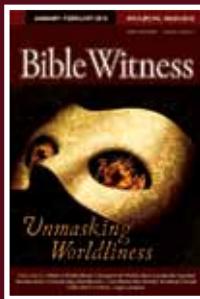


Bible Witness



Unmasking Worldliness

THIS ISSUE: What is Worldliness? | Dangers of Worldliness
Counsels Against Worldliness | Overcome the World | God Makes
the World's Wisdom Foolish CHILDREN'S PAGE: Hugh Latimer

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The decorative golden mask represents worldliness and her allure, which veils the soul engulfed in fire, symbolising spiritual danger of hell.

What is Worldliness?

Prabhudas Koshy

Worldliness is not the appreciation of the beauty of the physical world that God has created (Psalm 8:3; Romans 1:19-20). It is also not engaging in serious study or carrying out one's business with fervency (Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

However, if one engages in any of these endeavours at the expense of God's will and His glory, it is worldliness. Jesus said, "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). "Mammon" is an Aramaic word for an idol which the ancient Aramaic world worshipped as god of wealth and it came to represent all kinds of material possessions and profits. A captivation with material wealth and glory that hinders the soul from loving and obeying God is worldliness. We cannot love God and the world at the same time. James 4:4 unequivocally declares that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" and "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God". If one loves the world, there will be no room in his heart for the love of God.

Are your worldly engagements constantly distracting you from spiritual activities ("means of grace") and stunting your spiritual progress? If so, then you are affected by worldliness. A preoccupation with the cares and riches of the world will inevitably prompt a scandalous departure from God and His will concerning His people (Matthew 13:22;

Mark 4:19). Christians ought to be fascinated with God's glory and not that of the world.

According to biblical truths, worldliness can also be explained as the acceptance and engagement with ungodly philosophies, passions, fashions, amusements and activities of the world. All worldly practices that draw the soul away into ungodliness are considered as worldliness. So "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" teaches us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

Worldliness, then, is the unholy conduct of the unregenerate people, which Christians should avoid. In fact, Christians are exhorted, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:5-9).

Christians are strongly warned by the apostle John: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). The term "world" here refers to the ungodly or wicked systems of the world. John also forewarned: "the whole world lieth in



wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Likewise, the apostle Paul taught us that to walk after the ways of the world is to be under the direction of the prince (or god) of this world, the devil and his demonic forces (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12). In the apostle Peter's language, worldliness is the "pollutions of the world" (2 Peter 2:20). Hence, loving the activities and amusements of the world, which are satanic and contrary to God's holy and perfect will, is prohibited in God's Word.

What constitutes worldliness?

John, the apostle, provides a clear understanding of what constitutes worldliness in 1 John 2:16 – "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."

THE LUST OF THE FLESH

Worldliness, first of all, consists of "the lust of the flesh" which is the sinful craving of our fallen body. God has created our body with certain desires such as hunger, thirst and sex. These desires are good, and are not at all evil in themselves but they should always be controlled according to God's intended design and plans.

However, the world, which is under the control of the devil, urges us to satisfy these bodily desires through all forms of distorted ways which are forbidden by God. When these bodily desires are stirred up contrary to God's design and purpose, they become sinful.

Thirst, as mentioned, is not evil in itself but drunkenness is. Hunger is not sinful but gluttony is. Money is needful but the love of money is covetousness, a form of idolatry. Sleep is a gift of God but laziness is condemnable. Sex is God's gift to have

a joyous wedded life between a man and woman, and to beget children, but when used wrongly, it becomes immorality.

The world appeals to the natural appetites and tempts us to satisfy them in forbidden ways. All the allurements of this world are designed to stir our fleshly desires to go against God's specific plan and purpose.

THE LUST OF THE EYES

Secondly, worldliness consists of "the lust of the eyes". The sinful fleshly craving finds its expression through the lust of the eyes (e.g. pornography). A man's eye is after women. Jesus warned against this sin in Matthew 5:28 – "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." So Job said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). The psalmist also prayed in Psalm 119:37, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way."

The lust of the eyes seduces man to do evil in many other areas of life as well. It is the lust of the eyes that caused the fall of Achan (Joshua 7:21) and David (2 Samuel 11:2). Through the eye, our corrupt minds seek satisfaction, glory and all that would excite its pride. These include costly raiment and ornaments, gold and silver, diamonds and jewels, huge and splendid houses, expensive cars, gorgeous furniture and appliances.

King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 4:8 observes: "...neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail." Through our eye, the world exerts its pressure on us to seek its glory. Thus, we engage in intellectual pursuits that are contrary to God's will. So the lust of the eye is also the craving of our corrupt

intellect. Let not our passion for the world's glory push God out of our mind.

THE PRIDE OF LIFE

Thirdly, worldliness consists of "the pride of life" which is the boasting of life's possessions. The Greek word for "life" is *bios* and it refers to the means or possessions of life. Therefore, the phrase "the pride of life" means pride in what one possesses. Generally, man feels great about flaunting the things he possesses. He wants others to know that he is cleverer, stronger, wealthier and even holier than the rest. Because of the pride of life, some fall into many foolish and hurtful situations.

Now we can see how the three descriptions of worldliness are interrelated. Have you ever wondered why people in general like to buy bigger houses and cars or new appliances and wardrobes even though they cannot afford them? Why do they succumb to the "travel now, pay later" or "drive first, pay later" advertising, and get themselves into a hopeless debt-paying situation? It is largely because they want to impress other people; they want folks to notice how affluent or successful they are because of their "pride of life".

The first two forms of worldliness – the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes – refer to desires for what we do not have; and a third – the pride of life – refers to the pride in what we do have. The world is driven by these two things: passion for pleasure and pride in possessions.

Sadly, there is much worldliness in the church!

Especially in these days, worldliness is found in great measure among churchgoers. Churches are worldly. Worship services are

worldly. Pastors, preachers and their families are worldly. Elders, deacons and their families are worldly. Churchgoers are worldly. Their homes and businesses are altars of worldliness.

Christians are living like worldlings. Churches are producing more carnal men than saints of God. Few today separate themselves from worldliness. There is hardly a distinguishable boundary that separates Christians from the world. In fact, many go to church with the hope that this will give them the material prosperity they are craving for. They refuse to believe that godliness can lead to much loss of material comfort. So many fall away from the church when their wealth, health, houses, businesses and other secular interests are endangered.

There is also worldliness in the motives and actions of many Christians. There is worldliness in their domestic life and in their interaction with society; there is worldliness in the education of their family members; there is worldliness in their businesses and employment; there is worldliness in their expenditure – so much being laid out for self-pleasure and self-glory, and so little for God; there is worldliness in their religious schemes and activities; there is worldliness in their reading materials and conversations, and there is worldliness in their sports and entertainment. In short, there is too much of the spirit of fervent worldliness in the life of a great many who claim to be Christians.

Are you, my reader, more concerned about your worldly advancement than spiritual advancement? Do you sacrifice your spiritual nourishment for worldly gain? Have you been too occupied with material and sensual matters rather than the Lord, His church and His truth? If your answers to these questions are "yes", then you are being gripped by worldliness. Repent and turn to the Lord now. ■

Dangers of Worldliness

Prabhudas Koshy

Christians are strongly warned about the dangers of worldliness by the apostle John. He wrote: "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" (1 John 2:15-17).

Two specific spiritual dangers are mentioned by the apostle. No Christian should consider these dangers of worldliness to be trivial matters. Herein we have a very crucial message for the modern Christians who are increasingly embracing worldliness.

Worldliness excludes the love of the Father

Firstly, John warned: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (v. 15b), that is to say, such a man has no relationship with God.

It is impossible to love the world and God at the same time. Love for the world pushes out love for God, and love for God pushes out love for the world. Love for the world cannot coexist with love for God.



The absolute nature of this statement by John is striking and compels careful and serious reflection. The stakes are high. Because the Father's kingdom is at war with the kingdom of this world, the two will never coexist peacefully. When love for the world increases, love for God dwindles. No human heart can hold these two opposing loves together.

To pledge allegiance to one side is to declare opposition to the other. Worldliness will put you together with all the God-haters of the world. James 4:4 – "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, 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."

Because of worldliness, many Christians are vexed and disturbed by the demands of a godly and service-oriented Christian life. The subtle existence of worldliness within the hearts of Christians keeps them away from God and His kingdom. A look at most Christians today tells us that they have much of earth, and little of heaven.

Worldly Christians are not large-hearted or open-handed when it comes to the service of God; they are not willing to spend and be spent. They are not like those whose eyes are ever set on the incorruptible inheritance which God has prepared for them. They have low spiritual vigour and are apathetic towards the things of God. They want to be engaged as little as possible in the things of God, and indulge more in their worldly comforts. They grudge and murmur about the labour, fatigue, expense and trouble that they have to bear in the service of God's kingdom.

They rather cherish the company of worldly men than that of Christians. They choose to stay away from fellowships, prayer meetings and other Christian activities. They prefer the respite and enjoyment that the houses

of this world offer. They spend more of their time and money in the activities of the world, whether it be shopping, clubbing, watching TV or other entertainment. When the pursuit of the material world increases in their hearts, their delight in the things of God fades away.

This danger is further emphasised by John in verse 16 when he wrote: "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." All that constitutes worldliness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are not of the Father.

Once the world takes over the heart of a Christian, he will soon lose his enjoyment of the Father's love and his desire to do the Father's will. The Bible will become boring and prayer a difficult chore. Even Christian fellowship may seem empty and disappointing. It is not that there is something wrong with those Christian activities, but that the Christian's heart has become worldly.

Worldliness embraces the temporal at the expense of the eternal

Secondly, John warned: "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (v. 17). The world and its lust are heading towards everlasting destruction, while the obedient Christian is going to live eternally. The world and the genuine Christian do not share the same destiny.

The world is passing away! It is rushing into eternal hell. For anyone to set his heart on the perishing world is to inherit heartache and misery at the end.

Would you buy stock in a company that is sure to go bankrupt? Would you like to spend a day to relax on a sinking ship? Would you

like to dance a night away in a nightclub that is on fire?

No reasonable person would lay up treasure where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal, would they? The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:31, “the fashion of this world passeth away.” The world with all its fashion and lust is heading towards eternal peril. The apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 3:7, 10, “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men... But 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.”

So if you love the glories and the pageantry of this world, you will pass away together with them. You will not only lose your treasure but also your soul. If you love the world, it will pass away, taking you with it.

Christians, be cautioned: worldliness distracts us from taking delight in things that abideth for ever, even doing God’s will. So if you are stuck in some worldly living, be forewarned of your quick destruction.

Are you surprised that this world and its glories are facing a perilous end? Well, it is going to be worse and worse. Sin is destroying this world. But there is a blessed hope – “he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (v. 17). What is the will of God that you should obey so as to live for ever? Jesus gives the answer to this question. He says, “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). If your heart would love the Lord Jesus and follow His Word, instead of loving and following the world, you will abide forever.

Do not flirt with the world, it will seduce you into destruction, but follow the will of God in Christ Jesus and you will have eternal life. ■

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“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” – 2 Timothy 2:2



COUNSELS

Against Worldliness



Prabhudas Koshy

In 1 John 2:15-17, when the apostle warned us about the dangers of worldliness, he also provided three unmitigated counsels against worldliness.

The first absolute counsel against worldliness is a command: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (v. 15a). No Christian should engage in any form of worldly activities. He should not even desire to be like the world. Oh let us all stop loving the world! Jesus said about true Christians: "ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:19). If this is true, how can a Christian continue to love the world more than God?

Christians, we are just sojourners here on earth. We are not here forever. We are pilgrims heading to the glory land. So do not get stuck in the miry clay of worldliness.

If you, my reader, have been abiding in worldliness, it means that you are heading towards a fiery end in hell. Please repent from your sins. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to renew your heart by the mighty work of His Holy Spirit so that you may love God with all your heart and not the world that is perishing.

If you are a backslidden Christian, you must now yield to the Spirit who teaches you through His Word. Plead before His presence for a resurgent love for the things of God, yea, even for the things that matter for all eternity.

The second counsel against worldliness is a great declaration – “he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (v. 17a). A person whose character and personality are shaped by a life that is obedient to God will not be affected by the passing away of the world and its vain desires.

Do not desire anything in this world more than the will of God permits. Our desire has to be always regulated by the Word of God. All the pursuits of the world must be subject to His will. Never pursue any of our desires beyond His will for us.

It is a Johannine way of saying, “Only one life, ‘twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”

The third counsel against worldliness is the wonderful reminder that there is eternal life

for all who forsake worldliness to embrace the love and will of God – “he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (v. 17a).

God’s cure for worldliness is the bringing before us of another world, an eternal world, which is infinitely more glorious than that which He calls on us to forsake. There is no thorough cure for worldliness but this. It is a lack of faith in eternal realities that makes us worldlings! By faith, when our eyes are fixed on the world to come, we will learn to set our affections on things above.

Christians, we need to be sternly and repeatedly warned against the spirit of worldliness. The Church is very prone to forget her role as a pilgrim in this present evil world. Our dignity as God’s chosen people is not in craving after the things of this world, but in doing His will and thereby getting ready for His glorious appearance. Let us not allow the world to obscure or blur our vision of the glory and kingdom of God that He has called us to inherit. Dear Christians, let us live on earth as heavenly citizens. ■

Bible Witness

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(For more information, please refer to page 2.)

OVERCOME THE WORLD

Dominino dela Cruz Jr.

"For whatsoever 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).

The main focus of the apostle John's teaching in 1 John 5:4-5 is overcoming the world. In fact, the phrase "overcometh the world" appears three times in these two verses. Of course, the apostle John is not saying that all people on earth are able to overcome the wicked system and sinful lifestyle of the world. He was referring to a special group of people – those who are born of God. In other words, only a Christian on this planet has the potential to live a victorious life though he is living in a sinful world. This sounds very intriguing to me. So it is good for us to look at 1 John 5:4-5 closely and meditatively.

The assurance of Christian victory

John begins by saying, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4a). The phrase "born of God" tells us that here, John is not talking about professing Christians but truly born-again Christians whose hearts have been regenerated and who are indwelt by the Spirit of God. So only a true believer has the potential and the capability to overcome the world because of his dynamic relationship with God. This is an unmistakable promise of victory to every

Christian. It is important to note that this assurance is not given only to an elite group of Christians but to all genuine Christians.

We are told that a soldier in the army of Alexander the Great was not acting bravely in battle. When he should have been pressing ahead, he was lingering behind. The great general approached him and asked, "What is your name, soldier?" The man replied, "My name, sir, is Alexander." The general looked him straight in the eye and said firmly, "Soldier, get in there and fight or change your name!" Alexander the Great wanted his name to symbolize courage. In the same way, the name "Christian" must symbolize victory against the world because the Word of God tells us so.

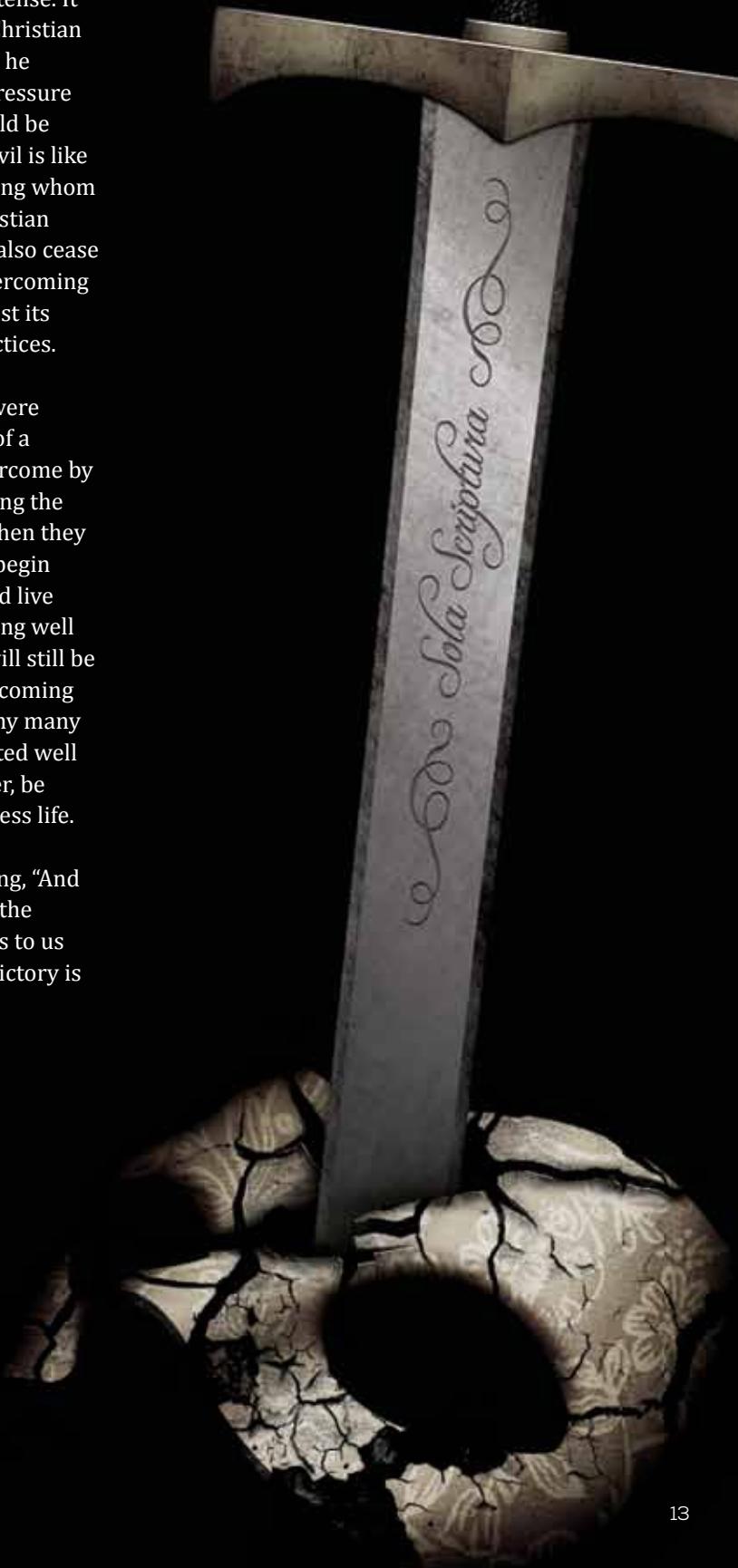
By way of application, a Christian student is able to overcome peer pressure in his school, a Christian employee is able to overcome the compromising environment at his workplace and a Christian businessman is able to overcome the temptation to cheat in the business world. A Christian has every reason to live a triumphant life wherever he is because of the seed of new life implanted in his heart. Yes, it is not easy to overcome the world. But the Word of God has given us the assurance that though it is difficult, we can overcome it.

The word "overcome" is one of the favourite words of the apostle John. In 1 John 5:4, the

word “overcome” is in the present tense. It conveys a continuous action. So a Christian can experience victory in his life as he continues to struggle against the pressure of the world. The child of God should be vigilant all the time because the devil is like a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour. The moment a Christian starts to live a careless life, he will also cease to overcome the world because overcoming the world is a constant battle against its evil philosophies and immoral practices.

No wonder, there are people who were actively serving the Lord when all of a sudden, we hear of them being overcome by the world instead of they overcoming the world. One of the reasons is that when they start to let their guard down, they begin to be slack in their Christian life and live carelessly. The fact that you are doing well today is not a guarantee that you will still be doing well tomorrow because overcoming the world is a daily fight. That is why many servants of the Lord may have started well but only a few end well. Dear reader, be always watchful. Do not live a careless life.

The apostle John continues by saying, “And this is the victory that overcometh the world.” The word “victory” suggests to us that all the power needed for our victory is



made available to us. In addition, the word “overcometh” in this phrase is in the aorist tense, which expresses an action done once and for all. When we put together the ideas conveyed by these two words, we hear John saying that the victorious power to overcome the world is already made available to every Christian. Of course, I see this as a reference to Christ’s once and for all victory against Satan and the world, which we have received by faith. As one Bible scholar beautifully puts it: “To believe that Jesus has been victorious is to have the power that enables us also to win the battle, for we know that our foe is already defeated and therefore powerless.”

The realization of Christian victory

Interestingly, in verse 4, the apostle John ends by saying, “Even our faith.” Thus far, we have seen the assurance of victory given to every true believer. But how can a true believer appropriate this assurance of victory? The answer is given to us by the apostle John – even our faith. Faith is the key to realizing the victory, as we often sing, “Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.”

Strictly speaking, faith does not save anyone. Christ is the one who saves us. But faith is the means whereby a person is able to receive salvation that is in Christ Jesus. In the same way, every Christian can appropriate by faith the divine power made available to overcome the world. By faith, a Christian can receive the power needed for daily victories. The new birth gives the believer the potential of victory, but the realization of actual victory depends on his active exercise of faith. Truly, a Christian is called principally to live a life of faith, a life of dependence upon God.

“The new birth gives the believer the potential of victory, but the realization of actual victory depends on his active exercise of faith.”

I remember when I was a Bible college student in Singapore, I was invited to preach God’s Word in a fellowship meeting held in a big house. After I had preached, the head of the home confessed in front of the brethren that before they became wealthy, they used to pray fervently every night. But when the Lord blessed them abundantly, their prayer life declined and they seldom attended prayer meetings in the church. Friends, whether in abundance or in need, let us live a life of dependence upon God because without constantly exercising our faith, we cannot overcome the world. A victorious Christian life is the result of faith.

Faith in what? The apostle John makes it clear to us in verse 5 when he says, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” This is the sole object of our faith – the Lord Jesus Christ. Any faith that is not anchored in Jesus Christ is as good as nothing. True Christian faith is Christological. The person that can actualize victory in his life against the world is he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now that we have already looked at 1 John 5:4-5, we discover that it is the will of God that every true believer should overcome the world and live a victorious Christian life. That is why He has given every Christian the power that has once and for all overcome the world. God’s Word gives assurance of victory to every truly born-again Christian. The key to that victory can be summed up in a single word: faith. May God help us to walk closely with Him every day because without Him, victory over the world is unachievable. ■

God Makes the World's Wisdom Foolish

1 Corinthians 1:20-28

Richard Tiu

One of the great themes of the apostle Paul's writings is the infinite wisdom of God. He uses this theme to direct the hearts and thoughts of men to a proper perspective of the Christian life, and often, as a rebuke to the high-mindedness of the worldly life. His rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 1:20d, "hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" best sums up that rebuke.

While this world has taken great strides in intellectual advancements, it has not made any real headway in things that matter most in life. In fact, the world has yet to figure out how to solve the sin problem. The guilt and its consequent eternal death hover over every sinner's head like guillotines ready to crash down any moment. In fact, everyone who is born into this world is hell-bound because of this sin problem.

And so, one may ask, "Is there any hope at all for mankind?" The answer is "yes" and it lies not in "wisdom" as the world knows it, but in "foolishness" as the world views it. What the wisdom of the world can never obtain, the foolishness of God will gloriously attain. The very wisdom the world has sought is what God will one day bring to nought as He has made the world's wisdom foolish. The passage for consideration will make this truth known to us.

Unfortunately, even within the church, there are some who think that worldly wisdom is superior. In the church in Corinth, some conducted themselves in a worldly manner. So Paul asked, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (verse 20). He then proceeded to show the believers in Corinth that worldly wisdom is indeed foolishness before God, though some might consider God's wisdom as folly. This message of Paul is very relevant to the churchgoers of our time too, as many of them are foolishly embracing the wisdom of the world.

Worldly wisdom repudiated by a foolish method

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom" (verses 21-22).

The Jews look to "signs and wonders" as the gauge for truth. The Greeks in those times desired esoteric wisdom and were known to spend much time discussing new ideas and philosophies in their search for truth (cf. Acts 17:18-21). Yet in all their efforts to

seek the truth, they had missed out the very method whereby the truth of God is revealed because it was plain foolishness unto them.

The divinely appointed method of preaching the Gospel has always been unattractive, even disgusting to the worldly-wise who considered it foolishness. Their attitude towards the God-ordained method of bringing souls unto salvation will prevent them from really knowing the God of salvation.

Do we not also see the same attitude in some ministers of the Gospel these days? Churches today consider Gospel-preaching to be outdated and have thus replaced it with modern methods. Pragmatism takes centre stage as the pulpit is set aside. A lot of drama, choreography, signs and wonders, and funky music have replaced preaching as the major means of presenting the gospel. They believe that the worldly means of creative presentations, flashy gimmicks as well as ingenious devices will bring in the desired results. They say that these are the methods that attract churchgoers nowadays.

Thus this fulfils what the Scriptures had prophesied, that people “after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Modern methods may indeed attract the world and they will remain as such – an attraction. But God has chosen preaching to be the method of calling sinners unto salvation. In God’s omniscience, He uses the preaching of the Gospel to confound the wisdom of the world. And unto those that believe, the foolishness of preaching makes them wise unto salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Worldly wisdom repudiated by a foolish message

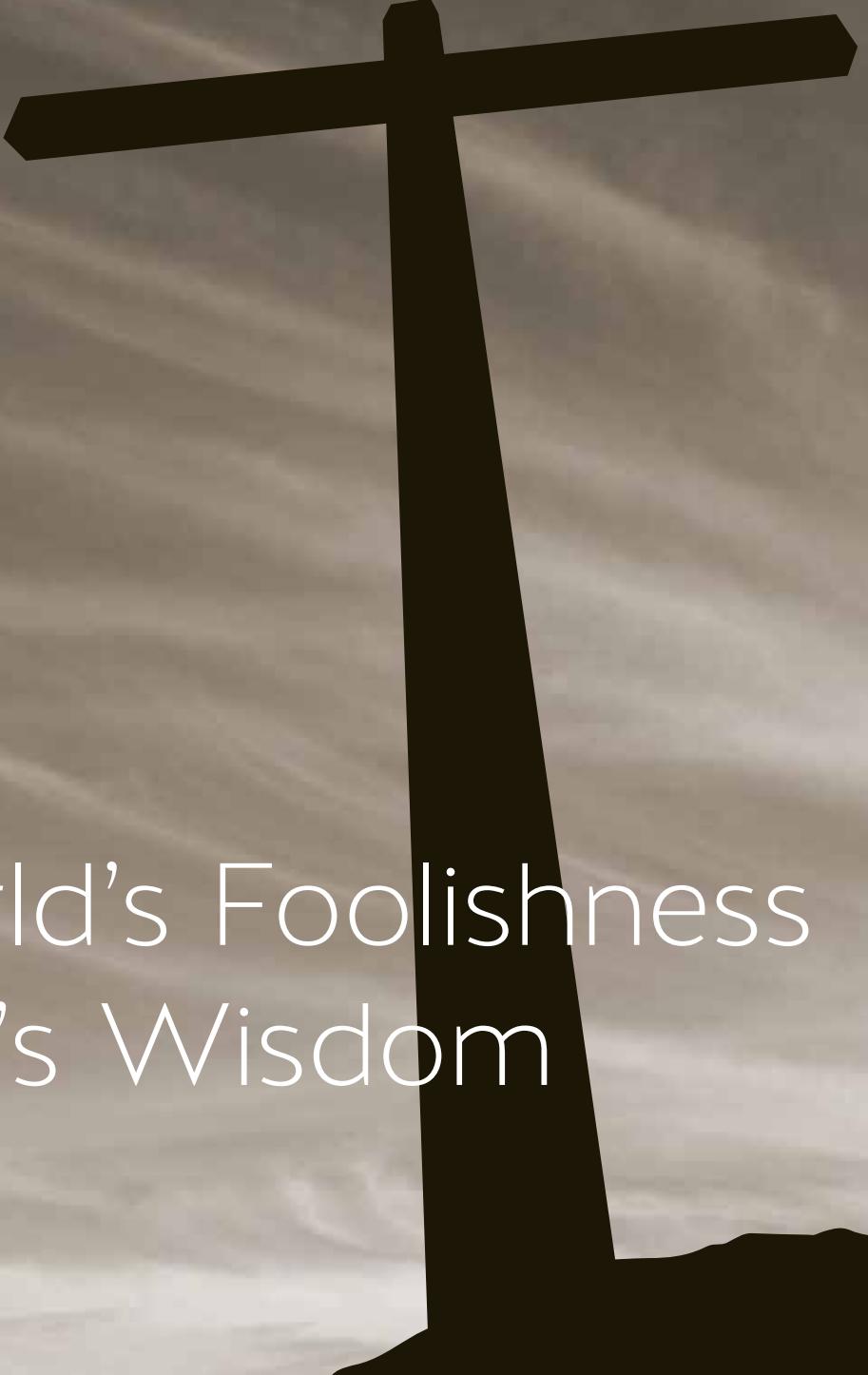
“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (verses 23-24).

The story of Christ crucified, being the power and wisdom of God, was as repulsive to the Jews as it was ridiculous to the Greeks. The Judaizers take great offence at the preaching of the Gospel because it reduces the observance of Jewish laws to nothing in terms of their salvation. Thus the message “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31) is a big stumbling block to them.

The Greeks, on the other hand, find folly in the message, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). Is Jesus Christ the Lord and the Messiah? Was He not mocked and persecuted by His own people? Did He not die a horrible death on the cross? That is a stupefying message to their critical minds.

The root word translated “foolishness” ($\mu\omega\rho\sigma$) is where we get our English word “moron”. Thus the message “Christ crucified” is a moronic idea to the wise Greek thinkers in view of their superficial knowledge of Christ. The message that Christ was crucified is true. But the Gospel story does not end with His death. The Lord Jesus Christ resurrected from the grave on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

continued on page 18



World's Foolishness
God's Wisdom

All those who believe in this Gospel truth will not perish in their sins but will be saved for eternity. However, those who reject this truth, being wise in their own eyes, are in darkness concerning the Gospel of eternal life. When the Lord Jesus returns, they shall stand in condemnation for the folly of their unbelief.

The crux of the matter

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (verse 25). Even the foolishness of God, if there was such a thing, is way beyond parity to man's wisdom. The Lord conveyed this truth through the prophet Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). God is the only supreme omniscient being of unfathomable wisdom. To this, Paul exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (verse 26). People of power and influence are likely to have an unfavourable view of God's calling because it is seen as a threat to all that they care about in this world. Thus, not many of them will be found in the church. This also goes to show that the Gospel is meant to flourish even without the aid of such people. And one can only wonder how so many pastors fret over the prospect of losing influential churchgoers if they preach an "offensive" Gospel message.

The social stratum of the Corinthian church is typical of the church as we know it today.

Though there may be people of the upper class, they are few and far between. Pews are mostly filled with the common folk, many from the lower strata of society. The reason given is simply that God has chosen the lowly and weak for a purpose – that their faith and hope in Christ might shame the high and mighty who have become wise in their own conceits. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Proverbs 26:12).

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (verses 27-28). The wisdom of God! It defies natural law; for things superior are put to shame by those that are inferior. What greater irony could there be than in seeing the proud and powerful being brought down to nothing by the despised weaklings of the lowest sort – their downfall being the result of their own unbelief. This brings to mind the story of the rich man and the poor beggar, Lazarus (Luke 16:19-26). There is something about wisdom and pride, wealth and vanity that usually makes those who possess these unwilling to give them up for Christ. Remember the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:21-23?

Worldly wisdom lures people to foolish self-deception. "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God..." (1 Corinthians 3:18-19).

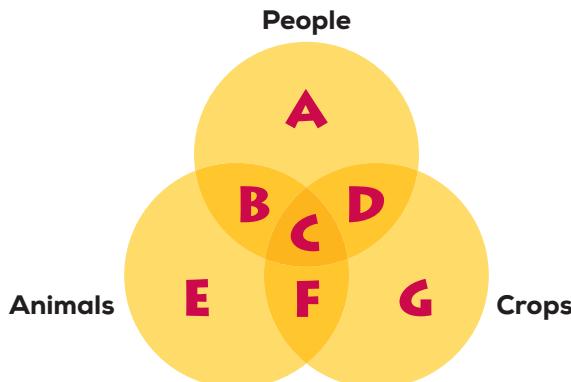
The hopelessness of human wisdom can only find its remedy in the cross of Christ, the crucified, who is the power of God and the wisdom of God! ■

BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 9 & 10

Sarah Yong

READ EXODUS 9 AND 10.

THE DIAGRAM BELOW SHOWS THE DIFFERENT DAMAGING EFFECTS OF THE PLAGUES ON PEOPLE, ANIMALS AND CROPS. FOR EXAMPLE, "B" REPRESENTS A PLAGUE THAT AFFECTED BOTH PEOPLE AND ANIMALS, BUT NOT THE CROPS. USE THIS DIAGRAM TO FILL IN THE TABLE BELOW.



Plague	Description	Order	Damage
Boils	Ashes from the _____ turned into this.	---	B
-----	Caused the death of the cattle of Egypt.	5th	---
Hail	Accompanied by thunder and _____.	---	C
-----	The Lord brought them in an east wind.	7th	---

Which letter best represents the extent of the plague of darkness? ___

SPIRITUAL LESSON

On three occasions, Pharaoh broke his promise to Moses and Aaron (Exodus 8:25, 10:11 and 10:24). Yet Scripture reminds us that all these happened according to God's sovereign will. Read Romans 9:17 and 18, then complete the short passage below.

God raised up _____ that He might show His _____ through him, and that God's _____ might be declared throughout all the _____. God alone decides to whom He will show _____, and whom He will _____.

ANSWERS TO VOLUME 12 ISSUE 4: BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 8&9 (P.23)

1st-fish, B / 2nd-frogs, A / 3rd-lice, C / 4th-flies, D / strength; people; peace

Story retold by

Ruth Low

Illustrated by

Linus Kok

HUGH LATIMER

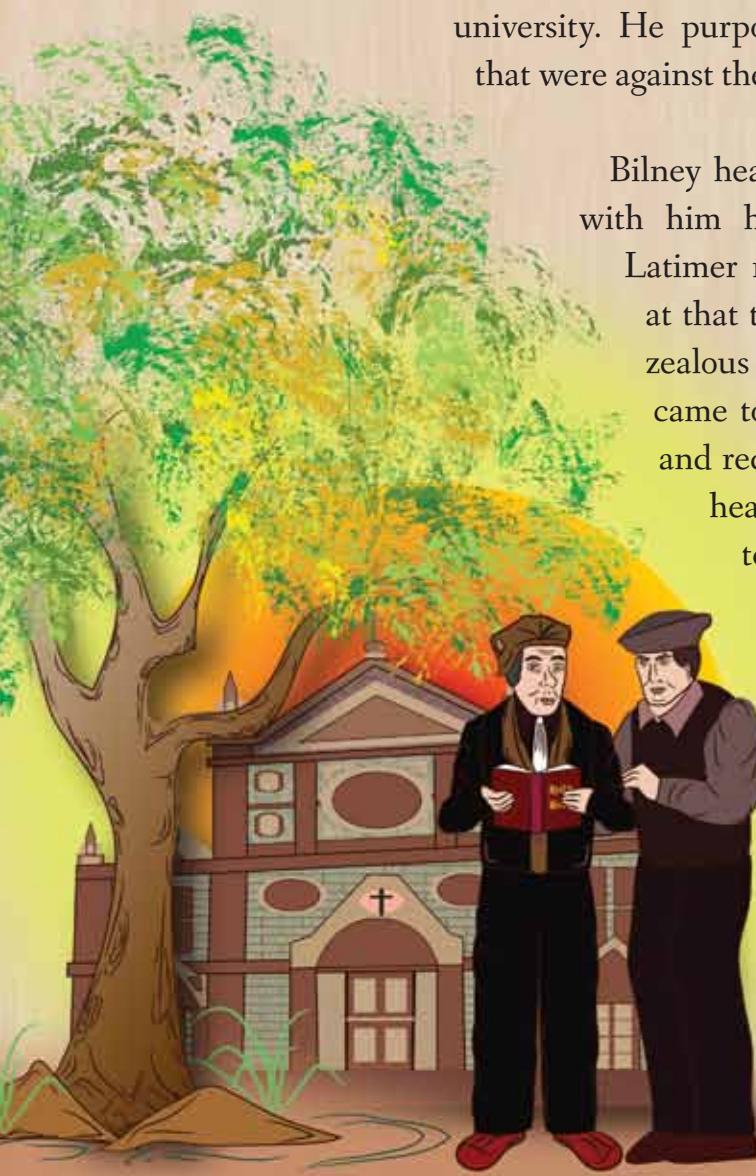
An English Reformation preacher and martyr

Hugh Latimer was a priest studying divinity in Cambridge together with Thomas Bilney. Latimer held on steadfastly to the Roman Catholic teachings, and strongly opposed the new religious views of Bilney.

One day, on completion of his graduate studies, Latimer preached to all the students in the university. He purposely criticized the doctrines that were against the Roman Catholic Church.

Bilney heard him and decided to share with him his testimony of conversion.

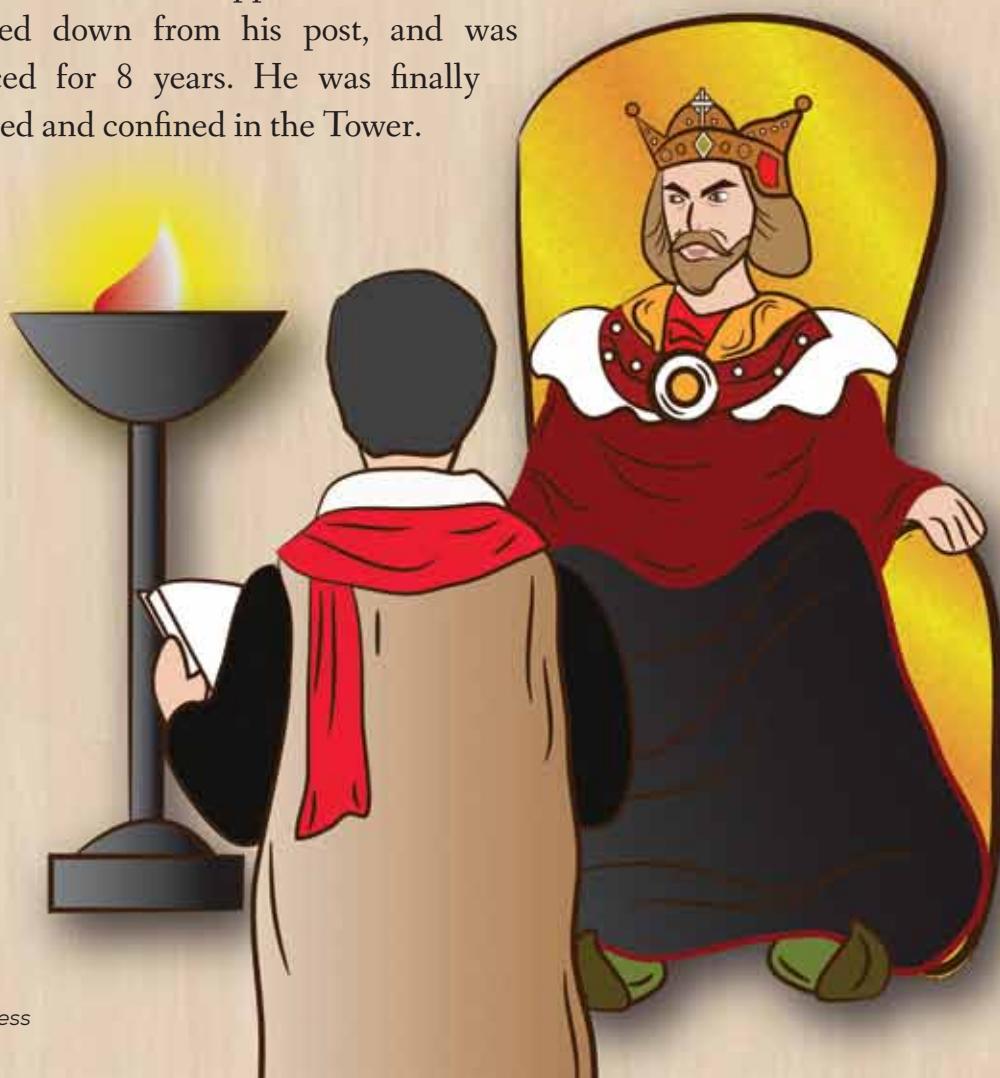
Latimer recounted, "Bilney heard me at that time and perceived that I was zealous without knowledge; and he came to me afterwards in my study, and requested me, for God's sake, to hear his testimony. I did so—and to say the truth, by his words I learned more than before in many years... from that time forward I began to savour the Word of God, and forsook the school doctors and their fooleries." Latimer's eyes were opened to the truth. He was converted and joined Bilney to preach the Word.



However, the Roman Catholic Church was not happy with Latimer because of his faith and preaching. He suffered interrogation and temporary imprisonment.

Upon his release, by God's providence, Latimer was appointed to be a royal chaplain. He preached before the king and found favour with him. As such, Latimer had the freedom and protection to preach in England for 4 years.

But when the king gave the order for all preachers to submit to the Roman Catholic doctrines, Latimer opposed these measures, stepped down from his post, and was silenced for 8 years. He was finally arrested and confined in the Tower.





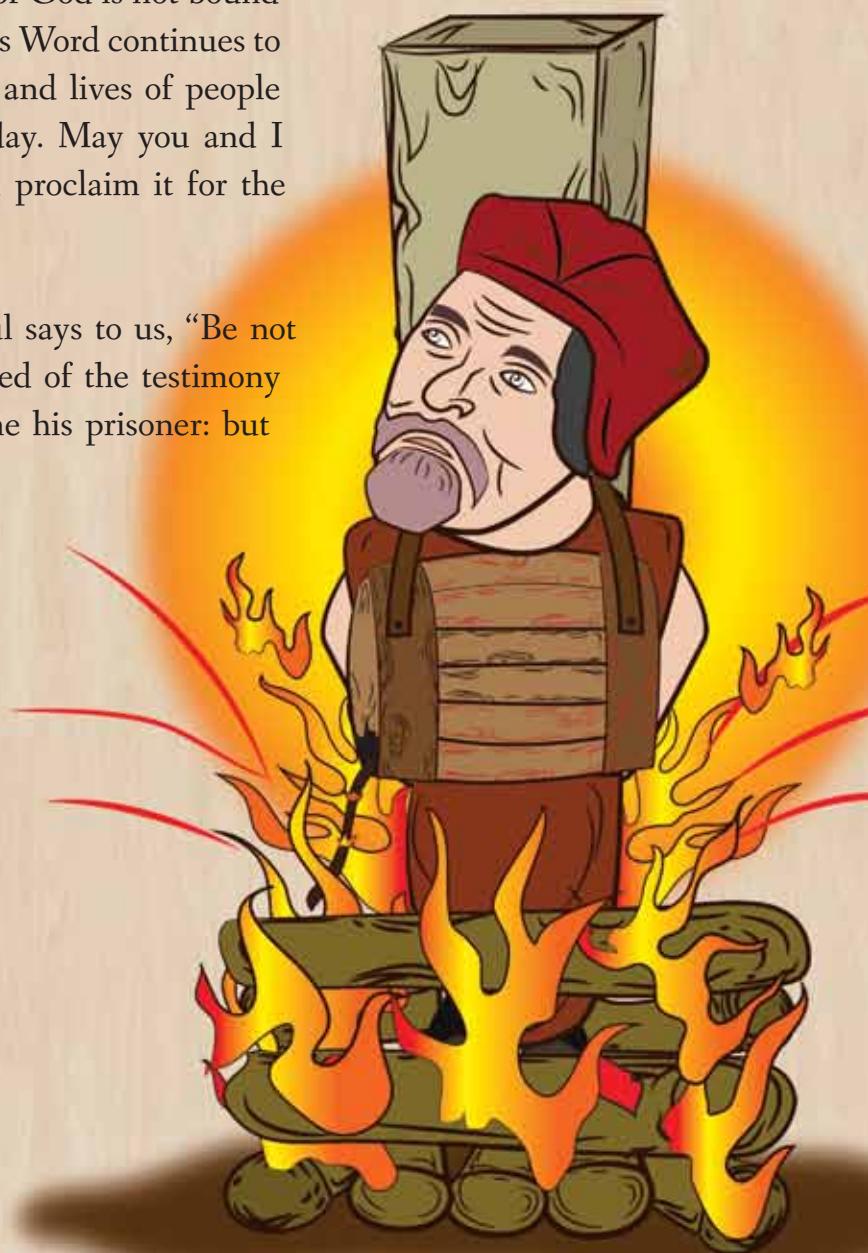
Later, a new king, whose name was King Edward VI, came to the throne. He allowed Latimer to preach openly for 6 years. When King Edward VI died, Mary Tudor became queen. She wanted to restore the Roman Church in England, and this caused Latimer to be arrested again.

Latimer was confined in the Tower for 2 years before he was led out to be burnt, together with another godly man, Nicholas Ridley. It was 1555, and Latimer was then 80 years old.

A bag of gunpowder was hung round his neck,
and as the fire was lit, he uttered his famous words,
“Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man;
we shall this day, by God’s grace, light such a candle
in England, that shall never be put out.”

Indeed, men of God may be bound and burnt, “but the word of God is not bound” (2 Timothy 2:9). God’s Word continues to flourish in the hearts and lives of people around the world today. May you and I fearlessly defend and proclaim it for the salvation of others!

The apostle Paul says to us, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Timothy 1:8).



Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church's 25th Anniversary Events

**"Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus
throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." – Ephesians 3:21**

In thanksgiving to God for 25 years of
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church's ministry,
the following events will be held on five Saturdays of March 2013.
We warmly invite you to come and rejoice with us as we exalt the
Lord Jesus, our Saviour, through the preaching of His Word.

Gospel Rally

All are welcome. Admission is free.

Level 5, Auditorium, Singapore Post Centre, Singapore 408600
(Next to Paya Lebar MRT)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

2nd March 2013, 8.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Paul Ferguson



Public Lectures on the Doctrine of the Church

All are welcome. Admission is free.

Level 5, Auditorium, Singapore Post Centre, Singapore 408600
(Next to Paya Lebar MRT)

Lecture I: The Church – A Household Founded on Christ

9th March 2013, 8.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Quek Suan Yew

Lecture II: The Church – A Pillar and Ground of Truth

16th March 2013, 8.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo

Lecture III: The Church – A Spiritual House unto God

23rd March 2013, 8.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy



GBPC 25th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service & Dinner

The Regent Singapore, Singapore 249715

30th March 2013, 7.00 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy

If you would like to join us for the Thanksgiving Service & Dinner, please call the church office at 6741 1910 during office hours on weekdays to register. Cost per person: \$95