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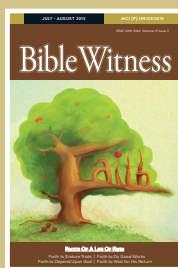
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Bible Witness



FACETS OF A LIFE OF FAITH

Faith to Endure Trials | Faith to Do Good Works
Faith to Depend Upon God | Faith to Wait for His Return



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*All the above articles
are contributed
by the Rev Tan Kian Sing,
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About the cover design

Life of a believer, much like the life of a tree, can be pretty tough. However, both grow through adverse circumstances by the gracious providence of God and become strong and fruitful.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

The magazine is distributed free from 2006 onwards. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Postage and handling charges for 2 years (12 issues):

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LOVE-GIFT

Bible Witness Media Ministry welcomes love-gifts from readers to meet the cost of publishing and distribution. The Ministry also sends the magazine freely to churches in poorer countries. Hence your generous support is much needed and greatly appreciated.

USE OF ARTICLES

The articles may be freely used for non-commercial purposes, so long as they are quoted verbatim, and the writer as well as the source identified.

Editorial

Greetings to all the readers in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The articles included in this issue of Bible Witness are the extracts of sermons delivered by Rev Tan Kian Sing in the recent church camp of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church. The sermons were based on teachings from the epistle of James concerning the various facets of a life of faith. Those well-expounded sermons were great spiritual resources for our souls. We are assured that our readers will also be nourished from them to live a life of genuine, lively, enduring, victorious faith. The assistant editor, Ho Kee How, has joyfully laboured to reproduce those sermons as articles in this issue.

This September, the Bible Witness Media Ministry has a special reason for rejoicing and thanksgiving. It was exactly 10 years ago that the Lord has provided BWMM with an opportunity to start a bookroom and a Lunch Hour Bible Study through a Christian lady who offered her shop in the Hong Lim Complex for these purposes. Just about that time, the Lord also called and prepared a man of His choice, John Peh, to serve as the manager of the bookroom. Since then, the Lord has graciously enabled this Gospel enterprise to win souls and to nurture the faith of Christians who attended the Bible Study and made use of the books and other resources made available there. Some of the testimonies of the regular participants of the Bible Study are included herein. To all who can come to the Lunch Hour Bible Study held on Wednesdays, I would like to extend a hearty welcome. (For more information, please see page 26).

I would also like to share with you an exigency that Gethsemane B-P Church and Bible Witness Media Ministry are faced with. It has become rather urgent to make room for the increasing number of staff, resources and weekly activities. The present venue (Church Resource Centre) of just 166 sq m is crammed with 12 staff, a small audio-studio, printed resources and equipment. Barely have we any space for any kind of gathering. The church is urgently in need of larger rooms for the fellowship groups, which have been steadily growing in recent days. So Gethsemane BPC's Session has prayerfully called for a Building Fund of S\$5 million by the end of 2015. However, the fund is still short of S\$3.5 million. I therefore appeal to all who love the Lord's work done through Gethsemane BPC and BWMM, to generously and expeditiously give to this Building Fund.

May "the voice of rejoicing and salvation be in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly" (Psalm 118:15).

Joyfully in the service of Christ,
Prabhudas Koshy

Faith to

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

James 1:12

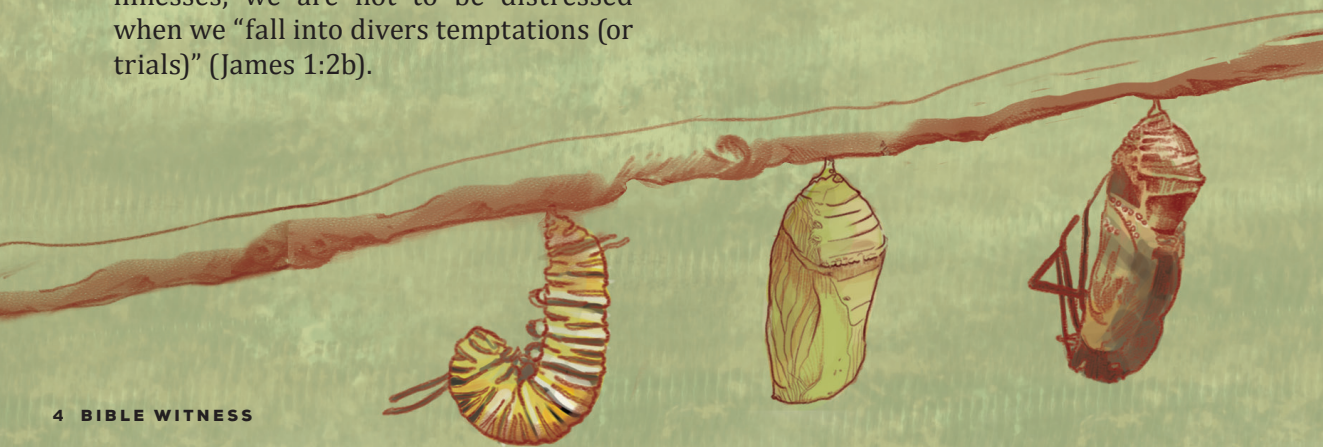
Christians are born again, justified and sanctified by faith. That is just the beginning of the Christian life. As believers go through life, they will be progressively sanctified – which involves constant battle and a relentless fight to the end against sin – and in the process, their faith tested and strengthened. That is part and parcel of spiritual growth and maturity.

As with physical development, in our spiritual growth, it is a matter of time that our faith will undergo testing. It is like the process of building up immunity in a child's body as he grows and matures. Part of the growing up process involves the child contracting various sicknesses (such as simple cough and common cold) which activate the body's antibodies to form. That way, the child builds up his immunity, and will be stronger and more resistant to future attacks of the same illness. Just as new parents should not panic, worry or fear in times when their children "fall into" various common illnesses, we are not to be distressed when we "fall into divers temptations (or trials)" (James 1:2b).

For our faith to be able to endure trials, we must understand the reason for trials, be able to respond properly to trials, and keep in view the sure reward that awaits those who persevere through trials.

REASON FOR TRIALS

The apostle James says the testing of our faith is to produce patience in us (1:3). It is thus a means to nurture and produce the fruit of godliness and spiritual resilience in our lives. But we must let the trial of our faith to patiently do its work in us in order to achieve its purpose of "perfecting" and making us "entire" (i.e. complete) in Christ, lacking nothing (v. 4). The Greek word translated as "perfect" means "mature"; it does not mean sinlessness, but spiritual maturity through the process of sanctification. To reap the full benefits of progressively maturing spiritual growth will require the Christian to go through the testing. There is simply no shortcut.



endure trials

The Need for Patience

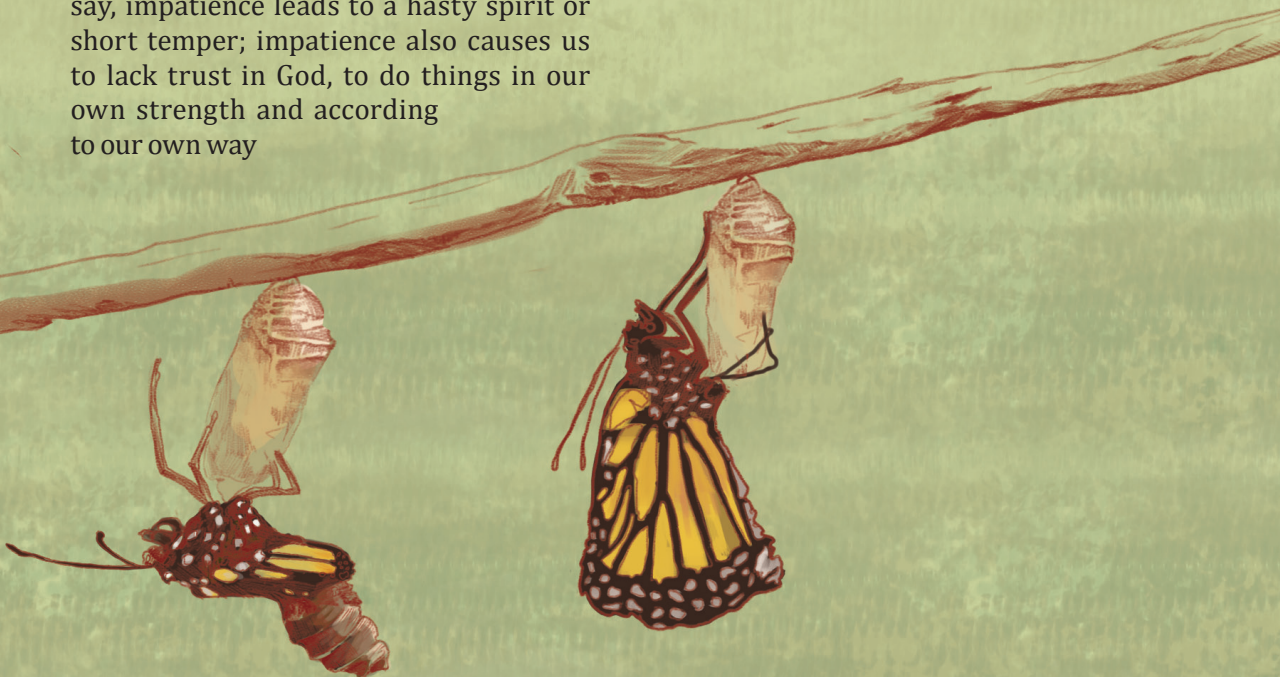
Perhaps the illustration of a butterfly pupa “struggling” in its development into the complete adult stage brings out this point most vividly. It experiences great difficulty and makes an intense effort as it attempts to move its legs and wings so that it can crawl and fly away from its cocoon. If a concerned but misguided boy cut short that process by pulling the emerging butterfly out of its “miserable” cocoon, he would end up with a stunted instead of a vibrant butterfly fluttering among the flowers! If we let patience do its work, the end-product will be much more beautiful than what it looks in the developing stage.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. Do we lack patience? Are we anxious always? That is not a good sign as it shows our faith is not tested. Needless to say, impatience leads to a hasty spirit or short temper; impatience also causes us to lack trust in God, to do things in our own strength and according to our own way

and timing, without waiting upon God (cf. Proverbs 14:17a, 29b). Only when we wait upon God will He do great things for us. Otherwise, we will end up being spiritually handicapped.

The Need to be Spiritually Exercised

As such trials “toughen” us, they also test the genuineness of our faith. This is likened to the endurance fitness training that soldiers undergo to be physically fit and operationally-ready to engage in military exercises. Truly, the process of sanctification is a formidable arena of spiritual conflict – it is a “battleground”, not a “playground”. James says he “that endureth temptation” is “blessed” (v. 12a). “Temptation” here does not necessarily mean being seduced to give in to fleshly lusts, but rather has to do with being in a state of adversity or suffering affliction.



Such suffering is designed to help God's children combat sin, and closely related to this, has to do with our being exercised and disciplined. Suffering produces perseverance. As perseverance mushrooms, "character" is formed and moulded. No wonder James says such a man is "blessed"! There is a certain kind of spiritual maturity that is attainable only through the discipline of suffering, which comes with trials.

RESPONSE TO TRIALS

Now, if trials are so good, what should our response be then? James says to "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (v. 2). Note that James says "when" and not "if". So we are, first and foremost, to expect trials and testings in our spiritual life, if we want to grow and mature.

Be Joyful

James' encouragement to believers in times of testings is to rejoice. Trials will be "divers", i.e. many and various (of different kinds). They may come in the form of afflictions, physical sufferings, persecutions, etc. Unpleasant and distressing though they may be, these are to be embraced by God's children as a privilege and joy. A perennially comfortable church, without encountering any opposition or any experience that it costs to follow Jesus, will never be strong. It is only in the context of suffering that Christians can learn what it means to be "more than conquerors". Therefore, the willingness to endure is not only a rightful response to trials, the developed ability (over time) to be temperate and

keep patient amidst trials is also a mark of true spiritual maturity. As we live in a godless and wicked world, where there is an invisible warfare going on constantly, such response is certainly what makes us "more than conquerors" through Christ (Romans 8:37)!

This concurs with what the Lord Jesus Himself has said: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Such an attitude was also what made the apostle Paul able to write the book of Philippians in prison, where he showed how he could still rejoice despite suffering for his faith and thereby also encouraged the Philippians to rejoice with him (cf. Philippians 2:17-18). Are you at present suffering for your faith in Christ at work, school, home or anywhere in this temporal earthly life? God's Word says, "count it all joy"!

Do not Blame God

Equally crucial is this: do not blame God for putting your faith on trial (v. 13). Accusing God is a frequent ill-response of those who "crack up" under trials or even yield to temptation and then try to excuse themselves. Do not repeat what our first parents did in the Garden of Eden, blatantly blaming others and subtly blaming God (Genesis 3:12-13). If we fall into wrongdoing, we are not to even implicitly attribute remote responsibility to God. God "cannot be tempted with evil", for in Him dwelleth no sin nor the experience of it; "neither tempteth he any man". God may permit the circumstances, but He is not responsible for the actual prompting to sin. That responsibility lies in man's own evil desire (v. 14).

We can draw further insight from Paul's usage of the illustration of God being the Potter and we being the clay (Romans 9:19-21). We deserve to be tested because of our sinfulness. God does not test us to cause us to fall into sin. He tests us to strengthen us and bring out the best in us. Rather, it is Satan who tempts us to bring out the worst in us and cause us to fall into sin. He does so by appealing to our "own lust" (i.e. evil desire). If we fail our test and become unfaithful to God, it is our deceitful heart to be blamed, not God.

REWARD DUE TO TRIALS

God is the source of all good. James says every "good" and "perfect" gift is from "the Father of lights" (v. 17). God loves to give us good and perfect gifts. A tested and proven faith is certainly God's good and perfect gift to us this side of heaven.

"Crown of Life"

This life on earth is not all there is to our Christian existence. There is a reward in heaven awaiting all those who patiently endure trials and sufferings in their Christian walk on earth out of love for their Saviour. James calls it "the crown of life" (v. 12). The certainty of this special reward and honour is guaranteed by the Lord's promise. It is given in recognition of faithful endurance. This is corroborated by the challenges to the church in Smyrna and Philadelphia respectively – "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10); "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy

crown" (Revelation 3:11). This describes the Christian's final reward in heaven.

"Eternal Weight of Glory"

The "crown of life" is not eternal life. Eternal life can never be lost. But the "crown of life" can be lost if we do not hold our ground in the face of severe trials. Though the testing of our faith is never joyous, but grievous, it is nevertheless the precursor to wonderful experiences of the Lord's grace. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him (Christ)" (2 Timothy 2:12a). If we realize, as the apostle Paul puts it, that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17), surely we should "reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18)!

CONCLUSION

Dear Christian readers, when trials come barging into your lives unannounced like a tide, remember the biblical reason for, and the blessed response to, as well as the ultimate reward due to such God-ordained trials. By God's grace, the Christian's life of faith can stand up to trials, even "fiery" ones (cf. 1 Peter 4:12). He will have the faith to endure and even rejoice in trials, knowing that all trials work together for good. May God help us to face the testings when our faith is being put on trial. Amen.

Faith to

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

James 2:17

James emphasizes the kind of faith that saves, namely a working faith, which produces visible fruit in a life characterized by endurance under trial, care for the needy, separation from worldliness, temperance in speech, purity and peaceableness in character, as well as prayerfulness in all situations. Faith without fruit is false, James warns!

WORKING FAITH SPROUTS FORTH FRUIT

According to the writer of Hebrews, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). That being so, how can something so intangible as faith be seen? Faith, simply put, is "trust in God", which stems from the Holy Spirit's illumination of our spiritual eyes. It is that spiritual enlightenment of the mind based on a clear knowledge of who God is, as revealed through His Word. It operates in the innermost recesses of a man's heart, realigning his convictions and values system with God's Word. No man can see the heart; only God can. Fellow men can only see the outward expressions of a true Christian's faith. Thus, "Let your light so

shine before men, that they may see your good works (i.e. outward expressions of your faith), and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

No Fruit Equals Dead Tree

Christian faith cannot be separated from Christian practice. Faith and works co-exist in harmony because faith is the "root" while works are the "fruits". A tree with functioning roots absorbs water and minerals from the soil, so that its trunk and branches may be nourished by the life-giving sap. The inevitable result is that the tree will bring forth fruit in its season. If no fruit comes forth, it may mean that the roots are dead. A tree with dead roots will not be able to produce any fruit or even leaves. It is a worthless tree, which is the depiction of a confession of faith not accompanied with good works (James 2:17).

In modern-day Christianity, faith in God has been easily misunderstood. It is not just raising our hand at a gospel rally, or saying the sinner's prayer, or mere intellectual belief in God's existence. In fact, James is saying that such profession of faith that stops short of being

do good works

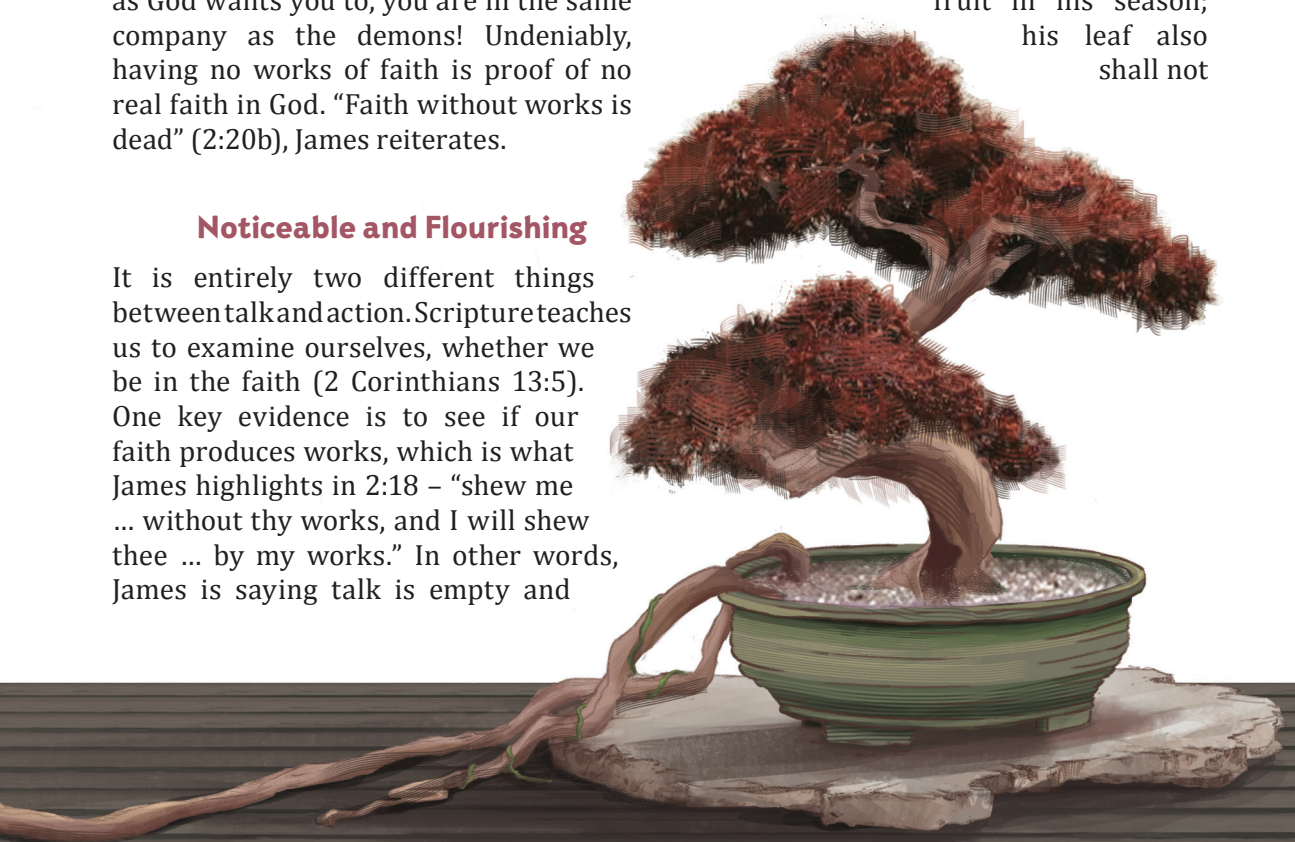
substantiated by the fruits of faith is no different from the monotheistic belief of the demons, who know God exists (2:19). Their belief, however, does not result in obedience, but rather causes them to “tremble” at the prospect of their coming doom, having been “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6b). Dear friends, you may be going to church every Sunday, attending prayer meetings and joining fellowship groups. You may even agree with the articles of faith in the church constitution, and Westminster Confession of Faith. Yet if your faith only makes you believe in God but not behave as God wants you to, you are in the same company as the demons! Undeniably, having no works of faith is proof of no real faith in God. “Faith without works is dead” (2:20b), James reiterates.

cannot stand on its own, whereas action speaks louder than words and is concrete proof of one’s faith. James is challenging his readers: “Show me.” This means “bring to light, exhibit, display”.

Faith does not exist in name only. It is demonstrable and evidenced by accompanying service and attitudes towards God and fellow men. True faith cannot be hidden – it is like a lighted candle that cannot be put “under a bushel, but on a candlestick” to give “light unto all that are in the house” (Matthew 5:15). A life of faith is like “a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not

Noticeable and Flourishing

It is entirely two different things between talk and action. Scripture teaches us to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). One key evidence is to see if our faith produces works, which is what James highlights in 2:18 – “shew me ... without thy works, and I will shew thee ... by my works.” In other words, James is saying talk is empty and



wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:3). The impact of such working faith in a Christian’s life is highly visible – full of vitality, fruitfulness and flourishing works!

WORKING FAITH SERVES MANKIND

Modern-day Christianity is characterized by much easy-believism. One great danger is that churches, in their watered-down preaching, give sinners the impression that one can be saved while continuing in sin. James bluntly says, “What doth it profit?” (2:14, 16). That is, what benefit, what advantage, what use is there if we say we have faith in God, but we do not act out our faith. If we fail in doing good works with our faith, we are like those who “profess that they know God; but in works they deny him ... and unto every good work reprobate (i.e. unfit, worthless, of no value)” (Titus 1:16).

Practical and Profitable

Faith must be seen in action. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we are saved to do good works – “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” James goes straight to the point: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food”, are we moved by their need to provide physical relief and refreshment to alleviate their great deprivation? Or do we say we will pray for them and that God will supply all their need according to His riches? Sweet, pious words without the corresponding

practical help, when it is in the power of our hand to provide, is making a mockery of our faith (2:15-16)!

James is insistent that faith offers practical help. Yes, we are to be concerned with the spiritual needs of the lost. But it is also necessary that we show concern and care for their bodily needs. Sharing what we have materially with those in need is an effective way of sharing our faith. What is the point of saying to the needy that we love them, but we do nothing to show our love for them? The apostle John puts it most urgently: “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:17-18). In a word, faith in God is not mere lip service, but is invariably accompanied with service that is profitable and meets the practical needs of fellow men, especially fellow saints.

“Freely Ye Have Received, Freely Give”

True piety must be accompanied by charity (i.e. loving fellow men), so that by this shall all men know that we are Christ’s disciples. When the Holy Spirit convicts a man of his sins and grants him faith to believe on Christ for salvation, that man knows, more than all else, how much he owes his spiritual life to Christ who, in giving Himself a ransom for all, has given him a righteous standing before God. He recognises that every blessing (physical and spiritual) he has received comes

from the Lord. Being merely stewards of all his worldly goods, he realises that just as he has freely received from the Lord, so freely will he also give in response. His is a faith which feels and responds to others in dire straits.

No wonder the apostle Paul is keen for believers to “affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men” (Titus 3:8). Remember when we do good to others, we do so as unto the Lord. Likewise, when we deny others of bodily needs, we deny the Lord Himself, as we have seen in the teaching of Christ (Matthew 25:31-46). Unquestionably, faith in God does not just end there. It will naturally lead us to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10), wherever opportunity or need arises. Such service done for Christ will enable us to be furnished and abound unto every good work, evidencing the fruits of our faith, which we have received from the Holy Spirit. Such faith will also freely give!

WORKING FAITH SUBMITS TO God

James, in mentioning two Old Testament characters, Abraham and Rahab, highlights that true faith submits to God’s will when put to the test. This is the case even when we are “troubled” or “perplexed” (2 Corinthians 4:8).

Walk by Faith, not by Sight

The world may be against you, circumstances may be bleak, but a working faith will not be daunted. It will not lean unto human understanding, but acknowledge and submit to God’s revealed will, trusting that God will direct the path (cf. Proverbs 3:5-6). This was well borne out by the two illustrations that James gives. Abraham, when he “offered Isaac his son upon the altar” (2:21), was “tried” (Hebrews 11:17a), that is, put to the test. Hebrews 11:17-19 tells us Abraham believed that God would somehow raise his son to life again if he were to sacrifice him. He did not stop believing that and went on to prove his belief, yielding to God completely to carry out His will. This was well-pleasing to God (2:23). Like Abraham, Rahab believed in God. And what proved her faith sincere was when she submitted herself to God by putting her life at risk as she “received the messengers, and ... sent them out another way” (2:25). Her great act of self-denial of her own safety was recognised by the Lord who had pardoned her.

The Lord sometimes tests our faith in Him to prove if we are truly and fully trusting in Him. Often when times are good and when others (not us) are in difficulty or trouble, it is easy to say how much we trust in God and encourage those afflicted to do so. But when our turn comes to face testings in life, are we ready to go through and pass the test? Will we have faith to submit to God’s leading, come what may? Can we simply trust and do what He says we should do, though we might not see what is ahead? If so, we have a faith that is true and living, not dead.

Faith Wrought and Made Perfect

The ultimate test of faith undoubtedly hinges on whether one is genuinely willing to say: “not my will, but thine, be done”. In other words, a man of faith will be asked by God to do what pleases God, though it may not be pleasant or comfortable to him. He may not immediately see the purpose or value of it, but his faith still moves him to submit to God’s will and carry out the needed task or responsibility, even at great cost or effort to him. Now if, for instance, God wants us to serve Him in a certain area of ministry, will we be readily available and by faith take up the challenge to do the work which He has called us to do? Or will we give the excuse that we do not have the skills, the ability, the experience, etc.? That will not allow the execution of our faith to be seen through our works (cf. 2:22).

Do not look upon ourselves, but look unto God. “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5). This involves a constant submission and habitual commitment to God’s revealed will, not just an occasional show of faith. That way, “by works”, faith is “made perfect” (2:22b), i.e. our faith may be brought to completeness and maturity through our continual obedience. Faith does not just begin and end in itself. It has a goal, which is full spiritual maturity in Christ. Abounding in works of faith will help us reach that glorious goal (2 Peter 1:8)!

CONCLUSION

Dear Christians, do you have a faith that is always in action? Is yours a true, saving, living faith in the living and true Saviour? If so, there will be noticeable evidence through the working out of your faith. It is not a dead faith, but a faith that is active and visible, that is, a working faith which not only results in good works that benefit others, but also submits to God’s constant leading through thick and thin. Amen.



✽ PHANG KIM WAH ✽

I am very blessed by Pastor Koshy’s Bible Study held every week at the Bible Witness Bookroom. As he expounds to us the Scriptures, I have been blessed with a better understanding of Biblical truths and God’s great promises to us in His Word. Personally, the walk of faith on this earth has been very challenging. But I look forward to be fed weekly with the spiritual food that the LORD provides for me through a truly God-called pastor. To God be the glory!

✽ LIM BENG HALL ✽

I am very blessed by this ministry in the bookroom, where Pastor Koshy can conduct a short but very spiritually enriching Bible Study for us during lunchtime every Wednesday. The Scriptures, as explained by Pastor, bring much comfort to me and I am personally



Years of Bible Study

@ Bible Witness Bookroom

impacted by the teachings of His Word, especially as I face struggles in the events and activities of the world during the week. I also thoroughly enjoy the warm fellowship among the participants. Praise God for Pastor Koshy for shepherding us and Brother John for being in charge.

✠ E. L. ✠

“My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word” (Psalm 119:28).

I am one of the “pioneers” who attended the Wednesday Bible Study when it first started in 2005, just after I had joined a company nearby. It was a very challenging working environment, so I always looked forward to lunchtime every Wednesday to find a reprieve and listen to God’s Word which reminded me of God’s providence and power to deliver. Despite the small group (sometimes 2-3 persons only), Rev Koshy faithfully taught the Word. At times, we would manage to finish only 1 verse during 1 session. In fact, we took 1 full year to complete 1 and 2 Peter. This is only because there was so much to learn from each word and each verse of the Bible. Thank God for Rev Koshy’s faithful teaching of God’s Word. I was always encouraged after the half hour of Bible study and wished we had more time.

Nevertheless, there were so few of us that I quietly wondered if Rev Koshy would stop the Bible Study one day. He already had such a busy schedule, having to rush to the bookroom after FEBC classes. But he never seemed discouraged. I thank God that the sessions are still running after 10 long years, and now to a very packed room.

In September 2011, when my company relocated to somewhere further away, I was very disappointed as I would not be able to attend anymore. Thank God that since live webcast was arranged, I could still attend “remotely”. Now with the Downtown MRT station opened, it is only 2 stops from my office, which makes physical attendance once again possible whenever I have the time to travel to the bookroom!

There had been very challenging and confusing times in my life in the past decade, but God is good. How could I have survived if not for His sustenance and encouragement through His Word, very often through the Bible lessons conducted faithfully every Wednesday, which uplifted my weary soul and heart. Thank God for this wonderful ministry and may the Lord continue to sustain it, Rev Koshy and the many brethren (Bro John and others) who work quietly behind the scene.

(continued on page 18)

Faith to

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

James 4:14

How do you live your life? Are you living your life as if God does not exist? We may not be conscious of it, but oftentimes the way we go about our daily business shows our lack of dependence on God and His holy will for our lives. This attitude is particularly manifested in our presumptuously laying plans for the future without considering God in the equation. James 4:13-17 particularly highlights the folly of such arrogant disregard of God.

FOLLY OF PLANNING WITHOUT God

In verse 13 of our text, we read of James' admonition to highly self-confident merchants: "Go to now, ye that say, To

day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and (we will) continue there a year, and (we will) buy and sell, and (we will) get gain".

Man's Misguided Self-Confidence

These were men with business acumen who had everything figured out. They were full of confidence concerning the future. They had made their elaborate plans and calculated anticipated profits, as though times, places, people and events were entirely under their control. Only intending to stay in the particular city for a year, they were certain they would make a profit. Apparently, profit-making, not the glory of God, was their overriding aim.

James objects to this presumptuous mindset which excludes God from the picture. James challenges us to check on the way we live our lives and go about planning and carrying out our plans. Throughout the days and years of our lives, we do get involved in many activities, set many goals, and make many crucial decisions. But in doing all these things, we must not disregard God

depend upon God

like those self-centred businessmen, who looked well into the future but failed to look into eternity. Profit-making without God will bring us misery and sorrow, for we neglect laying up heavenly treasures while on earth. Moreover, planning without God places us on very shaky ground as we do not know what will happen “tomorrow”.

Life's Fleeting and Uncertain Nature

To draw attention to our human limitation and frailty, James says: “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (v. 14). This metaphor of “vapour” is instructive; it illustrates the fleeting and transient nature of physical life. Like a whiff of perfume or foul air, vapour makes its presence known by filling the entire room within seconds, and then drifts away without being able to stay for very long. Likewise, human life will make its impact for good or bad, only for a short season, before passing from the scene just as quickly. Truly, life is so uncertain. None of us knows our future. That is why God warns us not to boast “of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs

27:1). We do not even know if today will be our last day on earth (having been reminded by news or in person that many deaths do occur suddenly). We cannot even see ahead into one day. No one can confidently say at the start of each day that one will still be alive by the end of the day. How dare we make plans for a whole year without any regard for God’s will for our lives? Like it or not, such a presumptuous mindset reflects our arrogance and defiant self-will.

Now, if you are running your life your way, without considering that your life is indeed in God’s hands and that it is He who can take it away from you anytime, then you are in danger of being like the rich but foolish farmer in the biblical account. After having a bumper crop, he made detailed plans for the future. He decided to build bigger barns, thinking that his life was in his own hands. Notwithstanding

his boasting, little did he realize that his soul would be required of him that very night (cf. Luke 12:16-21)! Do you not see the uncertainty of life? Indeed, the only certainty about our future is that it is shrouded in uncertainties.

WISDOM OF PLANNING IN RELIANCE ON GOD

Our ignorance of “tomorrow” ought to cause us to submit all our plans to the all-knowing God, who knows all about all our “tomorrows”. That is the essence of proper and wise planning. True, life may be uncertain to us, but it is not uncertain to God.

God Knows All about Tomorrow

Our God and Creator is a sovereign God, “high above all nations, and ... above the heavens”, who “humbleth himself to behold the things that are ... in the earth” (Psalm 113:4, 6)! He is not a “hands-off” God who is unconcerned about the affairs of the world, that He just let nature take its course. Nor is He a God with limited power who could only stand idly by as events unfold. God’s providence teaches that nothing happens by chance in our lives. In fact, He has a certain good plan for each of His children, and has already planned His “routes” for us, “that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). God’s sovereignty over human society is also shown in His ruling and overruling the affairs of men, even making “the wicked for the day of evil” (cf. Proverbs 16:4, 9). In other words, He knows all about tomorrow, He being “infinite,

eternal and unchangeable” in His wisdom (WSC question 4).

Living our life in dependence upon such a sovereign God will give us confidence of “tomorrow”, knowing that He is leading us day by day towards an as yet unknown future. Furthermore, our days here on earth are very limited and our life so brief that we cannot afford to waste our lives groping in the dark, not knowing God’s will. It is God’s will that helps us to navigate safely through the “labyrinth” of dangers, temptations and enticements in this crooked, dark world. Indeed, “the counsel of the LORD” (Proverbs 19:21) can stand the test of time. We do well to seek the mind of God, to follow after His counsel and do His will. Do not disregard it.

“If the Lord Will”

Therefore, instead of talking proudly about our brilliant plans, we should show our full dependence upon God by being in the habit of saying, “If the Lord will” (v. 15) or “God willing”. Do we pray and commit our ways unto the Lord? Do we seek the Lord’s will in all things that we do? Do we submit our plans to Him, bearing in mind that “the preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD” (Proverbs 16:1)?

Such reliance on God stands us in good stead, as “the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD” (Psalm 37:23). God’s unseen Hand of providence in leading the apostle Paul in his missionary forays into Europe presents a most telling biblical example. After a brief stopover

at Ephesus near the end of his second missionary journey, he told the Ephesian Jews of his plan to minister among them again: “I will return again unto you, if God will” (Acts 18:21). Later, when he heard of some serious misdemeanour in the Corinthian church, he wrote of his plan to make an urgent second “pastoral” visit, “if the Lord will” (1 Corinthians 4:19). If that plan materialized, he hoped to remain with the flock for an extended stay, “if the Lord permit” (1 Corinthians 16:7). “If the Lord will” is a constant attitude of Paul’s heart. Wise indeed is that man who, in all his earthly pursuits, subjects all his future plans to the will of the sovereign and omniscient God.

EVIL OF EXULTING IN SELF- ASSURED PLANNING

Do you notice how many times “we will” is used in James 4:13? Four times – “we will go ... (we will) continue ... (we will) buy and sell, and (we will) get gain”! Remember that this was actually the way Lucifer spoke against His Creator, and for that God cast him out of heaven – all because of the sin of pride!

Sin of Self-Glorying

Granted, there may be some “believers” who seem to have everything going for them in life. Whatever they have planned has hitherto flourished. Taking credit for themselves and not attributing their success to God is tantamount to ingratitude. To plan without God is bad enough, but to “boast” of their seeming success after they have so planned is

downright “evil” (v. 16)! In “rejoicing” (i.e. speaking loudly and highly of oneself) in your “boastings” (i.e. repeated outward shows of arrogance), you are committing evil. That is the characteristic of the devil. You become proud and cease depending upon God. You want to run your own life the way you like it; you want to be the “god” of your life.

Such self-glorying fails to recognize our dependence upon God for life and strength. It conveniently overlooks the fact that in the accomplishment of our plans, it is God who grants us health and ability, who allows peace and political stability to prevail in the land, who preserves the community from an outbreak of infectious diseases (such as SARS and MERS), and so on. Frankly, these are all factors beyond our control, which should cause us to humbly depend upon God. No room for boasting whatsoever!

Sin of Omission

Undoubtedly, if you deliberately disobey God’s will even after you have known it, you are proud and do not wish to live your life in full dependence upon God. Surely it is God’s will to read God’s Word daily, to pray frequently and earnestly, to worship the Lord faithfully each Lord’s Day, to come for prayer meeting to plead for help and mercy, to study to increase in biblical knowledge and understanding of God’s truth, and to be engaged in other means of grace to grow spiritually. If, in your well thought out plans, you fail to include these spiritual duties, James says: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (v.

17). In theological terms, this is known as the sin of omission. We tend to think that only doing wrong is sin. But God's Word says that sin is also not doing good!

The epitome of a self-exulting and self-sufficient spirit is manifested in a person's self-assured perspective to all his meticulous and self-serving plans. If you allow your so-called grandiose plans to eat into time devoted to God and spiritual matters, you are omitting to do good, and that is sin. In your indiscriminate and even nonchalant neglect of spiritual considerations in your planning, you betray your conceited thinking that you can succeed under your own steam. You are fully aware that God holds the future. Yet, despite that knowledge, if you fail to plan according to God's will, then you have fallen short. You err in not what you have done, but in what you have not done!

CONCLUSION

Dear friends, what is your attitude towards God's will and your dependency upon Him? Do you live your life with a total disregard of God's will as you make your daily plans and decisions? Do you know God's will and yet refuse to obey Him? As true believers, we ought to exercise our faith to trust and obey God's will and be in total dependence upon Him. Let us not say, "To day or to tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain". Rather, we ought to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." May God help us.



(continued from page 13)

✠ MARGARETHA GOLE ✠

After my transfer to a new employer, I felt very lost. Because of my contract, I go to church only once a month, but that is not enough for me to hear the preaching of God's Word. In 2013, I was given a weekly half-day off on weekdays. I thank God for the Bible Study @Bible Witness Bookroom, where I can take this opportunity to study God's Word. Thank God also for the online live broadcast, where I can still join the Bible Study when I can't come.

Even though my English is not strong, I could understand enough the messages and have been blessed.

This Bible study has helped me grow in faith. The exhortations given by Pastor has been instructive to me to change my ways in my walk with the Lord.

As Christian, we will and must face persecution. Persecutions can be physical, emotional or spiritual. It comes not only from the unbelievers but also from those who called themselves 'Christians' but choose to live and enjoy the pleasure of the world.

✠ ANG SOK LENG ✠

I want to thank God for the brothers who set up the webcast. It makes it convenient for me to tune in when I travel and have no conflicting appointments. This Bible Study is a time that I look forward to. Tuning in to God's Word, which Pastor Koshy carefully explains without "sugar-coating", is a great joy. Pastor Koshy certainly has a gift of teaching. I have learnt much, including the series on Revelation. Thank God for his faithfulness as well.

I also share what I've learned with my family. God is constantly calling us to be like Christ and not to conform to the world. Though we may go through many trials, we are not alone but are protected and strengthened by our Abba Father. May we be guided only for the purpose that God be glorified.

☪ **Ooi Aik Kean** ☪

Bible Witness Lunch Hour Bible study has been a place of “refuge” for me during the most difficult 8 months in my working life. For the whole of that period, week after week, I eagerly looked forward to the Bible Study to find some solace for my stressed soul. On one occasion when Dn Paul Cheng was the teacher, I arrived in terrible emotional shape in the midst of trying circumstances in office. Praise the Lord through him, God’s Word ministered to me, restored and uplifted me, and then sent me back more ready to face the trials at the office.

☪ **Philip Goh** ☪

“Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it” (Proverbs 8:4-11).

For those who were there from the beginning of this Bible Study, it has been a blessing. I pray that the knowledge, understanding and wisdom gained will fill their souls to the extent that they neither desire silver nor gold nor the things of this world. May the Spirit of the living God bless all those who are led to come and hear the Wisdom from the Living Word. I thank and praise our glorious Father and Saviour for Rev Prabhudas Koshy who sacrificially

labour for the Saviour’s sake, not counting his life precious but putting the flock of Christ first. He truly knows his calling. He “dies” daily to give his all for his loving Saviour. Let us fall on our knees to thank and bless the Lord on how we have all been blessed by this ministry.

May the Lord continue to bless this ministry and grant Rev Koshy the anointing from above through the empowerment of the mighty Spirit.

☪ **MARY QUEK** ☪

I must express my grateful thanks to God, for providing us not only with physical food, but also spiritual food for souls. In this regard, I praise God for His kindness for this past decade in giving us a conducive place to have Wednesday Lunch Hour Bible Study, and for His servant, Rev Koshy, to faithfully teach us. Here, I was able to unlearn wrong ideas, learn and relearn God’s truths as they were taught in the Bible.

Through Rev Koshy’s teaching of Revelation, my love for this world began to grow dim. My eyes were opened and my heart was gripped with fear, when I realised that the Antichrist would reign and many would be deceived, and how God would pour out His wrath and judgments upon this present evil world. Sad to say, many will go through that “great tribulation”. But the believers have this blessed and glorious hope of our Lord Jesus Christ’s return for all His people, upon which He will rule the earth for 1,000 years of peace. Finally, “God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:3-4).

All glory be to God for the Bible Witness Wednesday Lunch Hour Bible Study.

Faith to

"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

James 5:8

In the immediate decades following the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel of Christ's salvation grace was carried far and wide by His faithful disciples. Farther and farther the message spread, first in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and then in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8), until communities of Christians appeared throughout the mighty Roman Empire. So much so that when the apostle James wrote his epistle, it was addressed to "the twelve tribes" of Israel (i.e. Jewish

believers) who were "scattered abroad" (1:1). Alas, while many people accepted the glorious message and were soundly converted, many more rejected the gospel of grace. They refused to give up their evil ways and worldly pleasures. Their wicked lives being rebuked by the Christians' sobriety and holy abstinence, they even turned angrily against the Christians and persecuted them in every way they could.

The epistle of James bears witness to the severe opposition and persecution



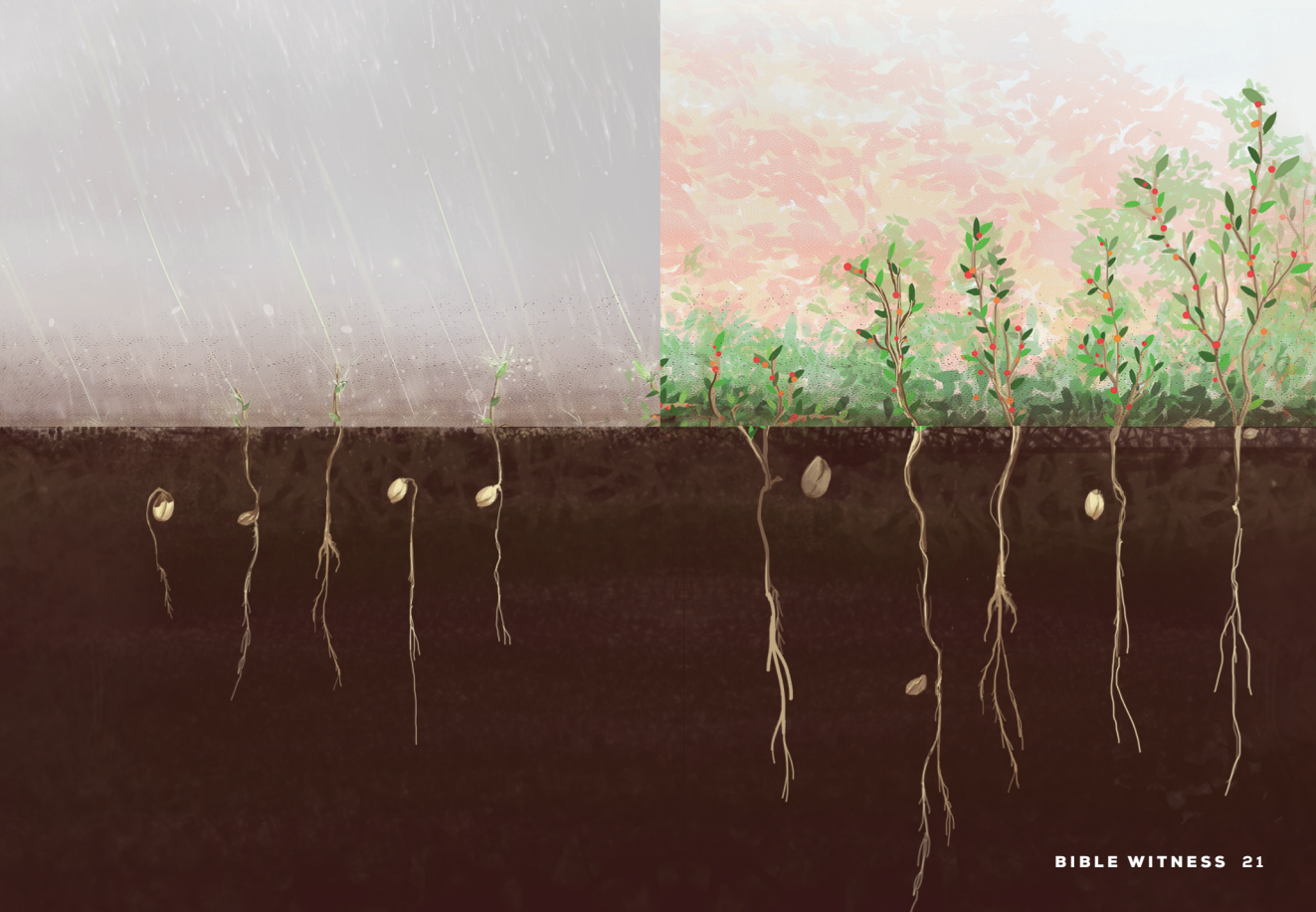
wait for His return

confronting the early Jewish converts. Undeniably, the theme of Christ's second coming would have served to sustain the "under-duress" Christians' hope and faith in the face of relentless persecution. How about you? Is your life so full of sufferings, afflictions, persecutions, troubles, and difficulties? The Lord had already forewarned His disciples that in this world they shall face trials and tribulations, but He encouraged them to be of good cheer. He exhorted them not to be troubled, for He has gone back to His Father's house "to prepare a place" for believers. And He assured them that He will come

back again to receive them into His eternal presence (cf. John 14:2-3)! James reinforces our Lord's encouragement when, towards the end of his epistle, he reminds his readers of the Lord's second coming 3 times – in verses 7, 8 and 9 of chapter 5. Meanwhile, we are to wait patiently, be steadfastly established, and continually bear a good testimony in awaiting the Lord's return.

BE PATIENT IN WAITING

Firstly, the phrase, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming



of the Lord" (James 5:7a), emphasizes the idea of "holding one's spirit in check". James is exhorting the believers to "suffer with long patience" until the coming of the Lord to take us back to be with Him forever and ever in glory land.

No Retaliatory Spirit

Christians will be comforted by the fact that at Christ's return, all the wrongs in this world will be set right – no more so-called unfairness of life. The wicked will not get away scot-free; they will be punished and no infringement overlooked, for God shall "recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ... taking vengeance on them ... who shall be punished with everlasting destruction ... when he (Christ) shall come to be glorified in his saints" (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). In other words, there will be a day of reckoning for those who oppress God's saints. Even if the wicked flourish on earth, it is only for a short season. In the light of eternity, the triumph of the wicked is short. Whereas the saints' sufferings last at most a lifetime on earth, God has all eternity in which to punish the evil-doers!

As such, suffering Christians are not to take matters into their own hands. When "men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for (Christ's) sake" (Matthew 5:11), Christians are urged to bear up nobly and show great restraint in the face

of hostility. Be it insult or injury, there should be no room for retaliation or loss of temper. This is because Christians have the blessed hope that Christ's return will bring the only lasting solution to the unsolvable problems of life. We should therefore not allow mistreatment to instil resentment in us or drive us to despair. We are not to avenge ourselves, but rather let God avenge us in His time (cf. Romans 12:19). We are to be patient in waiting for God to act and be prepared to "suffer long". This non-retaliatory stance must be the Christians' response until "the coming of the Lord".

Be Watchful and Expectant

To drive home his point, James uses the illustration of the farmer: "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (5:7b). The farmer has learnt to trust the dependability of seasons for sowing and of harvest. The "early rain", which falls in October during sowing time, helps the seed to germinate. The "latter rain", which comes in late April just before harvest time, is necessary for the grain to mature. The farmer cannot be impatient and cut short the process of harvesting a crop. Instead, he "hath long patience for" his precious harvest. This phrase highlights the farmer's attitude of watchful and constant expectancy. While waiting, he will encounter problems – weeds growing, lack of water, pests

threatening to destroy his crops, etc. So he has to take pains to remove the weeds and pests, keep watering and wait patiently for the rainy season to come. He could not just sit or sleep all day or be slothful, if he wants to have a good harvest. It takes time and involves difficult experiences. But the rains will surely come in due season, and with that, the reward of a good harvest as well. That is his irrepressible expectancy, which keeps him patient and motivates him not to give up during the long waiting.

Likewise, as we serve the Lord, we must be prepared to plod on for long periods of time, perhaps without seeing any results in the beginning. Not only that, there may come troubles and difficulties as God's enemies attack and threaten to destroy our work. There will also be seasons of dryness when God does not seem to shower His blessings from above. But we are not to give up. Remember, "let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

BE ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH WHILE WAITING

Secondly, James exhorts in 5:8, "... stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." We are to "establish our hearts", that is, to make firm our beliefs and strengthen our faith in God – through God's Word, of course.

Be Steadfast and Unmoveable

Establishing the believers in the faith is a most essential ministry in the church. This is highlighted by Paul's sending of Timothy to Thessalonica "to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: that no man should be moved by these afflictions", which they were expected to face in their Christian lives (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3).

James, like Paul, knew only too well that "when God works, Satan also works", but in opposition. James realized the need for believers to be vigilantly put in remembrance of what they have been taught by God's Word, that they may be rooted and established in their unfeigned faith. Whatever contrary thing or whatever troubling information they have heard, they are to verify and check against God's Word. It is imperative that they take heed to and continue in sound doctrine, which is needed to build a strong foundation in their faith, so that they will not be tossed to and fro, nor swayed by every wind of doctrine (cf. Ephesians 4:14), or waver when faced with difficulties and troubles in their Christian walk.

Beware of Subtle Unbelief

The Bible speaks specifically of a troubling phenomenon among the churches worldwide that must transpire before our Lord's imminent return. Men's love will

wax cold and true faith will be a scarcity. In fact, there will be “a falling away first” (2 Thessalonians 2:3a) from the historical biblical faith, and a moving away from the conservative Bible-believing stand of the Protestant reformers and of our spiritual forefathers. A prelude to that apostasy would inevitably be a low and compromised view of God’s unchanging Word, which basically stems from “an evil heart of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:12).

As this subtle “root” of unbelief can ultimately lead to the subverting of our faith, we need to diligently examine ourselves, so as to detect any trace of gainsaying or contradictory stance in our hearts, concerning the fundamental doctrines of our Christian faith. We must spare no effort in constantly being put in remembrance of spiritual truths through the faithful exhortation of God’s Word, and firmly embrace them so that they do not become mere head-knowledge detached from practical Christian living. So it is vital that we do not neglect such means of grace, lest our hearts “be hardened” through habitually resisting truth and yielding to sin (Hebrews 3:13). Indeed, let us not forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day (of the Lord’s coming) approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

BEAR A GOOD TESTIMONY WHILE WAITING

Thirdly, James exhorts in 5:9, “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.” To “grudge” is to complain, grumble, groan, grieve, or murmur against another, especially when the going gets tough.

Avoid Complaining

In times of persecution and severe trials, there is a tendency to become impatient with those closely associated with us. James is warning us not to allow our inward groanings to degenerate into complaint and irritability against fellow brethren. In an unguarded moment, we may just lash out in our sorrowful anguish at those nearest us, or even blame our troubles on one another. Under distress, it is easy to feel aggrieved and begrudge others who are suffering less. Falling out with one another amidst great trials will mar our Christian testimony before the unbelievers.

Rather than grudge against one another, believers are to learn to endure patiently. It will not be for much longer, for the Lord is already at the door. Notice He is coming as “the judge”. The suddenness of judgment is implied here, much like a judge who “standeth before the door”, awaiting to enter the courtroom to

judge those awaiting trial. That should keep us on our toes, so do not be caught murmuring and grumbling. What a shame it will be, to be found quarrelling and griping about fellow Christians, when the Judge comes through “the door”!

Take Courage from Godly Examples

Many godly men, like “the prophets”, had to endure difficult trials in speaking up for the Lord, so that their lives might back up their messages (v. 10). A faithful, godly life makes a powerful impact. One case in point is the proverbially patient Job. It is difficult to find any other human being who suffered more than Job. Circumstances were against him when he lost his wealth, his beloved children and his health. His wife was against his “unrewarding” piety and provoked him to “curse God, and die”. His friends were also condemnatory of him, accusing him of being a hypocrite who was deserving of God’s judgment. Worst of all, it seemed like God was against him, for when he cried out for answers to his questions, there was no reply from heaven. Yet Job endured. Having established his heart in the Lord, though he did question God’s will, he did not forsake his faith in the Lord. As Biblical readers would know, the end of the trial of Job was most blessed (cf. Job 42:12-17). In the whole process, God was glorified and Job purified. What a great testimony to God’s pity and tender mercy (v. 11)!

Dear reader, when you find yourself in the furnace of trials, go to the throne of grace and receive from the Lord all the grace you need to endure. “Ye ... have seen the end (i.e. purpose) of the Lord” in Job’s life, James says (v. 11b). Whatever trial God permits to come into your life is never purposeless. Remind yourself that the Lord has a gracious “end” or purpose in all of your suffering, and that He will work out His purposes in His time and for His glory (Romans 8:28). Settle in your heart that your patience in times of suffering bears great testimony to others around you.

CONCLUSION

Though our Christian sojourning on earth is full of persecutions, pains, troubles, trials and difficulties, God’s Word exhorts believers to take heart, for the Lord’s soon coming will deliver us from them all. But while looking forward to the ultimate deliverance, we need to trust in God to help us to wait patiently, to establish our hearts in the faith and the Word, and to bear a good testimony for Christ. Thrice James reminds us – The Lord is “coming” (v. 7), His coming “draweth nigh” (v. 8), and He “standeth before the door” (v. 9). It will be worth it all when we see Christ and then hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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Bible Trivia - Exodus 24

Sarah Yong

Fill in the blanks with the correct answer.

1. The LORD called Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and ____ elders of Israel to worship Him.
2. Moses told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments, and they answered with ____ voice.
3. Moses rose up early and built an altar, and ____ pillars, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.
4. The blood of the sacrifice was divided into ____ parts, to be sprinkled on the altar and also on the people.
5. Moses went up into Mount Sinai and a cloud covered it for ____ days, and the glory of the LORD abode there.
6. The children of Israel then saw the glory of the LORD that was like a devouring fire on the top of the mount, when the LORD called unto Moses on day ____ .
7. Moses went into the midst of the cloud and he was in the mount for ____ days and nights.

Question:

What specific items would the LORD give to Moses while he was in the mount?
(Hint: Refer to verse 12)

ANSWERS TO BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 23 (VOL 15, ISSUE 2, P. 23)

- | | | | | |
|------------|---------------|-----------|------------|----------------|
| 1. seventh | 2. unleavened | 3. Egypt | 4. harvest | 5. ingathering |
| 6. Angel | 7. overthrow | 8. little | 9. desert | |

EUPHRATES

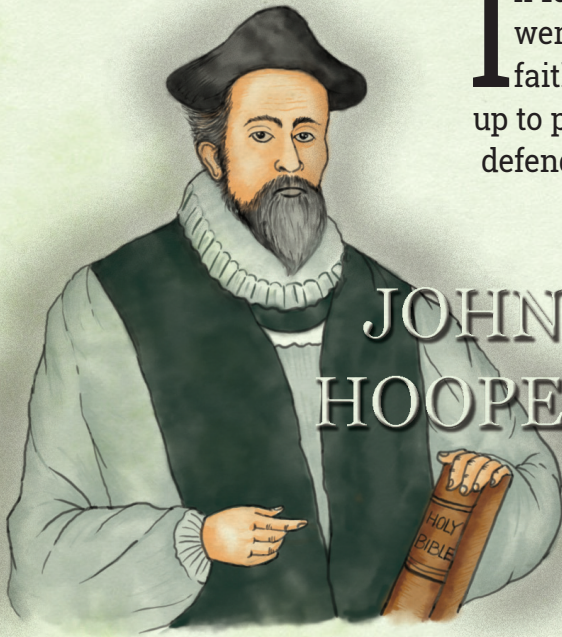
John Hooper

– An Indomitable Reformer (Part I)

(Retold from 'The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs, written by John Foxe,
rewritten & updated by Harold J Chadwick Bridge-Logos Publishers)

Retold by Jenny Lok

Illustrated by Linus Kok



In 16th-century England, there were many great men of faith whom God had raised up to preach His Word and defend the truth of the Gospel.

This period in church history is known as the Protestant Reformation. It was a time when godly men like John Hooper risked life and limb to uphold God's truths in the midst of false teachings in the church.

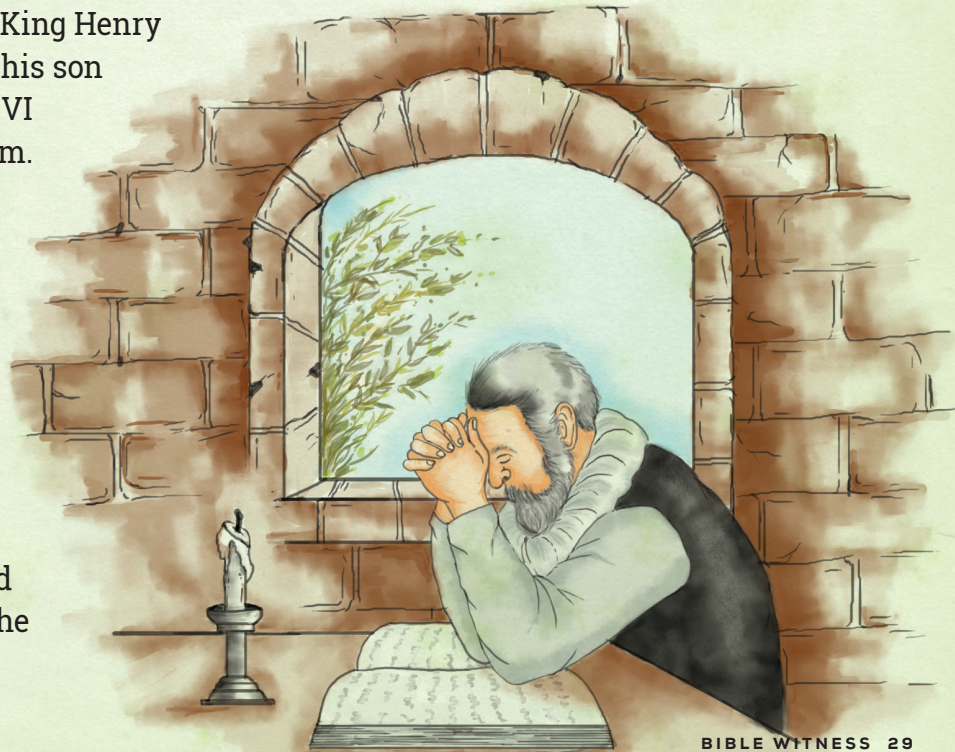
While studying at Oxford University, Hooper was constantly searching the Scriptures to understand more of God's Word. Day by day, though he was busy with his studies in the sciences, he never failed to pray and spend time reading God's Word. There was this great hunger and thirst for the Truth. By God's grace and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Hooper's efforts

paid off. He began to grow in spiritual understanding of God's Word and found the way to true holiness!

Soon, some other religious people in the university noticed Hooper's devotion to God. Wouldn't they rejoice that such a faithful man could be found in a place of higher learning? Sadly, no. Instead, they were unhappy with Hooper and even hated him for his firm beliefs in God's truths! This brings to mind what Jesus says in John 15:18, 19 – "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

It is not surprising, therefore, that a godly man like Hooper would not be welcome by people who had no love at all for Christ and His Truth. He would have left the university then, if not for a rich man by the name of Sir Thomas Arundel who wanted Hooper to stay on to be his personal assistant for a while. Shortly after, Hooper had to flee to Paris, France because of some wicked people who plotted against him. Later, he returned to England where he found employment with a Master Sentlow. However, not long after that, he had to flee again because his life was in danger. He went to Germany and then later to Switzerland, where he married and started learning the Hebrew language. Despite being persecuted for his faith, Hooper was not discouraged but remained true to God and His teachings.

In 1546, King Henry VIII died and his son King Edward VI succeeded him. King Edward was supportive of reforms which would help remove the unbiblical teachings and practices of the



Church of England. Hooper saw that the time was ripe for him to return to England to further the cause of the Gospel. His parting words to Master Bullinger (a good friend of his) were: "For there I shall have the most pains, and then you will hear that I was burned to ashes." Hooper knew that going back to England would pose great risks for him but he obeyed God and was determined to do His will.

Back in England, Hooper regularly preached at least once, if not twice, a day. Hooper was tireless in his efforts to preach God's Word because he saw it as his life's work. He displayed an excellent knowledge of the Scriptures and spoke God's truths with such deep conviction. As a result, many came to hear him. It was said that "the church would be so full that those who came late could get in no further than the door". Shortly after his return to England, Hooper was given an opportunity to preach before King Edward



VI, whereupon he was made bishop of Gloucester thereafter. After serving faithfully with great excellence for two years, he was subsequently made bishop of Worchester, a position he held till it was taken away by his enemies.

In every way, Hooper was a fine example of a faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not at all tempted by the comforts of life or earthly pleasures. He was always busy visiting the towns and villages to preach the Gospel. He would instruct his flock in the true way of salvation. His free time was spent listening to people's problems, visiting schools or having his own personal study and prayer. He gave himself fully to God to serve Him and His people! Be it at home or in public, Hooper was just as devoted to God. He made sure that his children behaved in godly ways. They were taught to be courteous, diligent in their work and to love God the way he did. His home was simple and modest with no display of wealth. It was truly a humble dwelling with a godly atmosphere. Anyone who entered it would think that he had come into a church or sanctuary of worship.



Hooper was also known to be very careful and wise in handling money that God had entrusted to him. Besides taking care of his family's basic needs, he would often provide beggars and poor folks with hot and nutritious meals. While they were eating, Hooper would preach to them. What a faithful and godly Christian man and preacher of the Gospel! His life was a sermon in itself, for he truly practised what he preached in his personal life. Be that as it may, this precious life of an abiding and obedient faith would soon be snuffed out ...

A stylized, dark brown graphic of a church steeple with a cross on top, centered at the top of the page. The steeple has a square base with an arched window and a smaller square section below it.

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