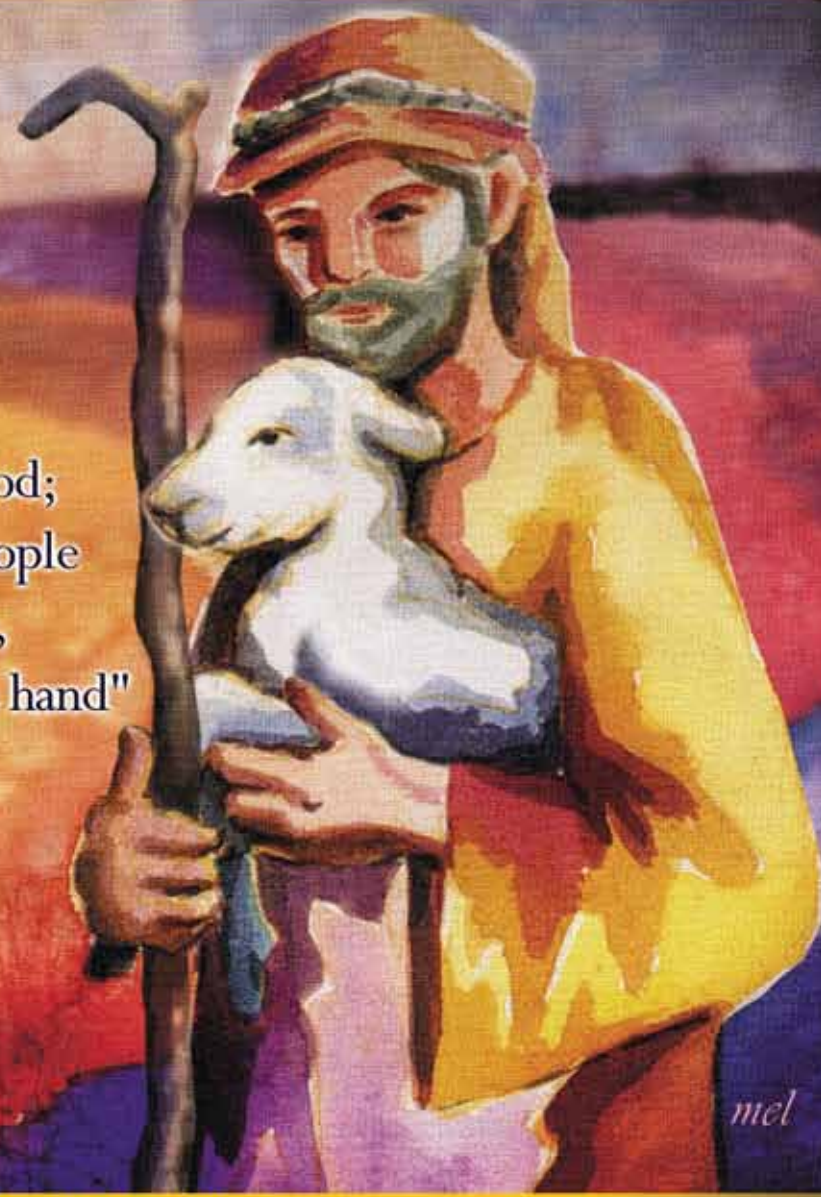


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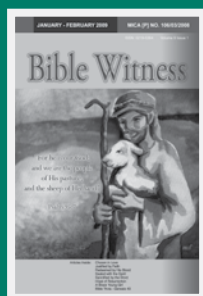
"For He *is* our God;
and we *are* the people
of His pasture,
and the sheep of His hand"

Psalm 95:7

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- Sealed with the Spirit
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- Hope of Resurrection
- A Brave Young Girl
- Bible Trivia - Genesis 43



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From the Editor...

Dear Reader,

Greetings in the name of our ever merciful Saviour and Lord,
Jesus Christ!

You might have noticed that the last issue of our magazine (Bible Witness, Nov-Dec 2008) was not distributed. It was the first time since the inception of the magazine 8 years ago that such a disruption to its publishing has occurred. I sincerely regret that I could not make it available to you on time. Both issues (Nov-Dec 2008 and Jan-Feb 2009) are now combined for your reading and edification.

Labouring in many different Gospel-fronts has not been without its "wear and tear". In the last quarter of 2008, I had been overwhelmed by the sheer volume of ministerial duties of Gethsemane B-P Church, her missions and other preaching engagements in various camps of sister churches. A terrible exhaustion had overcome my sickly body and tired mind, incapacitating me from getting the last issue of the magazine ready for print.

Now I rejoice in the Lord for His rejuvenating and strengthening grace which He has poured upon me to work again on the magazine and get it ready for you once again. It is indeed a great privilege and joy to have His abiding presence and power to bring the wonderful truths of His perfect Word to you through the publication of Bible Witness. May the blessings of the Most High God rest upon all my helpers in the Lord's work, and also upon all of you who cheerfully support us through your prayers, gifts and encouragement!

Yours to serve through life,

Prabhudas Koshy

Chosen In Love

**Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.
Jeremiah 31:3**



Whenever the subject of God's election is considered, we cannot help but be amazed by God's wonderful love that has chosen us before the foundation of the world that we might be saved through Christ Jesus. Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." The expression "in love", when considered in relation to the following verse, would read, "in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:5). And thus, we are

(1) chosen in Him (Christ); (2) chosen to be holy and without blame; and (3) chosen in love – all before the foundation of the world. Although we cannot fully grasp how God could choose us before the foundation of the world, we can rejoice in this fact and praise Him, for He has chosen us in love.

It was out of His own goodwill and pleasure that God loved and chose a people to be saved. It must be said that God's choosing (election) is not based upon anything on the part of the ones chosen – not on any foreknown faith, nor any foreseen obedience, or any other good quality in them, but simply

on God's good pleasure. How true that old saying "God does not find, but makes men holy!" It is evident, indeed, that none is chosen because he is holy or blameless, but some are chosen in order that they may become so.

Let us ponder upon this wonderful truth that God's choosing was prompted by love. God's words in Jeremiah 31:3 are very instructive of His choosing love. God said, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

His love for the elect is sovereign

Firstly, His love that elected a people for Himself is sovereign. The sovereign nature of His election love is clearly recorded in the Scripture. The Lord has said, "Yea, I have loved..." (cf. Jeremiah 31:3). In Deuteronomy 7:7-8, while Moses addressed Israel, he said, "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you." Similarly, in Exodus 33:19, the Lord has declared, "I... will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." The Apostle John also declared the sovereign nature of God's love when he wrote in 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us."

God's love does not depend upon anything outside of God Himself. The great fire of love that burns in God's heart towards His elect is self-existent and independent of external influence. Though we are the object of His love, yet His love for us is not at all imparted,

awakened or motivated by us. God set His love upon Israel and chose them to be His people, not because of Israel's worth or love, but simply because God loved them. In love God chose His elect in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. That was not because of anything in the elect. His love is not initiated, motivated or sustained by our goodness or love towards Him. His love is sovereign. He loved us according to the good pleasure of His will, His own sovereign determination.

God's love is altogether free, He alone being its source. It emerges out of His mere good pleasure. No reason can be found for this but only in the bosom of God. God's reason for loving and choosing a people is in Himself.

His love for the elect is personal

The Lord said, "Yea, I have loved thee" (cf. Jeremiah 31:3). God's election love is personal, i.e. He loves individually those whom He elected. As someone said, "His loving a large number is by His loving each one in that number." It is not mere impersonal conception of supreme benevolence. It is God loving an individual "like as a father pitieth his children" (cf. Psalm 103:13).

When God reveals His election love through preaching of the Gospel to sinners, He means it. He assures them of His love through His Holy Spirit. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5). True believers will have clear memories of God's personal, loving dealings through the Holy Spirit in their hearts. It is certainly the election love of God reaching out to His elect.

His love for the elect is timeless

His love for the elect is everlasting. The Lord said in Jeremiah 31:3, “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” God’s love for His elect is from everlasting to everlasting. It is with an everlasting love that He loves them. God has not loved us with a love which will die out after a certain length of time: His love, like Himself, is “from everlasting to everlasting”.

Time never knew the beginning of God’s election love; and eternity shall never know its end. There has never been a moment when the Lord has not loved His people. There shall be no pause nor break in the love of God for His chosen people. His love towards them knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning. His love towards His chosen ones is a love that is firm and absolute, unchangeable and invincible.

God in His love will preserve His chosen ones through all eternity. Consider what Paul said in Romans 8:35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” Then in Romans 8:38-39, Paul affirmed, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The love of God follows every elect of God. It persists even though they have fallen into spiritual declension and backsliding. The love of God goes after them to sanctify and secure them for Himself. It pursues them

throughout life till death, and through death into immortality.

His love for the elect is effective

His love for the elect is certainly effectual. In Jeremiah 31:3, it is said that “therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee”. His love is the attractive force that draws rebellious sinners to Himself. The lovingkindness of God draws men from sin, from self, from Satan, from despair, from the world and from hell. As an old preacher once said, the love of God is “the heavenly magnet” that draws His chosen ones away from every evil that ensnares their souls.

Nothing shall hinder or divert His love for His chosen ones. It shall accomplish the salvation of the ones whom He has loved from all eternity. Think of the multitudes of persons whom He has drawn to His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ!

O, how gently, how tenderly, how silently and sometimes how mysteriously His love draws His elect to His salvation! God’s love that chooses a man will seek him out and call him to salvation, wherever he may be. It called Abraham out of idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees; the Samaritan woman out of her ignominious adulterous life in Sychar; Nicodemus and Paul, from the school of the Pharisees who were Christ’s sworn enemies. In whatsoever dunghill God’s elect are hidden, election will seek them out and bring them home.


Even when we were enemies, even when we have no love for God, even when we have gone astray and wandered far from Him,

even when we are undeserving, God so loved us that He sacrificed His only begotten Son. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8; cf. John 3:16). "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). His love has prepared for us the perfect atonement to save us from our sins and from eternal death, and to give us eternal life. Indeed, what manner of love this is! It is infinite, immeasurable, immense – beyond comprehension and beyond compare.

Certainly, there is nothing that can possibly separate us from the love of God; no person or condition of life, neither outward difficulties nor inward distresses, neither principalities nor power, is able to unclasp the grip of God's love by which we are securely and firmly held. The Lord Jesus clearly said in John 10:27-29, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Conclusion

The love of God towards His chosen ones is the greatest love of all. It is perfect love. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1a).

What a great comfort and assurance to know this wonderful truth that we are chosen and beloved of God from all eternity through all eternity! Before the world began, God knew each of us and loved us, and saved us and drew us unto Himself, kept and preserved us to the very end. We can only say like the psalmist, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:17). 



**Reggor
Galarpe**



**& Prabhudas
Koshy**

**"Thou didst seek us when we sought thee not;
didst seek us indeed that we might seek Thee."**

Augustine

Justified by Faith

Reformation Day

We remember the people of the Reformation—great men of God like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox and others. While remembering these people, we must not forget what they stood for—the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith and in particular, the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, based on Scripture alone, without the need for personal works, or the merits of others, or the traditions of the church.

The Roman Catholic Church, for a thousand years, had preached another gospel—a gospel not of grace but of works. The Catholic Church forbade the common folk from reading the Bible. Only the clergy or the priests could read and interpret the Scriptures. This led to many false teachings and interpretations of the Scriptures. Idolatrous doctrines and superstitious practices like the worship of Mary, of saints and of angels, transubstantiation, baptismal regeneration, indulgences, penance, etc. blinded the common folk to the wonderful truths of salvation as taught by Christ in His Word. The people in the Dark Ages were ignorant of the Gospel light until God by divine intervention sent out His light and His truth through His

**Therefore being
justified by faith,
we have peace with
God through our
Lord Jesus Christ.**

Romans 5:1



servants, the reformers, the chief of whom was Martin Luther.

Faith not works

Martin Luther was a sincere and devout Catholic monk who studiously and religiously followed the ways of the Catholic Church. He testified, “I was indeed a pious monk, and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever a monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it.” But he found no release from the guilt of

sin, and no peace with God until one day when he read the Holy Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit gave him understanding to know and believe that salvation was not by works but by the grace of God alone through faith in Jesus Christ. While teaching the book of Romans in the University of Wittenberg, he discovered that the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures differed from that of the Catholic Church. The Church says, salvation is by works, but the Bible says, “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Catholic Church says, believe in the Church, but the Bible says, believe in Christ, “But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 10:8-11). Suddenly, everything became clear to him, “Not I but Christ! Not works but faith!”

What is justification?

Justification by faith alone became one of the doctrinal pillars of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation. What is justification? The Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q33) has an excellent answer: “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” In other words, when a sinner confesses his

sins and accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour, God declares him righteous just as if he has not sinned, clothes him with the righteousness of Christ and cleanses him from all his sins by the precious blood of Christ. Justification sounds like “just as if you have not sinned”. That is what it means, for the biblical word—“justify”—is a legal term used by a judge to declare a person “Not guilty”, just as if he has not sinned. By faith, a sinner makes peace with the thrice holy God and becomes a saint on account of Christ.

Relationship between faith and works

The Catholic Church objects to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, for according to them, works must be included, quoting James 2:20, “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” The Liberals likewise attack the doctrine of justification by faith alone by questioning the integrity and inerrancy of the Scriptures. They say that Scripture contradicts itself when it speaks of justification, for Romans 4:1-3 says Abraham was justified by faith alone and not by works at all, but James 2:21-24 says Abraham was justified not by faith alone but by works also. So how do we explain this? It is very simple, just study the contexts of both epistles and ask the right questions.

The context of the book of Romans tells us that Paul was addressing sinners or unbelievers (Romans 1-3), and answering the question “What saves?” The answer, “Not works, but faith alone.” He went on to prove this by quoting Genesis 15:6 that “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3).

James, on the other hand, was addressing those who profess to have faith but do not show it in their lives or by their conduct. James was thus not answering the question “What saves?” but “What kind of faith saves?” The kind of faith that saves is the kind that will lead to a changed heart and mind, that will result in a godly and Christlike life. James proved this to be the case by using Abraham as an example. Abraham was saved by faith, no doubt about it (James 2:23), but he showed it by his works when he offered Isaac to be sacrificed in obedience to God’s command (James 2:21). This proves that Abraham’s faith was not fake but genuine. It was not a mere profession but a true possession of faith.


Thus, Paul and James did not contradict but complemented each other. Both believed the salvation equation to be: Faith = Salvation + Works. Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves will bring about a sanctified life of good works in obedience to the Word of God.

Distinction between justification and sanctification

There is a need to distinguish between justification and sanctification. The Catholic Church sees no distinction between the two because it has a false salvation equation which is Faith + Works = Salvation, but the Bible teaches Faith = Salvation + Works, and distinguishes between justification and sanctification. Know that good works come *after* justification, *not before*, for:

1. Justification is a *one-time act* of God whereas sanctification is an *ongoing activity* of God.
2. Justification is God’s work for us *from the outside* whereas sanctification is God’s work on us *from the inside*.
3. Justification happens *during conversion* whereas sanctification occurs *after conversion*.
4. Justification concerns the *root of salvation* whereas sanctification involves the *fruit of salvation*.

Justification is like the engine carriage of a train which gives it life and power to move all the passenger or cargo carriages that come after it. Without the engine, the train is lifeless and useless. Without justification, the sinner is lifeless and hopeless, dead and condemned in his sins. But when justification takes place, the sinner becomes a saint; saved and alive in Christ; sanctification automatically follows and the Holy Spirit living within him enables him to live a life that will be more and more Christlike.

Let us then examine ourselves. Are we truly saved? Do we have genuine faith? Faith alone saves, and we know we have true faith and are saved when we see the Lord changing us to be more and more like Him as the days go by, bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Do we see this? If not, let us repent of our sins and get right with God. Make peace with Him and be justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, believing in the Scriptures alone. 



Jeffrey Khoo

Redeemed by His Blood

Man's redemption from sin is wrought by God through the shedding of blood in the death of His Son. Everyone who trusts in Christ's sacrifice of His body and blood on the cross shall be saved from the damnation of unrepentant sinners in eternal hell unto eternal life in heaven.

All through the history of the Christian church, the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ has been a precious and important doctrine. Many favourite hymns of the church have the blood of Christ as their theme. For example, "Are You Washed in the Blood?", "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood", "There is Power in the Blood", "Nothing but the Blood" and "Saved by the Blood".

In this article, the Scriptural promises of redemption and its accompanying blessings through the blood of Christ are delineated.

Jesus promised eternal life through His blood

According to John 6:53-56, Jesus told the Jews that if they do not partake of His "flesh" and "blood", they cannot have eternal life: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and



Isaiah 53:6-7

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,..."

I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."

Though some have taken these sayings of Jesus as referring to the elements of the Lord's Table, the context testifies to the "perpetual eating by faith" of the sacrifice

of Jesus Christ on the cross. A comparison of the two verses (v 40 and v 54) found in this passage (6:40-59) helps us to see how one can “eat” His flesh and “drink” His blood. It shows that the verbs “seeth” and “believeth” (v 40) are parallel to “eateth” and “drinketh” (v 54). Jesus is therefore talking about the importance of one’s faith in the sacrifice of His body and the shedding of His blood on the cross in order to obtain eternal life.

Jesus said in verse 56 that “he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him”. The present participle form of the Greek terms for “eateth” and “drinketh” implies that one’s faith in the blood and death of Jesus must be a continuing one. In other words, only the soul which continually feeds on the atoning power of Christ’s blood and death can enter into union with Him. Christ’s flesh and blood offered on the cross is life-giving to the soul of every believer.

Jesus offers eternal life to all who would put their trust in His redemptive work on the cross where His body was sacrificed and His blood shed. So according to Jesus, it is the faith in His blood sacrifice that gives eternal life.

Jesus promised an irrevocable covenantal relationship through His blood

In Matthew 26:28, while Jesus was instituting the sacrament of the bread and wine, He said, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (cf. Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25-27). Jesus mentioned two important salvific functions of His blood. First, His blood was shed to establish a

new covenant between God and man; and second, His blood was also shed for the remission of sins.

The word “testament” refers to God’s covenantal relationship with His people. It refers to God’s action whereby man is brought to God as His people. While God’s covenant draws people to Him, all those who are outside God’s covenant remain His enemies.

Both the old and new covenants involve the shedding of blood. When God made covenants with Noah and Abraham, those covenants were ratified with blood (Genesis 8:20; 15:9-10). When the covenant at Sinai was ratified, “Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words” (Exodus 24:4-8). The old covenant was sealed with the blood of an animal sacrifice. This blood typified the blood of Christ under the new covenant (cf. Hebrews 9). As the commentator, Lenski, wrote, “The old covenant could be written in animal blood because it consisted of promise; the new testament could be written only in the blood of the Son of God because it conveys the complete fulfilment of the promise, the actual purchase of our redemption.

In other words, it was impossible to make a new covenant without the shedding of the blood of Christ. Without His blood, there can be no new covenant. The only means of establishing the new covenant was through the shedding of Christ’s blood. The shedding of the Messiah’s blood was the divine design for the redemption of His new covenant people. In essence, Jesus was saying that

His blood was shed to ratify and seal the new covenant.

Why is Christ's blood necessary to establish the new covenant? The Most Holy God cannot enter into a covenantal relationship with those who remain in sin and in its judgment. Before people can be brought into His covenant, they must be purged of all sin. When Jeremiah prophesied about the new covenant, he said, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant ... this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people ... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Therefore, the forgiveness of sin must be obtained before people can be brought into the new covenant. According to God's law, for sins to be forgiven, blood must be shed (Leviticus 17:11). It is in this perspective that Jesus said in Matthew 26:28, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Jesus promised the remission of sins through His blood

Concerning His blood, Jesus also said that it "is shed for many for the remission of sins". Jesus was in effect saying that His blood of the new testament was shed on behalf of many for the purpose of the remission of sins.

The original Greek word for "remission" literally means "let pass; passing over". In the

Greek translation of the Old Testament, this word appears 22 times in Leviticus 25 and 27 with reference to the year of Jubilee, and five times in Deuteronomy 15:1-9 with reference to the release from debts in the year of Jubilee. In general, it is used for the release of captives and slaves (Isaiah 61:1; Jeremiah 34:8, 15, 17; Ezekiel 46:17), and once it is used in the sense of forgiveness (Leviticus 16:26). In the New Testament, it is used 15 times in the sense of forgiveness (cf. Mark 1:4; Luke 1:77; Acts 2:38; Hebrews 9:22), and twice to refer to a release from captivity (Luke 4:18). The word, then, conveys the idea of forgiveness as a release from the bondage of sin and its punishment. It is to forgive us and free us from all our sins that Jesus shed His blood.

The apostles reiterated the redemptive power of His blood

In the epistles, including the Acts of the Apostles and Revelation, there are more than 20 references to Christ's blood and its significance in the atonement. It occupies a central position in apostolic thought. In the epistles, we see phrases such as "the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 1:7), "the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19), "the blood of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:16; Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 9:14), "the blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27), "the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14; 12:11). The apostles also used various terms to describe the significance of Christ's blood in His atoning work such as "purchased", "redeemed", "justified", "cleansed", "made nigh", "made peace", "propitiation" and "covenant".

Purchased with Christ's blood: Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28 that God has

purchased His church “with his own blood”. By using the word “purchased”, Paul was referring to the church as a peculiar people whom God has gained for Himself. The peculiarity of this acquisition is in the fact that God has purchased His people “with his own blood”. The preposition “with” expresses the means; this blood was the price with which the church was purchased.

The price was “His blood”. Whose blood? It was the blood of God incarnate, the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Jesus is fully God and fully man. The church was bought by the shed blood of Christ, the Son of God.

Propitiation in Christ’s blood: The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 3:25 that God has set forth Christ “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God”. The context of this verse is about God’s wrath against sin and His justification of all who believe in Jesus Christ (Romans 1-3). In this verse, Paul explains how the sinner is justified. Paul is saying that we are justified by faith in Christ’s shed blood because He is our propitiation.

The Greek word for “propitiation” is also found in Hebrews 9:5 and here, it is translated as “mercy seat”. We will understand the above statement of Paul in Romans 3:25 if we know how the “mercy seat” is related to the propitiation of the sins of the people in the Old Testament. Once a year, on the day of atonement, the Jewish high priest took the blood of the sacrificial animal and went into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle it on the “mercy seat” (i.e. the cover of the ark of the covenant) in order to atone for the sins of the whole nation. In the ark of the covenant

were deposited the stone tables of the law which condemned the sins of the people. The mercy seat covered the judgment (the law) of God. It was only when the mercy seat was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificial animal that it effectively covered the sins of the people from God’s judgment. The blood of the animals sprinkled upon the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant was an illustration of what the blood of Christ would do when applied to believing sinners, that is, “for the remission of sins” (Romans 3:25).

Propitiation, then, must be understood from its scriptural usage as God’s merciful provision of Christ in order that God’s just wrath against our sins might be appeased through His blood shed at His death on the cross. In the death of Christ, we have the demonstration of God’s mercy and justice because He took the initiative to send His beloved Son into the world to shed His blood in order to cover us from His wrath. In short, if Christ’s blood was not shed, there would never be a way to avert God’s wrath against our sins.

Justified by His blood: The Apostle Paul wrote, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:9). The word “justified” in reference to our relation to God implies that we are recognized in His sight as free from condemnation, and as having had all the requirements of His justice satisfied. We are declared righteous not because of our moral uprightness, but because Christ has suffered the punishment of our sins thus removing the condemnation we face. When Paul said in Romans 5:9 that we are “justified by his blood”, he was actually saying that for our justification, God takes Christ’s blood

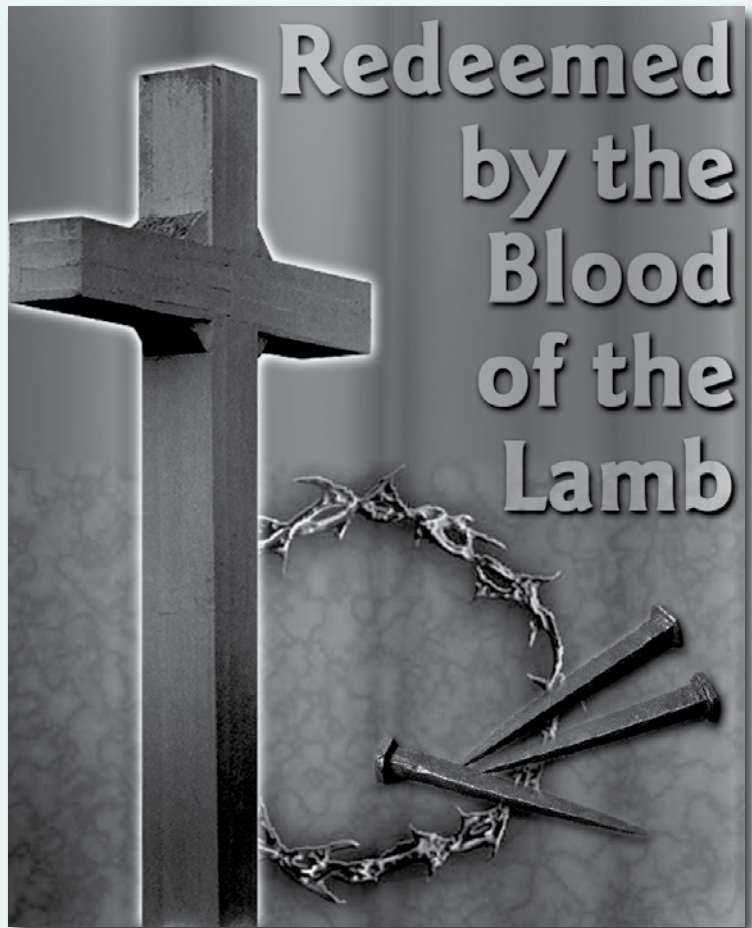
into consideration, and our faith relies on the atoning power of that blood.

Redemption through Christ's blood: In Ephesians 1:7, Paul wrote, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." He likewise wrote to the Colossians, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

"Redemption" was a common word in the language of the ordinary people in their everyday life. It referred to the process of securing the release of a slave or a captured soldier by paying a ransom. This buying back of slaves and prisoners from their captivity was the basic idea in redemption.

Christ's blood is the ransom paid for our redemption. To pay the ransom for our redemption from sin and wrath, He had to go through a "bloody" death. His blood was a needed payment. So Peter said, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The ransom which Christ has paid, even His blood, was something of infinitely greater



value than silver and gold. It was the precious blood of Christ. All the treasures of the world cannot redeem any man, and save him from his sinful nature. Only Christ's blood can be the ransom because it is "precious".

Forgiveness in Christ's blood: There is another aspect to the significance of Christ's blood in our redemption as taught in Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14, namely the "forgiveness of sins". In Ephesians 1:7, we read, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Colossians 1:14 says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." In both verses, Paul also said that we are redeemed by His blood.

Made nigh by Christ's blood: Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:13, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Like the Ephesians, all those who have been Gentiles were once "far off" from God. They were not considered God's people. It is by means of the blood of Christ that we are brought near to God. It brings us "near" or into union with God by removing our sins. As Christ's blood remits our iniquities which separate us from God, it becomes the means of our nearness or access to Him.

Made peace through Christ's blood: In Colossians 1:20, Paul says that Christ's blood reconciles us to God, "having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself ..." The Greek word for "made peace" concerns "bringing about a cessation of hostilities", and thus "to make peace or reconciliation".

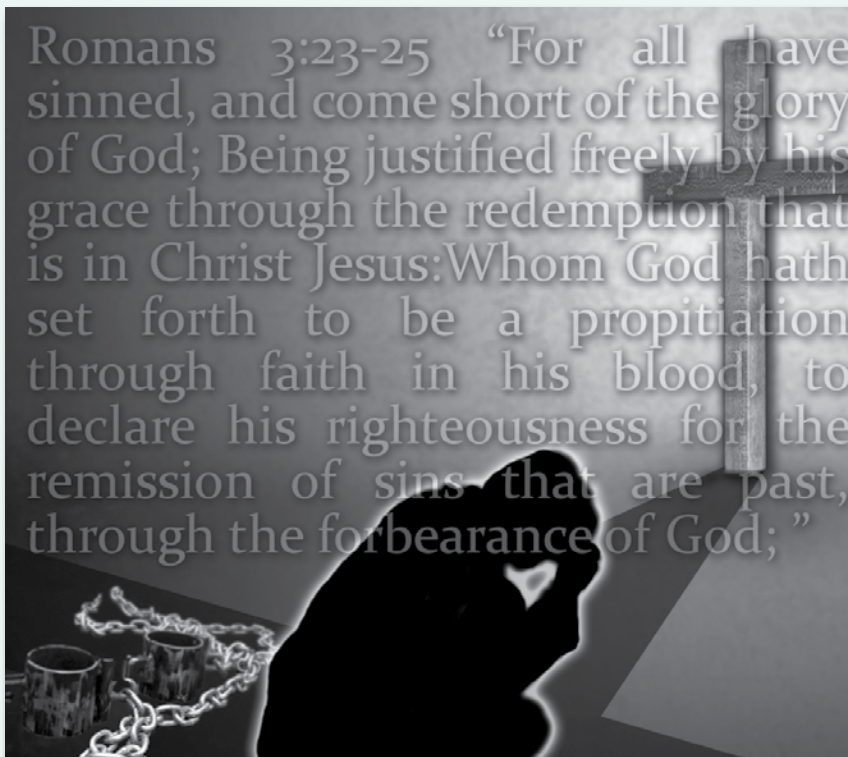
As sinners, all men live as enemies of God. The cessation of enmity between God and man is Paul's subject of discussion here.

In His sacrificial death, Christ has removed God's enmity against us because He has paid the price of our redemption by means of His blood. The blood of Jesus Christ that was shed on the cross is the means of our reconciliation.

Purging of conscience by Christ's blood: The author of Hebrews, while explaining the excellence of Christ's sacrifice in contrast to the animal sacrifices under the old covenant, said, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). The blood of animals cannot save; only the blood of Christ does. The blood of Christ purges our

conscience. In 1 John 1:7, we read, "...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." In both Hebrews 9:14 and 1 John 1:7, the blood of Christ is said to possess the power to cleanse. God requires the shedding of Christ's blood for the remission of our sins.

Entering into God's presence by Christ's blood: The ultimate purpose of the atonement



in Christ's blood which was shed at His sacrificial death is to grant boldness to believers - "to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

Under the old covenant, no one was allowed to enter the inner sanctuary except the high priest, and even that was done only once a year with an animal sacrifice. But now, in Christ and by means of His blood that purges our conscience from all sin, we can enter into the presence of God with boldness. By virtue of Christ's sacrificial blood given once-for-all at Calvary, believers may enter the presence of God without hindrance and without the need for further sacrifices. The blood of Jesus Christ accounts for all our sins, and as we trust in His atoning blood, we can also come with complete boldness before God, claiming all His promises and blessings, even heaven. The primary basis on which we can draw near to God in faith is the blood of Jesus.

The new covenant in Christ's blood: In the book of Hebrews, the blood of Jesus Christ is referred to three times as the "blood of the covenant" (10:29) or "blood of the everlasting covenant" (13:20). The author of Hebrews is actually reaffirming what Christ had already said about the new covenant in His blood in Matthew 26:28. As we have already noticed earlier, Christ's blood sanctifies us from all sins that we may enter into a covenant with God. In the old covenant, only Jews were included. But now in Christ and through faith in His blood, all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, are participants in His new covenant.

Sanctified with Christ's blood: In addition to the significance of Christ's blood as the means of purging, boldness to enter into God's presence, and a new and everlasting

covenant with God the writer of Hebrews says that it is also the means of our sanctification, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12).

The word "sanctify" here means to "render pure" or "make clean". The understanding of the word "sanctify" is enhanced by the expression that Christ "suffered without the gate". Here, the author recalls the ritual of the old animal sacrifice. The bodies of the animals, whose blood was used to cleanse and sanctify the people on the day of atonement, were burned outside the camp. It portrays the disgraceful character of sin and the removal of sin from Israel. In the case of Christ, He was also persecuted and killed outside the Jerusalem wall, at Golgotha. Jesus bore the sins of the people. He bore them outside the gate in order to gain for them entrance into holiness by means of His own blood.

Cleansed from sin in Christ's blood: Revelation 1:5 is another text which highlights the significance of Christ's actual blood in the atonement. It ascribes praises to the Lamb, Jesus Christ Himself, because He has "washed us from our sins in his own blood".

The Greek word for "washed" means "loosen what is fast or bound". Christ loosed us from the grip of our sins. Christ has obtained our release from sin by means of His own blood. Christ paid a great price, His own blood, to free us from our sins.

Washed and made white in Christ's blood: At the time of the Great Tribulation, the martyrs will stand before the throne and before the Lamb. The souls of countless

men who braved the persecution were before their Saviour when the voice said, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14).

The word for “wash” comes from the root word which means “to wash as garments”. The original word for “made white” comes from the Greek word which means white, and therefore, has the meaning “to whiten”. The passage is talking of spiritual purity. The only way sins can be washed away is through the precious blood of Christ which He shed at His death.

Bought for God by Christ’s blood: In Revelation 5:9, we have the words of the new song sung by the creatures of heaven (“four beasts and four and twenty elders”, v 8) unto the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. In that song of heaven, the angelic beings glorified the Lord by saying, “... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (v 9).

The word translated as “redeemed” in the KJV is from a Greek word which literally means “purchased” or “bought”. The price Christ paid to buy us for God is His own blood. Now believers are God’s possession because He has purchased them with a great price, the blood of His incarnated Son.

Overcame Satan by Christ’s blood: Satan accuses the believers of their sins before God.

But the believers overcome his accusations by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11). The word “overcome” comes from the Greek word which means “to be victorious” or “to prevail”. Since Jesus, through His blood, had bought them for God (5:9), washed them and made them white spiritually (7:14), and released them from the grip of sin (1:5), Satan’s accusation has no effect. Thus, the believers prevail over the accusation of Satan through Christ’s blood.

Conclusion

According to Jesus’ own words, His blood is as important as the other aspects of His atoning sacrifice (i.e. His body, His death, etc.). Christ shed His blood to ratify the new covenant for the benefit of His people, and procure the forgiveness of their sins.

Hebrews 9:22 aptly epitomises the apostolic teaching on the significance of Christ’s blood in the atonement: “without shedding of blood is no remission.” The blood of Christ is “precious”, according to Peter, for it has redeemed us from the punishment of sin when nothing else in the world could (1 Peter 1:18-19). The blood that saves is always the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who laid down His life for us. It is the ransom, the price, which effects the forgiveness and atonement of sins. The Gospel is no Gospel without the blood of Christ.



Prabhudas Koshy

Sealed with the Spirit

Ephesians 1:13-14

**In whom ye also trusted,
after that ye heard the word of truth,
the gospel of your salvation:
in whom also after that ye believed,
ye were sealed with that holy Spirit
of promise. Which is the earnest of our
inheritance until the redemption
of the purchased possession,
unto the praise of his glory.**

The sealing of the Holy Spirit is taught by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:13-14, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,

unto the praise of his glory” (cf. Ephesians 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

Marked out for God's special care

The phrase “ye were sealed” denotes a one-time event in the life of a person. It is the

seal that marks the salvation of the one who trusted in the truth of Christ's redemptive work. The believer is a passive party in this process of sealing. He cannot seal himself, for it is done by an external agent, the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. He is sealed "with" the Holy Spirit of promise.

The verb "to seal" (*sphragizo*) occurs 26 times in the New Testament (Matthew 27:66; John 3:33; Romans 15:28; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Revelation 7:3-8; 10:4; 20:3). The meaning of "to seal" in the sense of "secure" or "lock up" is indicated in Matthew 27:66 with reference to a stone over the entrance to Jesus' tomb. In Revelation 20:3, it refers to Satan being prevented from deceiving the nations. Elsewhere, the meaning of "seal" is "to bind up" so as to prevent disclosure of divine revelation, as in Revelation 10:4; 22:10. "Sealing" the people of God in Revelation 7:3 functions as an ultimate measure of protection against divine judgment. It is used metaphorically elsewhere. In John 3:33, it serves as a guarantee of truth for a particular testimony or validation of the truth of God. John 6:27 affirms that God sets His seal of approval on Jesus Christ in order to validate His status as the Son of God, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." In Romans 15:28, it means "to secure someone; to make sure; to deliver over safely".

In the context of Ephesians 1:13-14, God is said to "set the seal" of His Spirit on the hearts of believers in order to guarantee and preserve their status as belonging to Him (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30;

Revelation 7:3). It gives the believer security. The sealing also has a reference to ownership because believers are God's inheritance (Ephesians 1:11), and hence they belong to Him. All believers are therefore being marked out as God's very own, enjoying His special care.

A permanent seal for future blessings

Being sealed with the Holy Spirit has significance that is beyond the initial stage of salvation, even for the eternal preservation of believers. It is a permanent seal for present and future blessings. This is given in Ephesians 1:14, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

The phrase "earnest of our inheritance" is a legal and commercial technical term that denotes an advance transaction that guarantees the validity of a contract. In other words, it refers to a down payment, the first instalment or a pledge. When a person believes in the Lord Jesus, he is immediately sealed with the Spirit as a guarantee of his inheritance, a place in heaven.

Concerning the future inheritance unto which we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, Jesus says in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

We have ample evidence in the Scriptures that our sealing with the Spirit for the heavenly inheritance shall never be undone. In Romans 8:38-39, Paul testifies, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Also, Jude 24-25, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Practical implication


There is a great difference between one who is sealed with the Holy Spirit and one who is not. Only believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Unbelievers are without the seal of the Holy Spirit. Every heart that is sealed with the Holy Spirit will experience the guidance and instruction of the Spirit to abandon the ways of sin, and to please the Lord. In Ephesians 4:30-32, the Apostle Paul warned the Ephesian Christians not to grieve the Holy Spirit by wilful sins, "And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath

forgiven you." No one who is sealed with the Spirit is given a licence to sin.

Sealing is a distinct ministry of the Holy Spirit

God seals everyone who has believed Christ for redemption with the promised Holy Spirit when he believed in the Gospel of salvation. Being sealed by the Holy Spirit is not to be confused with the other ministries of the Spirit which are mentioned below.

The indwelling of the Spirit refers to His permanent residence in every believer (Romans 8:9; 1 John 2:27). The baptism of the Spirit refers to His placing of believers into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The filling of the Spirit is the control of the Spirit over believers' lives (Ephesians 5:18). All these ministries of the Spirit are seen in the lives of a believer who is sealed with the Spirit.

In summary, the Holy Spirit is the seal that marks out a person when he believes the Gospel of salvation. He is then sealed for God's special care and secured forever as belonging to God. It is also a permanent seal of God's present and future blessings on the believer. What a tremendous privilege! 

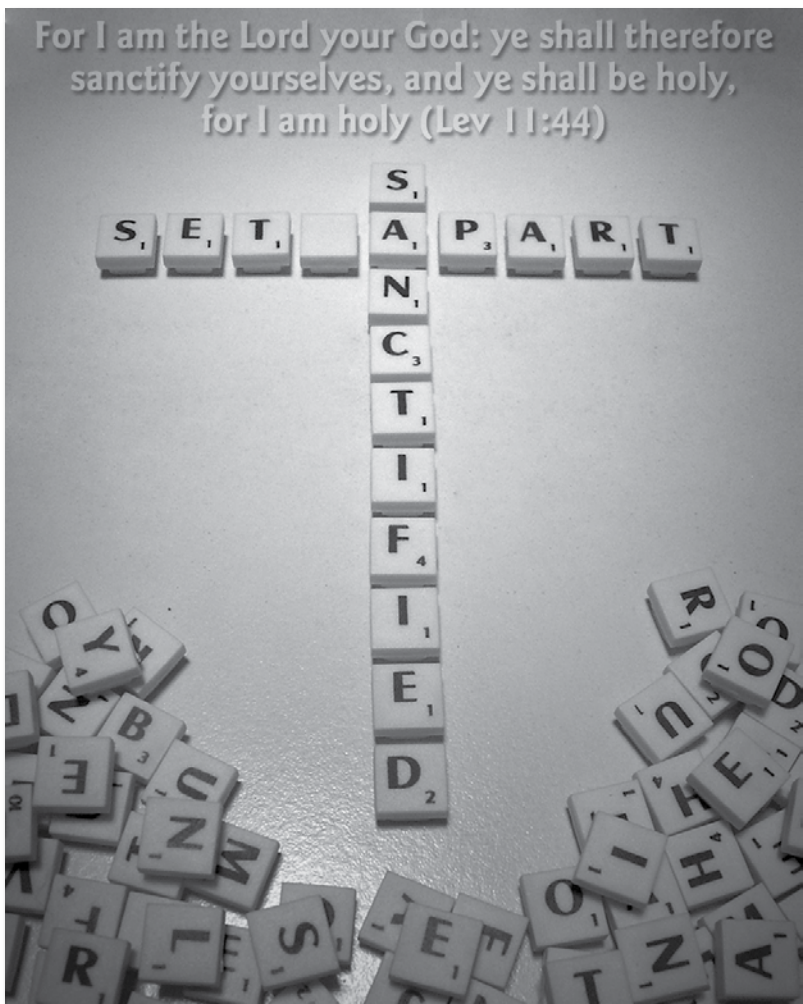


Lek Aik Wee

Sanctified by the Word

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

John chapter 17 is often known as Christ’s high priestly prayer or Christ’s pastoral prayer. This article seeks to consider one portion of His prayer, which is the sanctification of His people in verse 17. Based on this short prayer, we will discuss three important topics that pertain to the doctrine of sanctification, namely: (1) the definition of sanctification, (2) the necessity of sanctification, and (3) the means of sanctification.



The definition of sanctification

Sanctification comes from the verb “sanctify”. It originates from the Greek word *hagiazō* which means “to set apart as sacred to God”, “to make holy”, “to consecrate”, “to purify” and “to cleanse”. Along these lines, the Westminster Shorter Catechism defines sanctification as the work of God’s free grace,

whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

It is worth noting that sanctification has three aspects: (1) positional sanctification, (2) progressive sanctification, and (3) permanent sanctification. Firstly, positional sanctification is a once-for-all separation

from sin unto God at our conversion. Secondly, progressive sanctification refers to the continual process of consecration as we become more and more like Christ. Lastly, permanent sanctification alludes to the reception of our glorified and sinless bodies at the future resurrection.

However, the doctrine of sanctification does not teach that sin is obliterated in the believer's life. Even after our conversion, we realize that there is an ongoing battle in our hearts: to sin or not to sin. What sanctification teaches is that because the dominion of sin is broken, the believer can now break away from the influence of sin that is still present in him by obeying His Word. Spurgeon says, "It is one thing for sin to live in us: it is another to live in sin."

In view of man's inclination to glorify himself, it is very vital to make clear that sanctification is the work of the triune God, though it is more ascribed to the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). The Father sanctifies (1 Thessalonians 5:23); the Son sanctifies (Hebrews 13:12); the Spirit sanctifies (Romans 15:16). All these verses tell us one thing – God is the author of sanctification, not man. A believer dies more and more to sin and lives more and more unto righteousness because of the strength which the Holy Spirit imparts to him from day to day.

The necessity of sanctification

In John 17:17, Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them." The verb "sanctify" here is in the imperative mood. However, the force of the imperative is softened into a request. It could be said that the Son is saying to the

Father, "Please sanctify them." The question that we need to answer at this point: who are the "them" in this passage? The context of John 17 will help us to answer this question. In John 17:9, Jesus said, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." So the "them" in this passage refers to God's people.

Having studied briefly the words "sanctify" and "them" in the passage above, we have learned one important truth – the necessity of sanctification in the believer's life. It is not only true that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6); it is also equally true that without holiness "no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Regrettably, when we become absorbed with the marvellous position we have in Christ and the consequent security it provides, we tend to neglect the need to be sanctified from the besetting sins of our life.

When a person is justified, surely, his sanctification will follow. Justification is God's work for us from the outside, while sanctification is God's work on us from the inside. A justified sinner will continually experience God's sanctifying work all the days of his life. God will teach him through the Word to separate from sin as he is led to live a consecrated life for Christ. Justification and sanctification are two inseparable aspects of salvation though both of them are distinct from each other.

Nowadays, much is said on how to obtain forgiveness of sins, but little is preached on how to be cleansed from its pollution. As a result, separation from sin is gravely neglected in today's Christendom. A. W. Pink described this existing problem as:

“Christ is set forth as a fire-escape from Hell, but not as the great Physician to deal with the malady of sin, and to be fit for heaven.” One of Satan’s deceptions today is to fool God’s children that Christianity is all about believing in Jesus and has nothing to do with the purity of the heart. Dear Christians, be warned!

The Scriptures clearly teach us that constant purification is required of us because God is holy. In the Old Testament, God says, “For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44). This same truth is repeated in the New Testament, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15). To sum it up, it is God’s will that Christians must be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3), that is why Jesus interceded for us: “Sanctify them.”

The means of sanctification

Going back to John 17:17, Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” The preposition “through” in this passage is significant. It conveys the means whereby God sanctifies His people. Looking at the passage closely, the means is His truth. Subsequently, God’s truth is explained further – “thy word is truth”. It is crystal clear that the Word of God is the means of His sanctifying work in us.

How is the Word made effectual to salvation? The Westminster Larger Catechism answers: “The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an


effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to His image, and subduing them to His will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruption; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.”

Years back, I read the testimony of two backslidden Christians who were hooked on pornography for a period of time. One Sunday, both of them decided to attend Sunday service in a nearby Christian church. Amazingly, the pastor on that Sunday preached strongly about sin. Arriving home after the service, both of them decided to throw out all their pornographic materials into the river. The two backslidden Christians found freedom from the grip of pornography through the preaching of God’s Word. Plummer aptly says, “True liberty is by the power of God’s Word in the hands of the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus prayed to the Father, “Sanctify them.” Yet, immorality has become an epidemic in Christian society. What has gone wrong? The answer is simple: Christians, young and old, have abandoned the importance of obeying the Scriptures. The Word of God is a divine instrument whereby a sinner is gradually transformed into the image of his Master. If we are devoid of excitement in hearing and reading God’s Word, forget about growing in Christ. Dying more and more to sin and living more and more unto righteousness is unachievable apart from the Word of God. Therefore, the Word of God must be the heart of every Christian home. It should be desired more than gold (more than the

treasures of this world); it is sweeter than honey in the honeycomb (Psalm 19:10).

In conclusion, I want to ask you, dear reader: are you a breathing and living answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17:17? Are you a Christian whose words, thoughts and deeds are rooted in the Word of God? Remember that it is God's will for you to be more and more like

your Saviour. The Word of God is the means to bring you there. Desire it, love it and obey it. 



**Dominino
dela Cruz Jr**

News and Reports

Gethsemane Ethiopian Mission

We are glad to report that the Lord has provided a piece of land for the construction of a church and a Bible college in Ethiopia. The land is 9546m²; at the price of about S\$255,000.00. We would like to thank our generous readers for their hearty contributions. Please continue to pray and support as funds are still being collected for the construction.

Gethsemane B-P Mission Church, Bogo

On 21st March 2009, Bro Dominino dela Cruz Jr, our missionary, will be uniting in holy matrimony with Sis Sharon Ng, who has been serving full-time with Bible Witness as an illustrator for the past four years. We wish them God's blessings as they will serve the Lord together in the mission field of Bogo, the Philippines.

The Holy Land Bible Study Tour (14th June - 26th June 2009)

A group of 27 brethren have signed up to visit the Holy Land together with Pastor Prabhudas Koshy. Anyone who would like to join this study tour may call Bro Stephen Yap, the tour co-ordinator, at 9835 4075 before 10th March 2009.

Bible Witness Media Ministry

Before this year ends, BWMM desires in the Lord to publish Bible learning materials for children, youths and adults.

Bible Witness Web Radio has added a new segment for ladies in its weekly broadcast. We encourage sisters to listen to our edifying programme.

We covet your continual prayers and kind support for our ministries that the Word of God may be published faithfully and effectively around the world.

Hope of Resurrection

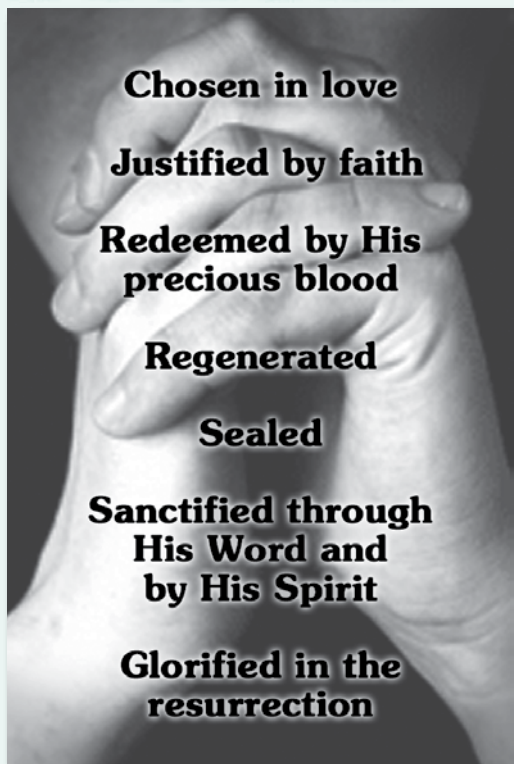
“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said...”
(Matthew 28:6).

All the four gospel books of the Bible testify to the bodily resurrection of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ after He died a cruel death on the cross. These eyewitness accounts provide solid proof of the Christian hope and belief that, indeed, there is life beyond the grave; and that the only way to get there is through “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven...” (Acts 1:11).

The scientific hope: cryonic resuscitation

However, the world has always been trying to find its own ways to fend off man’s inevitable appointment with death “as it is appointed unto men once to die...” (Hebrews 9:27). Medical science has discovered many breakthroughs to promote our physical well-being, and thus prolong life. Yet, death continues to stare at everyone’s face to this day.

At the turn of the millennium, science introduced the theory of cryonics, which has rekindled hopes of extending life through human ingenuity. A cryonic facility located about forty miles east of the city of Los Angeles has been freezing dead bodies with liquid nitrogen at -196° Celsius since 1993. These cadavers, encapsulated and kept in an underground storage vault, are supposed to be retrieved sometime in the future with the hope that atomic medicine



will discover a way to resuscitate dead bodies and cure them of the diseases that killed them. Even if we grant that this will indeed be a possibility in the future, will not these resuscitated bodies be facing death again not long afterwards? Count in the hundreds of thousands of dollars (or if the discovery takes longer, even millions!) needed to maintain these bodies in that preserved state and you will have a hope that is really no hope at all.

The sad hope: Christ-less religion

More often than not, funerals of unbelievers are a terrifying sight to see. The family of the departed would usually be inconsolable

and would cry their hearts out as if there is no more tomorrow, to the point that some would even faint over the sheer exhaustion and hysteria of their crying. Why do they do this?

One reason other than the sorrow they feel is the fact that they may never get to see their loved ones again. Beliefs of the people concerning life after death, which are inconsistent with Jesus' teaching, do not give the sure hope of heaven. The doctrine of purgatory, which speaks of fire, gives a real reason for the family of the deceased to be worried. For they would not even know when that suffering in purgatory will end. For religions that believe in reincarnation, you may become a tree, a pig, or even a cockroach in the next life depending on how good or bad you were in this life. Belief in these scenarios certainly gives little comfort, much less, hope. That is why the bereaved are left stricken with much grief.

The scriptural hope: Christ's resurrection

The Bible, which is unmistakably inerrant, infallible and the perfectly preserved Word of God, shows us a living hope that is trustworthy and, by far, less complicated. We can fully rely upon it not only because it is "a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19), but also because it is based on God's promise rather than mere theory or tradition. Interestingly, this blessed hope is not something that is new.

The resurrection of the dead saints was a fact already made known even before the resurrection of Christ Himself. The Old Testament book of Job, which is considered to

be the earliest book of the Bible, has attested to the truth of the resurrection. Job testified, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26). In the New Testament, a disciple named Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" in expression of her belief that her dead brother Lazarus will be resurrected (John 11:24). These testimonies prove that the hope of the resurrection of believers in Christ was no secret and that this truth is nothing new.

An excellent exposition on the resurrection of the dead believers was written by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

For genuine believers in Christ, the Apostle Paul wrote that we are not to be ignorant over the destiny of our loved ones who died in Christ. He went on further to say that we

are not to be overcome with sorrow like those who have no hope after this life (v 13). The verse that follows explains why: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (v 14). The term “which sleep in Jesus” is simply a euphemism – a good word – to refer to those believers who have already passed away. So, the idea here is given that physical death is not the end of the road for Christians because our bodies will simply be lying in peaceful sleep. That is why in Christian cemeteries, one gets to see such tomb inscriptions like, “Resting in Peace” or “Awaiting Resurrection”.

So if we believe that “Jesus died and rose again” bodily, then the bodies of Christians who have died would also be brought back to life when the Lord returns. Verse 16 sums up this truth – “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” Now we may think it is a mistake that verse 14 says God will bring dead Christians with Him from heaven while verse 16 says that dead Christians will rise from the ground. Well, as what has been stated earlier, the Bible is inerrant and, therefore, it cannot make mistake.

When a Christian dies, his soul immediately goes to heaven while his body is laid to rest in the earth. On the day of resurrection, when the rapture takes place, all these departed souls will then reunite with their physical bodies as they rise from the ground to become resurrected, glorified bodies.

In God’s order of the rapture, “we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord

shall not prevent them which are asleep” (v 15). The word “prevent” here in the old English actually means “precede” or “go first”. This explains why verse 16 says, “... the dead in Christ shall rise first.” Thus, in verse 17 comes the turn of those who are yet alive at the Lord’s return – “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

No Christian will be left out when it comes to the actual meeting with the Lord at His second coming. If we have family members who have died in the Lord, we will not be worried that their bodies will be left behind in their graves because of the fact that they will rise first and, if we remain alive on that day, we will follow them.

For the Christian, there is real comfort in knowing that death is not the end of life but just the beginning of an endless life. He has been chosen in love, justified by faith, redeemed by His precious blood, regenerated, sealed, sanctified through His Word and by His Spirit; and finally glorified in the resurrection. Thus is the story told of mankind’s salvation – from conception to consummation – it is all the work of our sovereign God. And since it is all of God, we can trust every bit of the promise that this blessed hope of resurrection can be ours if we receive and believe in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you haven’t done that, will you do it today?



Richard Tiu

BIBLE TRIVIA - GENESIS 43

Sarah Yong

READ THE TEXT FROM YOUR BIBLE THEN FILL IN THE BLANKS. (HINT: THE LETTERS IN EACH BRACKET SPELL THE ANSWER BACKWARDS)

The _____(enimaf) was sore in the land soon they had to go to Egypt to buy more _____(nroc). Judah assured his father that he would be _____(yterus) for Benjamin. Israel instructed them to take the best fruits of the land, and carry down a _____(tneserp) of a little balm and _____(yenh), spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds. He pleaded that God Almighty would give them _____(ycrem) before the man, that they may return safely. The brothers also took double _____(yenom) in their hand, and _____(nimajneB); and rose up, and went down to Egypt.

Joseph saw his brothers and commanded the _____(relur) of his house to prepare a feast. They were _____(diarfa) and entreated the steward of Joseph's house concerning the money in the sacks. He replied, "_____ (eaceP) be to you, _____(raef) not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you _____(erusaert) in your sacks: I had your money." And he brought _____(noemiS) out unto them. He brought them into the house and gave them _____(retaw) to wash their feet; and he gave their _____(sessa) provender.

When Joseph came home, they _____(dewob) themselves to him and presented the gift to him. He asked them of their _____(eraflew) and about their father's _____(htlaeh). They bowed down their heads, and made _____(ecnasiebo). Joseph saw Benjamin and said, "God be _____(suoicarg) unto thee, my son." Then Joseph entered into his chamber, and _____(tpew). After he had washed his face, he went out, and gave an order for the meal to begin. The men _____(dellevram) one at another because they were seated from the _____(nrobsrif) according to his birthright, to the _____(tsegnuoy) according to his youth. He took and sent messes unto them, but Benjamin's mess was _____(evif) times so much as any of theirs.

Answers to Vol. 8, Issue 5 - Bible Trivia - Genesis 41 & 42

p. 21 - (Q1) 30; (Q2) 1/5; (Q3) Asenath; (Q4) 2; (Q5) Manasseh; (Q6) Ephraim; (Q7) 10; (Q8) Canaan; (Q9) 1; (Q10) Benjamin; (Q11) 3; (Q12) Simeon.

A Brave Young Girl.

The following story is a real story that was told to Mrs Goforth who decided to put it in her book.

Bibliography: "Goforth of China" by Rosalind Goforth.
The stories are retold by Sis Ruth Low.
Illustrations are done by Sis Sharon Ng.

One day, a group of fierce gangsters wanted to rob a house.



When the security alarm went off, most of the family members quickly escaped but two young girls were not able to do so in time.



The younger girl went to hide in a room, but the older one stood in the middle of the main room, praying quietly as the gangsters rushed in.



As the men began to take things from the home, the leader caught the older girl by her throat and warned her that if she did not tell him where her father was, he would choke her to death.



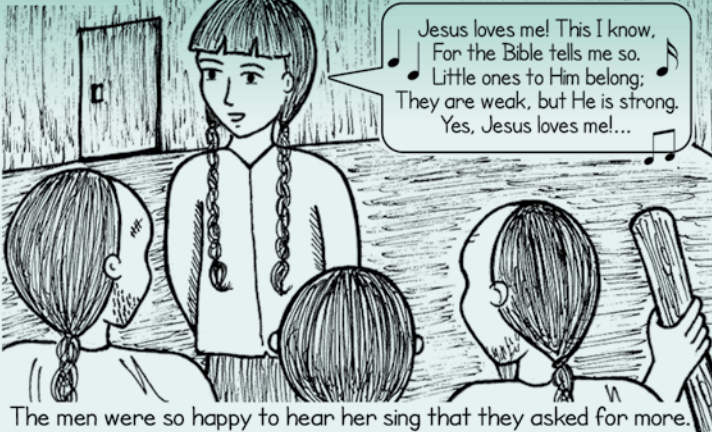
The girl simply said she did not know. The man held her more tightly and said, "You lie!"



The girl told him, "I am a Christian." Then something prompted her to say,



True enough, when the men heard that, they stopped what they were doing and asked her to sing to them. She sang a verse of "Jesus Loves Me".



The men were so happy to hear her sing that they asked for more.

The girl then called the other girl from the room to join her:



Together, they sang the second verse of the same song.

To the two girls' surprise, the leader immediately asked his men to put back everything they had taken.



Some time after this incident, someone asked the older girl, "Didn't you feel scared when the gangsters were all around you, and the leader threatened to kill you?" The brave little girl replied,



This girl was not afraid of facing the bad people alone. Why? It was because she trusted in God's presence. She had strong faith.

How about you, dear child? Do you trust that God is with you all the time? Do not be afraid of anything or anyone, not even the strongest, scariest man!

Let us say with David in Psalm 56:11,



A Pilgrim's Glorious Hope

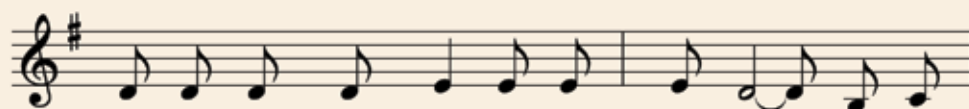
Lyrics & Music: Prabhudas Koshy



As a pil-grim I look for a be-tter coun-try, Which my



Lord is pre - par - ing for me; In that



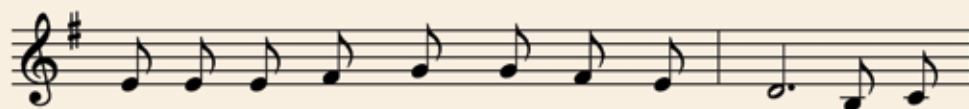
glo - ry land where God is the build - er, He



pro - mised me a man - sion in His house. There'll be



glo - ry for me at the end of this road; There'll be



glo - ry that out - shines my trou - bles here. So I



pa - tient - ly en - dure, as I for - ward go; With a



hope that is stead-fast and sure.

Arranged by Carmen Wong
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