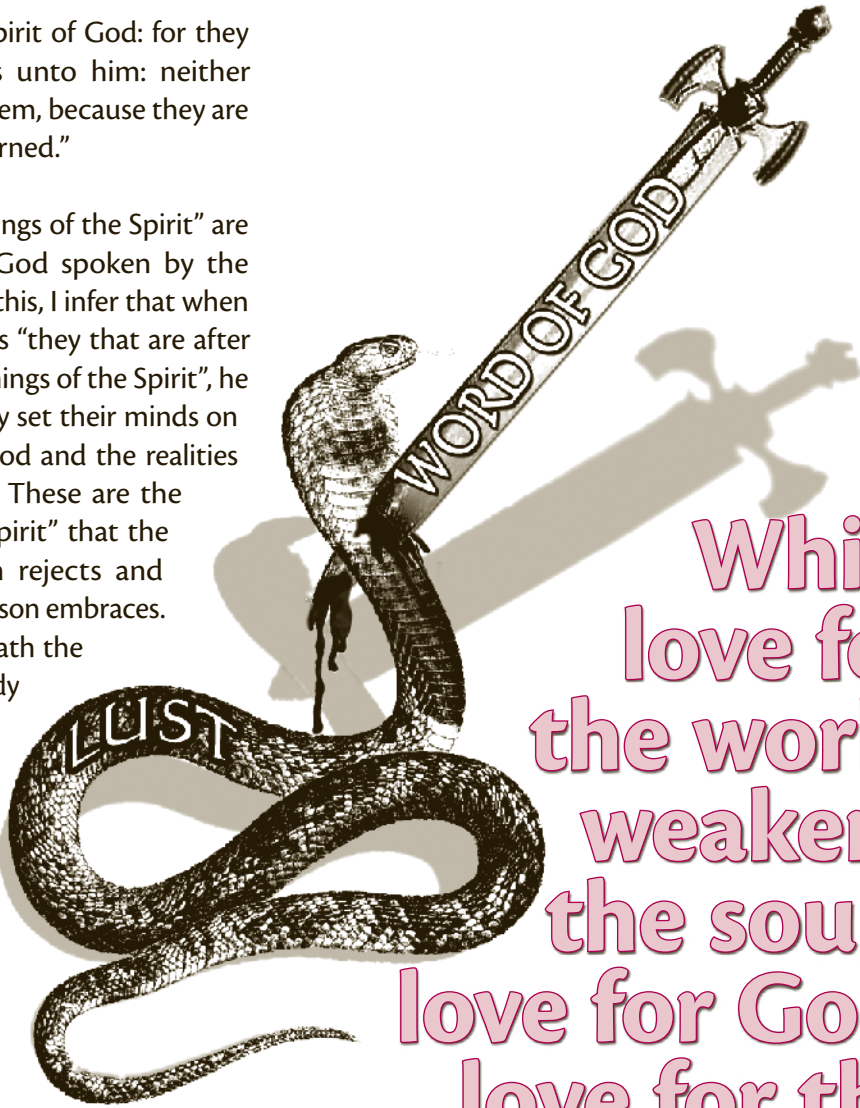
Step Two: Set Your Mind on the Word of God and all It Commands

What are "the things of the Spirit"? If our minds and hearts are going to be riveted on them in the hour of temptation so as to kill sin, what should we be looking at? Here the key text is 1 Corinthians 2:13-14 where Paul talks about his own teaching as God-inspired words. This is the only other place in the New Testament where the very phrase "things of the Spirit" is used. He speaks of his revelations like this: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. . . . (v. 13). But the natural man receiveth not the

things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

So here "the things of the Spirit" are the words of God spoken by the apostles. From this, I infer that when Romans 8:5 says "they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit", he means that they set their minds on the words of God and the realities they stand for. These are the "things of the Spirit" that the natural person rejects and the spiritual person embraces. So to put to death the deeds of the body "by the Spirit" is to "set your mind on the things of the Spirit", which we now understand to mean the words of God, and all that they prescribe.

This is especially significant because the "word of God" is called "the sword of the Spirit" in Ephesians 6:17. And swords are used for killing. So we are to kill the deeds of the body by the Spirit: by fixing our mind on "the things of the Spirit", by welcoming and embracing the "word of God" in our minds. Let us, therefore, mortify the lust of our flesh by wielding the sword of the Spirit which is the deadly sword for sin-killing.



While
love for
the world
weakens
the soul's
love for God;
love for the
Word revives
the soul's
love for God
and mortifies
its love for
the world.

VANITY OF THE MATERIAL WORLD

Lee Kim Shong

The sacred pages of the Bible open with these words, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Midway through the sacred Book, it is written, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep" (Psalm 127:1-2).

Material things are good gifts from God. Silver and gold are made by God. There are proper uses of them. God wants us to manage these things well as His stewards. God made the whole earth and put us to manage it. We should never allow material things to manage us. Material things may be good servants but they are terrible masters. We should use them to serve the Lord by giving to His cause and helping our fellow men. Otherwise we are wasting our lives on earth chasing after the wind.

From childhood to old age, we are very much influenced by materialism. What is materialism? Materialism is nothing short of putting material things above the

Creator. It is worshipping the created rather than the Creator Himself. It is a very common form of idolatry and the most popular religion that even the professed "atheist" practises it.

Let's look at what the Lord of the universe says in Psalm 127:1-2. It is useless to invest our waking hours in the pursuit of material things rather than God. What we get in the end is only headache, heartache and restlessness.

King Solomon, the son of David, was endowed with great wisdom and great wealth by God. He began his administration with a God-fearing attitude. He sought after God's will. He thirsted for wisdom. But as the days went by, he was very much influenced by materialism. He trusted in the power of horses. He married the daughter of Pharaoh plus many other princesses from the surrounding nations. As a result, his heart was not perfect before the Lord, unlike his father. Gradually, he was influenced to worship other gods by his non-believing wives. At the end of his life, he lamented the vanity of materialism. In the book of Ecclesiastes, he gave many warnings to people who put material things above God.



Materialism promises much but delivers little. “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?” (Ecclesiastes 5:10-11). Many people consider money as their goal in life and therefore pursue after wealth. But after earning much money, they find their lives empty.

Money will bring a lot of trouble and stress. When we have much money, we think of more money. We think of investing to get more money. But investment is a risky business. We may earn but we may also suffer loss. So investors have a lot of stress and trouble. If you have invested in the share market, your heartbeat will follow the movement of the share market. To cite a fact, there was a beautician who refused to let her clients listen to the news on business while they underwent treatment so as to avoid restlessness.

Ecclesiastes 5:11 tells us that many people will come to help us spend our money when we become rich. The bank officers, sales executives and fair-weather friends will flock to us in order to reap some benefits. The bank would want us to use their credit facilities. As a rule, the banks usually loan to the wealthy and not to the poor. The sales executives hope to reap commissions. Fair-weather friends will surround us in restaurants. When we have much wealth, we become who's who in town. Everybody greets us with a smile. But all these are not true friends. They will not be bothered if we are poor.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 says, “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and

on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” The profit here refers to eternal profit. By our old nature, we are short-sighted. We constantly substitute eternal profit with temporal profit. How many of us regret when we get older. Material things are helpful but they have their limitations. Not only can they not bring satisfaction, they may bring a lot of trouble instead. Ecclesiastes 2:23 warns against those who chase after material things rather than God, “For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.”

God does not want us to waste our lives but have an abundant life through Jesus Christ who said, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Come to believe in Jesus Christ and follow after Him rather than physical wealth.

Alexander the Great set out to conquer the world when he was in his early twenties. He defeated the mighty Persians who had many more soldiers than him. He marched further till the border of India. He wanted to conquer more land. But providence caused him to turn back. He died at his prime, aged 32. What a pity! Did not 1 Timothy 6:6-9 say, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”



MODEST APPAREL

Prabhudas Koshy

Is Our Dressing of Concern to God?

It was God who made the most appropriate clothes for Adam and Eve who had fallen into sin and shame. Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame. "They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:7). However, they still felt ashamed of their nakedness, and hid themselves among the trees in the garden. Adam confessed to the Lord, "because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10). Then we read, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). This act of God was a symbol of His provision of redemption and holiness. God was certainly interested in their need of proper dressing that the terrible shame, which resulted from their rebellion, might be covered.

Adam and Eve could not make appropriate clothes to cover their shame. So God gave them the appropriate kind of clothes that they needed. How can we now argue that it does not matter to God how we dress?

Our clothes should be a token or reminder of God's loving and holy provision for the eradication of our sin, guilt and shame. The Scripture uses

clothing as a symbol of God's redemption and blessings. In Isaiah 61:10, we read, "for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." In a similar manner, the Apostle Paul wrote, "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked" (2 Corinthians 5:3). In similar metaphorical terms, the Lord Jesus offered forgiveness to the sinning Laodicean church - "I counsel thee to buy of me . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. . ." (Revelation 3:18).

On the other hand, the Scripture uses the symbol of nakedness or immodest apparel as a symbol of filth, wickedness, shame and God's wrath. For example in Ezekiel 16:36, we read, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and



with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them.” In Revelation 16:15, the Lord uses “naked” as a term to signify sin - “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

So the act of God in the garden of Eden and the language of the Bible, clearly teach us that our manner of dressing is certainly an issue that matters to God.

Has God Given Us Guidelines on Proper Dressing?

Does the Bible give any guidelines on Christian dressing? Yes, most certainly.

Once I heard a Christian say, “No one tells me what to wear. It’s no one’s business what I wear.” This was said in defence of immodest dressing. Such an attitude reflects a rebellious mentality, especially when we are told by the Lord God Almighty how to dress.

Unregenerate people would want to live in conformity to the world. But Christians should be governed only by biblical principles. A Christian’s greatest concern should not be society’s current fashion, but God’s holy counsels. Christians are exhorted, “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” (Romans 12:2). In Ephesians 4:17-21, the believers are again reminded of the need to be different from the world in our thinking, mannerism and appearance - “ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of

the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.”

Let the Lord guide us in all matters of life, including our dressing. Why should we let the godless designers of the world decide for us what we should wear?

The following are some clear Scriptural guidelines concerning Christian dressing:

Do not Appear in the Clothes of the Opposite Sex

God has clearly spoken against women wearing man’s clothes and men wearing woman’s clothes. Deuteronomy 22:5 says, “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.”

In these days of unisex clothing, boys and girls, men and women all seem to wear the same kind of clothes. However, let all those who desire to please the Lord take note that God considers it an abomination for a Christian to appear in the clothes of the opposite sex.

Always Wear Modest Apparel

The Apostle Paul wrote, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety” (1 Timothy 2:9). The word “modest” means “properly restrained by a sense of propriety or seemliness”, “unassuming”, “chaste” or “pure”. It is the opposite of being lewd or sensual. The word is used synonymously with chastity, or purity of manners. In this sense, modesty is

thought of as a result of a pure mind. It also exhibits fear of disgrace and shame. “Modesty is the sweetest charm of female excellence, the richest gem in the diadem (crown) of her honour.”

Christians should be mindful to wear their clothes orderly, properly and decently. Christians, being ambassadors of the Most High King to the world, must appear in a way that will honour the Most Holy God. Would you expect someone who represents the highest-ranking official of a country to come dressed as a raggedly clad pauper? No, they would be dressed in a neat, orderly, and professional manner. In the same way, our outward appearance must be a reflection of Christ who dwells within us, and for whom we live in this world.

What a contradiction it is when a Christian wears a T-shirt with pictures and words that represent a sensual, materialistic, worldly lifestyle! What a contradiction it is that a Christian would dress in such a manner that he/she is a source of temptation to others!

Always Dress with “shamefacedness and sobriety”

Please note that in 1 Timothy 2:9, the word “modest” is associated with two other terms: “shamefacedness” and “sobriety”. “Shamefacedness” is

bashfulness or a strong sense of shame concerning one’s immodest appearance. From the use of the word “sobriety”, we are led to understand that modesty is the result of a conscious effort by a person to keep the heart free from sin, shame and guilt resulting from outward appearances and actions.

When you stand before a mirror and look at your dressing, what do you think about the way you appear? Do you then ask yourself, “Do I look ‘sexy?’” or “Do I look modest?” A Christian should feel an agonising shame within when he or she appears sensual and worldly. Such a feeling would help us to appear decent and modest at all times.

Ask yourself, “Why am I wearing this? Does this outfit glorify God and add strength to



my testimony as a Christian?" You may be surprised to discover there are many clothes in your wardrobe that are not appropriate.

Do not Dress and Behave like a Harlot

The opposite of shamefacedness and sobriety in dressing is described in Proverbs 7:10-13, "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 . . ."

This woman is impudent, which means "shameless". She is everything the modest woman is not. She is loud and stubborn. Towards men, she is anything but bashful. Her attire draws men's attention and advertises that she is a loose woman and available for them to look at and be tempted. She appears thoroughly carnal.

A woman whose attire exposes her flesh, or draws attention to the contour of her body is not modest or shamefaced. Her attire is that of an harlot, not of a woman professing godliness.

Modern dressing often fits the biblical description of "a harlot's dress". Most of today's fashion designers care only to feed the lust of carnal men and women. They do not care about what God classifies as modest.

May we appear like godly people and not like carnal men and harlots. It is incongruous for women, who profess to know God, to dress immodestly. It is a shame when seductively dressed women (professing to be saved) divert

men's minds to immoral imaginations during worship service.

"What becomes women professing godliness are hemlines that cover the knees when seated, and necklines that are necklines indeed. Attire that is full, rather than form fitting. Skirts and dresses instead of pants. Skirts with hemlines below the knee, but with slits to mid-thigh, are anything but modest."

Do not Overdress

In 1 Timothy 2:9, 10, we read that women should adorn themselves modestly and "not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

Christian women should not dress to draw the attention of men to themselves or to show off their wealth. (Men should also avoid this temptation.) We must lead a quiet and gentle life.

The outward appearance must never become our focus or chief end in life. We must not seek first how to be outwardly attractive, but instead how to adorn ourselves with godliness. 1 Samuel 16:7 drives home this point: "...For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." God is concerned with the beauty of our hearts which will be reflected in proper outward appearance. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3-4).



CHRISTIANS IN THE FIERY TRIAL

Prabhudas Koshy

A new generation of men arose to take the place of the Apostles of Christ as the leaders of the church. God had prepared them under the ministry of the Apostles. One of the foremost of these was a man named Polycarp. He lived between AD 70 and 155. This was a time when the Roman emperor unleashed terrible persecution against Christians.

Polycarp and many other Christians were arrested on the charge of being members of a dangerous cult. The arrested Christians were brought to an arena where a large angry mob had gathered. The rulers of the Roman Empire accused the Christians of being "godless" because they did not worship the Emperor and other Roman gods.

They were ordered to renounce their faith in Christ. Then they were threatened with death if they would not deny the Lord Jesus Christ. A few of them, who were shaken by the threats, gave up their faith in Christ and swore allegiance to Caesar as their lord. Though these few escaped death, the rest fearlessly chose to face death. The Roman governor ordered that lions be brought into the arena that those who refused to give up their faith might be fed to the wild beasts.

As the wild beasts were being brought in, the governor turned to a young Christian and shouted, "Come now. You are young. A lifetime awaits you. It's not too late. Some of

your friends have just sworn their pledge to Caesar. If you will do like them, I will remove this beast, and you will live." The young man shook his head to indicate that he will not swear his allegiance to Caesar.

The angry mob in the arena shouted, "Death to the godless." Soon a lion was sent in his direction; and it crept nearer, ready to pounce on the young man who stood firmly for Christ, his Saviour. In an instant, the lion attacked him with a powerful swipe. As he fell onto the ground, the animal tore him asunder. He died, but he entered into the presence of his Lord where heavenly and eternal pleasures awaited him.

The anger of the mob and the Roman leaders was so great that they shouted, "We want

Polycarp, their leader! Death to the godless. Death to Polycarp!" The whole arena was filled with the shout "Death to Polycarp! Death to the godless!"

A small group of soldiers brought Polycarp into the arena and hauled him to the governor. Upon seeing

Polycarp, the crowd erupted with a roar, "Death to the godless! Death to Polycarp."

The governor queried, "Are you Polycarp, the teacher of the Christians?"

"I am," answered Polycarp.

The governor then said, "I have respect for your old age. Curse Christ; and swear by



Caesar, I will release you." He also demanded that Polycarp point to the Christians, and say, "Away with the godless." Instead, Polycarp pointed to the angry mob and said, "Away with the godless."

Hearing Polycarp, the crowd became very agitated and called for his death. Then the governor tried a second time to get Polycarp deny the Lord Jesus. Against all the persuasiveness of the governor, Polycarp said, "For eighty-six years I have been His servant, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who save me?"

Hearing the words of Polycarp, the governor shouted again, "Swear by Caesar!"

To this, Polycarp replied, "If you imagine for a moment that I would do that, then I think you pretend that you don't know who I am. Hear it plainly. I am a Christian."

"I will throw you to the wild beasts," threatened the governor.

"Call them," said Polycarp.

"If you are not afraid of the wild beasts, I will have you burned alive!"

Polycarp stood unafraid of the new threats. He said, "You threaten me with fire that burns for a little while and goes out. But you are ignorant of the fire of eternal punishment which is prepared for the ungodly. Why do you wait? Do what you want to do to me."

To this, the crowd shouted, "Burn him."

Soldiers tied Polycarp to a pole and surrounded him with straw and oil-soaked timber.

At that moment, Polycarp prayed, saying, "... Father, I bless you that you have deemed me worthy of this day and hour, that I might be numbered among the martyrs... May I today be welcome before thy face as a rich and acceptable sacrifice. To thee be glory both now and for the ages to come. Amen."

The soldiers ignited the bonfire and torched Polycarp to his death. However, his courage and unswerving loyalty to the Lord emboldened Christians throughout the Roman Empire to faithfully serve Christ.

Children, may you also be unashamed witnesses of Christ. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).



BIBLE TRIVIA - GENESIS 31

Sarah Yong

READ THE TEXT FROM YOUR BIBLE. THE UNDERLINED WORDS HAVE BEEN SPILT BACKWARDS. UNSCRAMBLE THE LETTERS AND WRITE THE ANSWER IN THE BRACKET PROVIDED.

1. The LORD told Jacob to nruter () to his derdnik ().
2. He called his seviw () and told them what the legna () of God had spoken to him.
3. Jacob rose up and set his sons and wives upon slemac () and carried away all his goods and elttac ().
4. When Laban discovered that they had fled, he took his brethren and deusrup () after them seven days yenruoj ().
5. God came to Laban in a maerd () and dekuber () him.
6. The Lord had seen Jacob's noitcilffa () and the ruobal () of his hands.
7. Laban and Jacob made a tnanevoc () as a witness between them, and Jacob offered secifircas () to the Lord.
8. So Laban desselb () his children, and detraped ().

MEMORY VERSE

FILL IN THE MISSING VOWELS. (HINT: a=↑↑, e=⇒, i=↓↓, o=⇐)

"And be not c _ nf _ rm _ d to this w _ rld: but be ye tr _ nsf _ rm _ d by the
 r _ n _ w _ ng of your m _ nd, that ye may pr _ ve what is that g _ d,
 and _ cc _ pt _ bl _ , and p _ rf _ ct will of G _ d." R _ m _ ns 12:2

Answers to Vol. 7, Issue 3 - Bible Trivia - Genesis 29 & 30

p. 23 - (A) 3; (B) 2; (C) 7; (D) 7, 14; (E) 1; (F) 6, 1; (G) 4.

Jacob's last son: BENJAMIN

Bible Witness

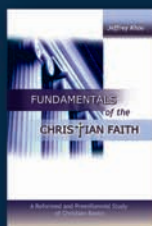
Media Ministry

This is a ministry established seven years ago by Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church for the purpose of spreading the Word of God around the world through modern media. The Lord has blessed Bible Witness Media Ministry to effectively disseminate the Gospel seed in Singapore and around the world through some of its special efforts mentioned below:-

The ministry has been maintained through the prayer and generous support of God's people. We praise God for all who have stood by our side and encouraged us to this day. We continue to covet the support of God's people that the efforts of Bible Witness Media Ministry may remain fruitful for the Lord's glory. (Your support for Bible Witness may be sent by cheque made payable to "Bible Witness".)

PUBLICATIONS

- ☛ Bible Witness magazine
- ☛ Gospel tracts
- ☛ We also provide help in publishing books by Far Eastern Bible College



BOOK ROOM & LIBRARY

- ☛ A book room is opened for the purpose of making sound Christian books available.
- ☛ We are also in the process of developing a useful Christian library at the same location.
- ☛ A lunch hour Bible Study is held every Wednesday from 12:45 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the book room facility.

CDs & DVDs

- ☛ Audio, video and animated media programmes for children's edification
- ☛ Sermons and other edifying materials



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- ☛ Our website provides downloadable version of the magazine and also discussion questions based on articles of recent issues.
- ☛ We also provide a 24-hour web radio with sound Christian music, sermons, children's programme and other edifying segments.