

Bible Witness

MCI (P) 069/04/2020 | ISSN: 0219-5364 | VOLUME 20 ISSUE 2 | MARCH-APRIL 2020

Hearts Failing Men for Fear!

*A special issue on overcoming fear
in a time of global pandemic*



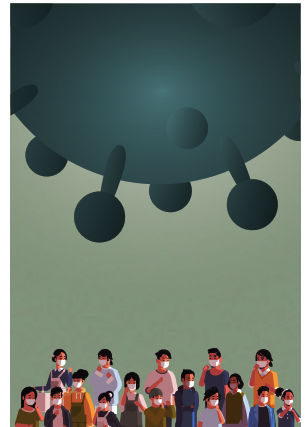


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Our Wednesday Lunch Hour Bible Study has now moved online! Pastor Prabhudas Koshy is currently teaching on the **book of Isaiah** during the Lunch Hour Bible Study.

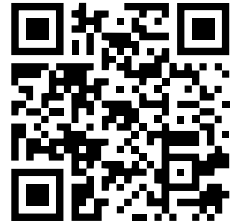
Tune in every **Wednesday at 1.00pm** on Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church's YouTube channel for the Bible Study broadcast. Our YouTube channel is at <https://www.youtube.com/user/gethsemaneipc>

Alternatively, you may catch it biblewitness.com/lunch-hour-bible-study/



On the Cover ▲

With the Covid-19 virus spreading across the world, fear has gripped the hearts of many. But fear not, for God watches over us!



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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). This magazine is distributed free from 2006 onwards. Postage and handling charges still apply. 2 years (12 issues): **S\$10.00** Singapore/Malaysia surface mail delivery, **S\$14.00** international surface mail delivery; **S\$26.00** Asia air mail, **S\$34.00** for air mail to all other countries. International bank draft, money order or postal order drawn on a Singapore bank in Singapore dollars may be made payable to "Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church".

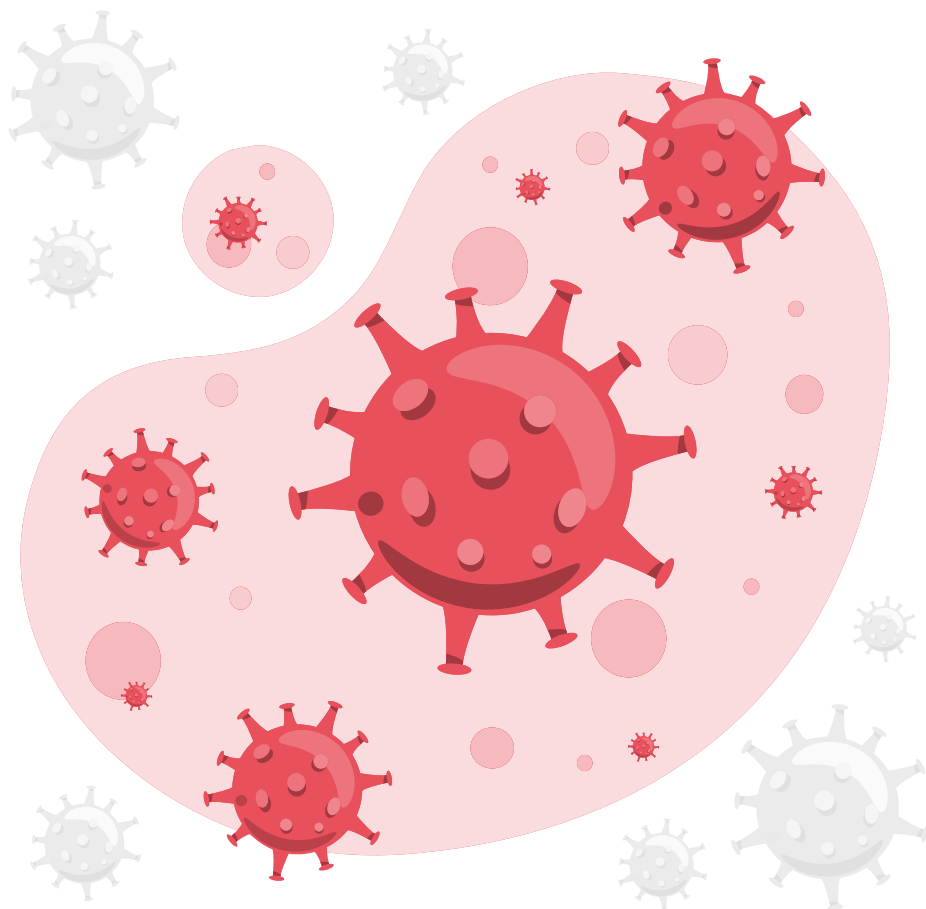
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HEARTS FAILING MEN FOR FEAR!

Volume 20 Issue 2 | March–April 2020

<i>All articles in this issue are written by Prabhudas Koshy, Pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore.</i>	4	Pestilences! Pestilences!
	8	Fear Not in a Time of Worldwide Fear
	12	Dealing with Fear
	16	Thinking About the End of Our Earthly Life
	20	Running to the End of Our Life
	23	The Christian's Hope
<i>Jenny Lok</i>	28	Children's Page Hudson Taylor—Part I
<i>Sarah Yong</i>	34	Bible Trivia—Numbers 14



PESTILENCES! PESTILENCES!

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

The Straits Times reported (on 4th April 2020): “Global cases of the new coronavirus hit 1.03 million ... with more than 54,000 fatalities, after the number of confirmed infections surged past the million-mark the previous day on the back of rapid contagion in the United States and western Europe.” As Covid-19—which has shown that it does not respect racial, social and political boundaries—continues spreading

across first Asia, and now the rest of the world, it is no wonder that the World Health Organisation (WHO) had already declared the virus outbreak to be a pandemic. It is nothing less than a crisis of global magnitude!

As the fear of pestilence grips the people of our times, we must be prepared to face whatever comes our way. While we need to observe good hygiene practices as a precautionary

measure, we must, even more importantly, also be spiritually ready as we face this time of emergency.

Pestilence in the Bible

What does the Bible say about “pestilence” or “plague”? The Hebrew word (*deber*) and Greek word (*loimós*) for “pestilence” in the Bible refer to contagious epidemic disease. Pestilence is often associated with other calamities [e.g. outbreak of infectious cattle-disease (Exodus 9:3-15); war (Leviticus 26:25); earthquake (Habakkuk 3:5-6); earthquakes and famines (Luke 21:11)]. Undeniably, Scripture records the occurrence of pestilence as a judgment or punishment sent by God, rather than a naturally occurring phenomenon.

In the Bible, pestilence usually refers to divine intervention in human history in the form of human sickness, with the express purpose of punishing the people for their rebellious conduct. God had clearly recorded in His Word His pronouncements of pestilence upon Israel for her neglect of her covenant obligations to God. In the case of His covenant people Israel, it served as a scourge to bring about repentance and obedient behaviour. God has this grave warning for them if they walk contrary to His Law: “And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy” (Leviticus 26:25). Moses reiterated this divine

threat just before Israel crossed over to the Promised Land: “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes ... The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 21).

pestilence

(Hebrew *deber*;

Greek *loimós*)

usually refers to divine intervention in human history in the form of human sickness to punish the rebellious conduct of people

That’s not all. Scripture has also recorded, for our instruction, instances of pestilence being unleashed upon Israel for her prideful rebellion. A case in point is the aftermath of David’s census “to number Israel”, which precipitated out of prideful confidence in the nation’s strength in numbers (cf. 1 Chronicles 21:1-5). As a result, “the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men” (1 Chronicles 21:14)! Moreover, certain prophets of Israel, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in proclaiming divine sentence on the rebellious Jews, almost always predicted pestilence as part of a

list of scourges that would befall them: “Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet ... I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence” (Jeremiah 14:10–12; cf. 24:10; 27:8). As God is no respecter of persons, even the enemies of Israel (like Egypt, Zidon, Gog, etc.) were not free from being the objects of this form of judgment (cf. Psalm 78:50; Ezekiel 28:23; 38:22). Bluntly put, they were not immune from pestilence!

Nevertheless, a comforting thought to note is that when pestilence was sent as a punishment for sin in the case of ancient Israel, it was not applied indiscriminately unto all. The one who remains faithful was promised divine protection from its effects. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence” (Psalm 91:1-3). This tells us that the pestilence may cast down thousands or even ten thousands of people, but the LORD is able to unerringly preserve those whom He seeks to preserve (according to His sovereign will). Even in the midst of judgments, God is discriminatory and selective over which ones to plague with or to withhold His Hand of judgment from the deadly, infectious pestilence. This doctrine concerning pestilence as God’s judgment is clearly taught in the Old Testament.

The New Testament likewise has grave things to say about pestilences. In fact, Jesus mentioned “pestilences” as

part of the signs of His second coming. “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:7). “And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven” (Luke 21:11). According to the Book of Revelation, biological plagues will reach unprecedented proportions, causing great pain and distress upon the earth during the seven-year Tribulation prior to Jesus’ return to this earth. In Revelation 16, we are told that when the “vials” of the wrath of God (symbolising God’s judgments) are poured out upon the earth, “there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast” (16:2b). Not only are those sores injurious to health, they would, together with subsequent plagues, leave the wicked ones on earth in terrible agony. For “they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (16:10b-11).

Our Readiness

As the prophetic clock winds down to the last of the last days, culminating in the seven-year Great Tribulation, it should not surprise Christians that the world has been witnessing more and more (hitherto unheard-of) highly contagious diseases and plagues. In recent history, the world had encountered several pandemics already, such as SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2003, H1N1 (also known as swine flu) in 2009. In the tiny city-state of Singapore alone,

an estimated 415,000 people were infected with H1N1 influenza, and there were at least 18 fatalities (according to that country's National Library Board's Infopedia). Now, humanity is facing another epidemic crisis—Covid-19 ...

How shall we prepare ourselves to face such an outbreak of diseases in our present times?

Firstly, let us pray for God's mercy to protect us and heal those who are infected by this disease. Let us, in our prayers, remember doctors, nurses and all medical professionals who work hard to attend to the sick and work relentlessly to fight the spreading of the disease. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Secondly, let us act responsibly by taking all necessary precautions to avoid being infected and to also prevent the spreading of the disease. Please pay attention to put into practice the advice given out by the government / medical authorities, and the needful precautionary steps recommended.

Thirdly, should any among us become afflicted, let us be comforted that the Lord is with all those who trust in Him. Even in death, the Lord is with His people. So we can assuredly say, like David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death (*read "pestilence"*), I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

Fourthly, if a believer dies due to this outbreak, let us be assured by God's Word that he will certainly be with the Lord. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

So, let us humbly seek and worship the Lord. Let us "give unto the LORD glory and strength ... (and) unto the LORD the glory due unto his name" (Psalm 29:1b-2a). Let us fear Him who alone "hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit ... (and) power in the day of death" (Ecclesiastes 8:8), and who knoweth exactly when "thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:20). In the meantime, while we still have breath (and so much the more in these last days), let us also labour for Him, "knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24). ♦

"Yea, though I walk
through the valley of
the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for
thou art with me; thy
rod and thy staff they
comfort me."
—Psalm 23:4



FEAR NOT

IN A TIME OF WORLDWIDE FEAR

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

The Covid-19 pandemic is spreading fear across the globe. Only a few places on earth are unaffected by this scourge. Even in countries which seemingly are making ground in slowing the transmission of the coronavirus, though their governments have been taking appropriate and critical measures to control its spreading, fear is a real factor that is unsettling many of their citizens and residents. Even Christians are not spared from feelings of panic.

Fear Plaguing the Heart

Such terrorising fear and panic are not unprecedented in man's history. God has already warned in His Word that

when He would scourge the earth for its wickedness, the hearts of people would melt and be troubled with anguish and dismay. He might use various means, such as war and pestilences, to strike the hearts of men with terror.

Theologically speaking, war is a means of God's judgment on a corrupt nation, polluted by sin of every kind. We see such punitive manifestations in God's unmistakable forewarning to the children of Israel for rebelling against His good and righteous will for them. "But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments ... I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror ... and cause sorrow of heart ... And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your

sins ... And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of *my* covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy” (Leviticus 26:14, 16, 21, 25). Note that the punishments included sudden terror resulting from calamities of a biological nature, such as contagious epidemic disease (or “pestilence”). In rebelling against the faithful, covenant-keeping God of Israel, “a faintness into their hearts” (Leviticus 26:36) would be sent to the children of Israel, and “a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind” (Deuteronomy 28:65) would also be given them.

Similarly, when Jesus spoke about the terrifying end-time events, He referred to them as “the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8), signifying the commencement of grievous distresses, with more of such to follow in increasing intensity. Luke records Christ as saying in His Olivet discourse, “And there shall be ... upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ... men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth...” (Luke 21:25-26). These words of Christ forewarn us that in the days prior to His second coming, people will experience severe emotional stress which will overwhelm and overpower their senses. Acute, unrelieved fear and torment will plague people’s hearts everywhere. The end-time situation will be a lot worse than what is experienced today! No amount of determined or ingenious effort of man would alleviate such fear. People will be scared to death because of what is happening around them. The events during the end-times will

be calamitous, and there is no escape from such terrifying times as foretold by Christ. “For *in* those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be” (Mark 13:19). “And take heed to yourselves, lest ... that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:34-35).

Concerning humanity of the last days, Isaiah 13:8 foretells that “they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.” The Hebrew word translated as “amazed” has the idea of being astounded and dumbfounded. People will writhe in fear and confusion, and in astonishment they will look at one another. The figurative expression of their “afire” faces as they look at one another would be descriptive of their faces flushing with consternation and even dread at the sight of one another, perhaps hinting of a great need to keep a distance from one another. (Without sounding too far-fetched, isn’t this reminiscent of the current ubiquitous observance of social distancing measures in the midst of this Covid-19 situation?) Undoubtedly, the catastrophic end of human history before Christ’s return will shock and terrorise the unbelieving world. So much so that “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him

that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Revelation 6:15-17). To put it even more graphically, because of the unbearable torment inflicted during one of the end-time plagues, “in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” (Revelation 9:6). Undeniably, men’s hearts will fail them for fear!

Overcoming Fear

On the other side of the coin, God’s Word has this assuring thing to say to God’s children: “Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him” (Psalm 103:13). In fact, God’s children are told to “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Indeed, “fear not” is an oft-repeated exhortation to God’s people in the Scriptures. It is mentioned about 60 times throughout the Bible. God wants His people not to be consumed by fear, which adverse circumstances will conspire to instil in them. He wants all His people to know that they do not need to be anxious or fearful. Rather, they must teach

themselves that it is their Heavenly Father’s desire concerning them that they will not give in to fear. To ignore God’s will concerning us is a sin. So, we as God’s people must encourage ourselves in His love, care, protection and the glorious hope which He promises to all who have trusted Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Certainly, we who have trusted in the Lord will also be reassured by His teaching of how God, our Father, cares for us: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6-7). If God knows and cares for a tiny, cheap bird which would probably end up as food eaten by the poor, how much more will He care for His blood-bought children, whom He counts very precious to Him. He even knows the number of hairs on every one of His children’s heads. Such is the meticulous care and attention God gives to His people. If He takes notice of such an insignificant thing as a strand of hair of His children, which we seldom pay attention to, how

“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? ... Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”
—Luke 12:6-7

comforted and consoled we ought to be even when we get caught up in adverse and frightening situations!

Notwithstanding the foregoing, when turmoil and tragic scenarios do arise in the public and personal realms of our lives, we must know that these things are already foretold by the Lord—“In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33b). To comfort and strengthen us, He also added, “but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33c). We may find ourselves having no ability to control our circumstances. Our best efforts may not prevent catastrophic events. Deadly situations may suddenly befall us. But our Lord wants us to know that He will never leave us. Though we may be severely tested, the victory of Christ is certain. We can thus have spiritual peace even in tribulation. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

As such, we should never despair in the face of trials and death. The apostle Paul teaches us to rhetorically ask in times of tribulation: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Romans 8:35). He then assures us, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39). Note that Paul begins his list with “death”, which is the last adversity that we

will experience in our earthy life (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:26). Even that final trial will not separate us from our God, because through Christ whom we have trusted, we shall enter eternal glory that He has prepared for us!

Therefore, we can testify with David, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4). Assuredly, with Paul, all true believers can say with regard to their final trial—even death—that “we are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). Truly, whether we be in life (with many of its trials) or in death, we should courageously say, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). The knowledge of God’s loving care of our soul should cast all fear out of our hearts—“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). Because God’s love has removed our judgment and made us His children and heirs of His eternal kingdom, we **fear not** even our last enemy, death!

Conclusion

So, let all fear be far from us. “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Romans 14:8-9). Amen. ♦

DEALING WITH FEAR

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

Fear can grip our hearts anytime. It can arise within us due to tragic circumstances, such as failures, sicknesses, urgent financial difficulties, deaths of dear ones, etc. We can also be filled with fear as a result of overwhelming responsibilities, anxiety over the future, etc. Whatever be the cause of our fear, if we do not appropriately deal with our feelings of fear, it can cause considerable damage to our lives. Fear is like a tyrant, subduing our senses and emotions, even numbing our mind and body. Worst of all, it can cause us

to act dishonourably and defiantly before the Lord. Hence Scripture is replete with exhortations that urge God's children to act decisively to expel fear from within us.

Despite the immense technological and medical advancement of our modern world, people have not been cured of their long-standing phobias. There is a very long list of phobias that people suffer from. Since time immemorial, humanity has experienced all sorts of phobias and panic attacks. People are constantly



looking for cures, but to little avail. It is a well-documented fact that many have tried to cope with the help of antidepressant pills and other drugs, but in the process have become addicted to these, thus compounding their problem even further!

When Fear Grips You, Go to His Word

We, Christians, have access to a superior way of dealing with fear, namely the Scriptures, which constitute a matchless wealth of wisdom for our earthly living. Oh, what timeless resources God's Word can avail us in times of adversity, affliction and fear. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet ... I remembered thy judgments ... and have comforted myself" (Psalm 119:49-52).

Not surprisingly, Scripture exhorts us to overcome fear by yielding in faith to divine counsel of His Word, prayer and obedience. Let us therefore, with thanksgiving to God, meditate on the divine solutions that God's Word offers us. Unusual troubles may encompass us, but we can overcome our sense of helplessness by trusting and obeying the counsels of God's Word, like the psalmist. When being opposed and ridiculed, the servant of the Lord waxed strong in God's promises and prayed earnestly: "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him

that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever" (Psalm 119:41-44). God's Word was his answer to his enemies. He did not rely on his personal wisdom, scholarship, eloquence or riches to ward off the reproaches of men. The Word of God was his only and best weapon of defence and strength, causing him to thus testify: "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me" (Psalm 119:50).

The Bible provides us with wonderful promises of God to strengthen us to face our trials with a joyful and resolute spirit. Consider a few of those promises mentioned below:

- "The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).
- "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:29-31).
- "He would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).

Many believers, who have experienced disturbing and heart-

wrenching crises, have found strength and joy in God's Word to overcome their fears. Having found such wonderful promises of God's empowerment to face life's troubles and burdens, they would, like the psalmist, pray: "My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word" (Psalm 119:28). May we too be deeply moved by God's promises to pray with faith that God would strengthen us to face our deeply troubling circumstances and challenges.

Indeed, having the right attitude towards God's Word can help us overcome fear, as affirmed by Proverbs 3:21-26. "My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."

When Fear Grips You, Yield to the Spirit of God

Besides God's Word, we also have the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Comforter, in our hearts. He would aid us with His wisdom and power if we yield to Him in faith and obedience. Granted, the natural thing to do when fear comes is to yield to all kinds of thoughts and emotions that

arise in our hearts. It is important that the child of God should not obey his own heart, but rather the voice of God's Spirit who is within him. Scripture reminds all true believers that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

"God hath not given us
the spirit of fear;
but of power, and of
love, and of a sound
mind."

—2 Timothy 1:7

Fear comes into Christians' hearts when they fail to be filled with the Spirit. In other words, it is when we listen to our own sinful lusts or feelings (doubts, anxieties, envy, jealousy, anger, bitterness, etc.) more than the assurances of the Spirit that we become fearful. Timothy was a child of God who has the Spirit of God within him. But when he allowed the intimidations and persecutions around him to affect his thoughts, he became timid and ashamed of the Christian witness. So, the apostle Paul reminded him that such a fearful approach to life and ministry is not of God, because God has made available to His children His power, His love, as well as a sound mind through His Spirit.

In Romans 8:15-16, Paul reminds us concerning the ministry of the Spirit

within us: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”. The Spirit of God will grant us understanding and assurance concerning our special relationship with God as His children. Like a frightened child who is comforted and strengthened by the presence of his father, the Christian too is greatly encouraged by the ministry of the Spirit that sheds abroad God’s fatherly love in our hearts (cf. Romans 5:5). We must then yield to the assuring voice and leading of the Spirit within us.

It is instructive to note Paul’s response when he himself felt the fear about preaching the Gospel before men of intellect. He says, “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:3-4). He yielded to the Spirit of God. Like Paul, we need to deal with our fears, in the midst of our Christian living and especially in the demands of the ministry, by yielding to the power of the Spirit that works in us.

When Fear Grips You, Trust God Even More

Like the psalmist, we too must confess in prayer, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Psalm 56:3). Being human, we Christians can feel afraid

when faced with real, big, nasty problems or when frightening events occur in our lives. But God does not want us to be afraid. Over and over again, God has said in the Bible: “Fear not.” God wants all His children to be courageous. When we are afraid, we must exchange fear with faith through prayer. When fear grips us, let us remember that the time has come to prove how genuinely and firmly we trust in the Lord.

If we do not deal with fear in a biblical manner, we may waste a lot of time worrying. Fear, not properly confronted, handled and addressed, will drive us to senseless behaviours and actions. Remember, God is able and ready to help us overcome our fears. Dear fearful Christian, do not let fear remain. As soon as fear arises in your heart, you must exercise faith in God by communing with Him in prayer and taking hold of His promises in His Word. Even if you have to “walk through the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4), the LORD will be with you and give you great assurance, peace and comfort. He will calm the nerves of everyone who trust in Him sincerely.

Undeniably, fearful times can come unannounced to all and sundry. But how blessed it is that we can rejoice in God’s love and promises. Let us transform our unsavoury, unsolicited moments of fear into sublime, Spirit-filled times of faith, prayer and obedient actions. Indeed, like the psalmist, we too can be so strengthened to declare in faith: “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh (or any circumstance or thing) can do unto me” (Psalm 56:4). Amen. ♦



THINKING ABOUT THE END OF OUR EARTHLY LIFE

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

As mortal beings, our life is fragile and fleeting. Ours is a perilous journey through time. This life on earth will not last long; it consists only “of few days” (Job 14:1; cf. Genesis 47:9a). The strength of our bodies will decline sooner than many of us realise or imagine. Even those of us who might live seven decades or more will face death someday soon.

Life is Short

Since the time of the first parents’ disobedience, there was never a hope of living forever here on earth. God had unequivocally proclaimed that death would ensue if they would sin—“for in the day that thou eatest thereof (of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17)! Just as God warned, death (both spiritual and physical) entered the world the day Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Spiritual death occurred immediately—“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked ... And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God ... And he (Adam) said, I

heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:7-10). Spiritual communion with God was broken straightaway. Physical death would also come to pass eventually—“And unto Adam he said, Because thou ... hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it ... in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (referring to the decomposition of the body)” (Genesis 3:17, 19).

The first parents died, and all their descendants too—with just a couple of exceptions, namely Enoch (cf. Hebrews 11:5) and Elijah (cf. 2 Kings 2:1, 11). We too will die, if Jesus would tarry further. Every life that is born into the world faces the reality of its demise shortly or later. Death is inevitable. “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2a). Death draws ever nearer with the inexorable passage of time. Even if one lives to a ripe old age, the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that still, will “the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them ... and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets ... Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:1b, 5c, 7). Death still lurks at the end!

It goes without saying that even the longest life is very short, especially in comparison to eternity, for which our souls are created! Moses graphically

spoke of the brevity of life—“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10).

Consider Scripture’s sombre biblical depictions (from both the Old and New Testaments) of finite man’s weakness and the shortness of his life:

- “... our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding” (1 Chronicles 29:15).
- “Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey” (Job 9:25-26).
- “He (man) cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not” (Job 14:2).
- “They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn” (Job 24:24).
- “For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb” (Psalm 37:2).
- “... they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again” (Psalm 78:39).
- “Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in

the evening it is cut down, and withereth” (Psalm 90:5-6).

- “... we spend our years as a tale that is told” (Psalm 90:9).
- “My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass” (Psalm 102:11).
- “Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away” (Psalm 144:4).
- “...all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow” (Ecclesiastes 6:12).
- “Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me” (Isaiah 38:12).
- “...All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass” (Isaiah 40:6-7).
- “... as the flower of the grass he shall pass away” (James 1:10).
- “...For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14).

Our life on earth is like an arrow that is sent forth from the bow of an archer—it moves forward with great speed, without any chance of retreating or returning to the

beginning of its flight. Life only goes forward, never backward!

Life is Limited

Man’s life on earth is limited by God. No one can live beyond the time set by God. Even a child cannot be sure whether he will live into his teenage years or into adulthood. Dear reader, you may be a youth or a young adult, and you may be thinking that you have many more years to live. But do not forget that you are closer to your grave than yesterday. Also, the fact remains that even if you would live to a ripe old age, those years will pass very quickly.

It is instructive, therefore, that Moses prayed, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). That prayer does not mean that we should know the day and hour of our death; rather, it urges us to have a practical impression that life is brief and the opportunities to live for God’s glory and for the blessings of God’s people are rather limited. Man has a set time to live and do the will of God. God has set our lives’ bounds, over which no man can pass. Note that we are asked to number our days, and not our years or months or weeks! With God’s help, we will be wise to realise that with each passing day, we are closer to the end of our life on earth. At the end of each day, let us remember that the number of opportunities for us to live for God and to fulfil our responsibilities is irreversibly reduced. If we wait for the end of each year to remind us of the nearness of our lives’ end, we would have let 365 days slip by unaccounted for! It is far better to take stock of the

shortness of our life by each passing day than on a yearly, or monthly, or even weekly basis. We must live a day at a time, and pray for God's help to wisely use our daily opportunities to please and glorify God.

Supposing you will live a few more decades, your present youthful days will become a distant memory. The vigour and vitality of youthfulness will be replaced by the fear and feebleness of old age. Old age, a time of much infirmity of body and mind, is portrayed by Scripture as "evil days" (Ecclesiastes 12:1), i.e. days of misery and distress. This alludes to the waning of one's physical strength and mental prowess, and all the attendant pains, sickness and sorrows associated with the decay of one's health. Hence the imperative urgency to "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not" (Ecclesiastes 12:1a), that is, while one's faculties are still functioning well. We do well to ponder how well we have traded the talents, gifts and opportunities bestowed upon us. Such reflection should lead us to repentance within us for time misspent, gifts neglected, and opportunities squandered. It should also lead us to reconsecration of our lives to be faithful stewards of our limited opportunities.

Let us not misspend our time nor waste our talents. Put your God-given gifts to full use. Solomon, the wise king, advises us, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Our Lord Jesus Christ provides us with the perfect example of making full

use of one's short life and its limited opportunities. He said in John 9:4—"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Conclusion

Our time on earth can end soon, either by our death or by Christ's return. With such thoughts fixed firmly in our minds, we must be determined not to indulge in sin or lethargy, nor to waste precious moments of our limited life. As the apostle Paul said, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8). Much can be accomplished in the meantime for Christ's glory and praise, by yielding ourselves wholeheartedly to do His purposes. This means that we seriously consider the **shortness** and **limitation** of our life, and commit ourselves to making the most of what remains. ♦

"So teach us to number
our days, that we may
apply our hearts unto
wisdom."
—Psalm 90:12

RUNNING TO THE END OF OUR LIFE

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

How true are the words of the hymn-writer, Isaac Watts:

*Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the opening day.*

The sudden deaths in quick succession of this writer's younger brother (at the age of 53) in February 2020 and younger cousin's husband (also aged 53) in March 2020 starkly drive home this harsh reality of our earthly life. In particular, his brother's passing away had left their aged parents and many who had known him shocked and devastated. Though dumbfounded that his life ended so fast, this writer's family were nevertheless grateful that the Lord has called him by the Gospel and prepared him through his short life on earth for heaven's glory.

Life is Like a Race

Life is like a race. We, like runners approaching the finishing-line, will soon come to our life's end. It shall not go on and on.

We may say that life is uncertain, but we may be certain that life will definitely end very soon, and it shall



never again return to this earth. So Job sombrely said in Job 14:7-10: “⁷ For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. ⁸ Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; ⁹ Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. ¹⁰ But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?”

The realisation that our life is extremely brief ought to have a very sobering effect on us. It should leave with us many hard questions about the purpose of our existence on earth. Why do we work so hard for this transient life on earth? Why should we take undue pride in our temporal accomplishments, our corruptible wealth, our fleeting fame, etc.? Certainly, life does not revolve around its short-lived achievements and accolades, luxuries and pleasures.

If life would end soon, why then be fretful that it is full of troubles and disappointments? After all, all these shall soon end as well, and believers shall enter the glory that God has prepared for them!

As this writer is poignantly reminded of the untimely and sudden deaths of his two close relations, he is all the more struck by this inescapable fact of life, that is, it revolves around God! He is the Giver and Taker of our life! He alone is eternal—without beginning or end. In view of His eternity, the duration of our earthly sojourn pales into insignificance, as acutely pointed out by Moses in his psalm: “¹ Lord, thou hast been our

dwelling place in all generations. ²Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. ³ Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. ⁴For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:1-4).

Life, then, is like a race. It behoves us to be able to say, like Paul, at the close of our earthly life, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). When the whole race is over, if we had run well, we shall soon hear the Lord’s commendation: “Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21a)!

Run Your Race with Christ in View

The Christian life is a race in which God’s child is focused on Christ, from the beginning to the end. Christians are exhorted to “run with patience the race that is set before us” by “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1b-2a).

Now, the Greek word (*aphoráō*) translated as “looking” in the said Scriptural verse literally means looking away from one thing to some other thing in a steadfast or intent manner. It is used to denote the fixing of the mind upon something. It expresses the mental posture that all Christians should maintain in relation to Jesus, as they run their Christian race. It should be a holy habit of our souls to keep the Lord Jesus in our view.

Looking at Jesus at the beginning of the race and then totally keeping Him out of view, is not the right kind of faith that Scripture teaches us. We should never lose focus of Christ in our Christian race. The sad reality is, some of the people who started the race with us may drop out of the race altogether, while some others may become distracted and refuse to keep up, thus leaving us disappointed and troubled. But we must not let our minds be affected by their quitting. We do well to bear in mind Jesus' response to many of such professing believers when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the initial stage of His public ministry. Though "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did" (John 2:23b), "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25). Knowing the fickleness of men, we must look away from such spiritual "stumbling blocks" to our unfeigned faith, and fix our thoughts upon the never-changing Christ.

Even in a spiritually conducive environment where all around us are God-honouring and a constant encouragement to us in our Christian race, it could well be our own lethargy and lust that may hinder our spiritual walk. Only when our minds are steadfastly fixed on Christ can we then overcome all distractions and obstacles, and complete our Christian race. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts us, we rather look away from all else to Jesus only, for He is "the author and finisher of our

faith" (Hebrews 12:2a). Instructively, the Greek word (*archegon*) for "author" was translated earlier in chapter 2 as "captain". There it was said of Christ: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10). Christ has set the path and He calls us to follow Him. It is Him, not the crowd, that we follow. The course of our race is shown by Him. He leads and we follow. His is our Guide, our Strength and our Motivation in our Christian race.

Conclusion

Jesus, the Author of our faith, has entered the heavenly sanctuary as our Forerunner, having "entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 6:19b-20). By "the blood of Jesus", He has opened "a new and living way" for us that leads to this sanctuary (Hebrews 10:19-20). Jesus is also the Finisher of our faith. Indeed, as the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 21:6; cf. 1:17; 22:13), He is our perfect Saviour and Captain, who is utterly and absolutely reliable and able to perfect all who have placed their trust in Him. So, let us run our life's race to the end—with eternal values in view—by looking unto Jesus, who "is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Amen. ♦

THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

Though the Bible predicts perilous times in the last days, Christians are urged to live with the hope of glorious experiences of heaven which their Saviour has promised them. They might live through many troubles and sufferings in this present world, but they can live in the hope of a glorious eternity. Every Christian can say confidently, “For I 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).

Hope's Declaration

The apostle Paul reminds us that “we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope” (Romans 8:24a). And in the same breath, he asks rhetorically, “for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Romans 8:24b). To which, he adds an instructive observation: “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:25).

Dear believers, our salvation that we have received by faith also kindles within us an undying hope. We hope in the promise of Christ concerning our eternal heavenly home—which

“we see not”, and which behoves that “we with patience wait for it”. We wait, not as criminals for execution, but as a bride for the wedding! The joy is sure to come. So, we eagerly and patiently wait for His return. He surely will come to take us to His glorious home.

The Bible teaches us that a Christian's real possession is not that which he can see. Now, suppose God prospers him and he has great riches. Well, let the rich Christian be grateful, but also let him confess that these are not his real treasures. All the wealth of the world gathered together “are not worthy to be compared with the glory” that awaits all those who are saved by the blood of Christ. Concerning this glory “which shall be revealed in us”, Paul pointedly declares it in another portion of Scripture as “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17b). He thus says with unswerving conviction: “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). What great hope Christians possess! It is glory! Glory shall be ours, poor sinners as we are. If grace is sweet, then what

must glory be? And the glory (about us, and over us) shall be revealed in us and through us, through all eternity.

Hope's Descriptions

Scripture has the following descriptions for the hope that we have received through our salvation in Christ.

To begin with, it is a **blessed** hope. In Titus 2, we are told that Christians must live godly lives in this present world by “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” (v. 12), and by “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (v. 13).

Furthermore, it is a **good** hope. In encouraging the early Christians at Thessalonica to be steadfast and unmoveable in their faith in the face of relentless persecution, the apostle Paul sought to reassure the believers by reiterating that “our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father ... hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

That's not all. It is also a **lively** hope. In his first epistle addressed to the early persecuted Christians (who were scattered throughout the various provinces of Asia Minor), the apostle Peter exhorted them to greatly rejoice even in the midst of their trials by reminding them that “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Peter is saying that no trial, however fiery, can dampen our “full of life” hope, which is a vigorous, active, operating hope! It lives for ever. Our hope shall never die.

Dear Christian, it is worth waiting for the fulfilment of our hope, for it is certainly a blessed and good hope, which is imperishable!





Hope's Demeanour

The attitude and spiritual posture of the Christian's hope is best summed up by the apostle Peter's exhortation (in his first epistle) to the believer to "hope to the end". He wrote, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). Here Peter mentions three duties of every true Christian. It is interesting to note that in the Greek text, only the last verb ("hope") is an imperative (or command), whereas the first two verbs ("gird up", "be sober") are participles. In other words, the first two verbal expressions explain to us how we can keep our hope in focus.

The first expression of hope is to “gird up the loins of your mind”. To understand the expression, “gird up the loins”, we must take our thoughts back to the biblical time and place of the apostle Peter. In those days, people wore long robes which often constrained them from moving about freely and swiftly. Whenever they needed to move quickly, they would gather up their robes and tuck into a belt. This action of girding up one’s clothing around the waist is often used to represent one’s preparedness for action. As the Bible reader would recall, the people of Israel were told to eat the first Passover “with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’S passover” (Exodus 12:11). So when Peter told his readers to “gird up the loins of your mind”, he was telling them to be mentally prepared. Our minds must diligently study the prophecies of Christ’s second coming and enthusiastically await His coming. We cannot let our minds wander into the things of the world and conveniently forget the promises of His return.

The second expression of hope is to “be sober”, which gives us further understanding as to what it takes to hope for Christ’s return. The Greek word translated as “be sober” carries the idea of alertness or vigilance against dangers. Hope involves not only mental preparedness, but also spiritual alertness against the snares of the devil which may keep us trapped in sin at Christ’s return. We must keep a watchful spirit amid all the spiritually narcotising conditions around us. This is also enjoined by the apostle Paul in his call to us not to let “that day (of

the Lord’s return) ... overtake you as a thief (in the night)” (1 Thessalonians 5:4)—“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8).

Finally, “hope to the end” is the ultimate expression of genuine hope. The phrase, “to the end”, comes from the Greek word (*telios*) which means “perfect” or “complete”. We must set our hearts on our ultimate hope—the Lord’s return. We look forward in steadfast hope for God’s grace towards us to be fully realised at the revelation [from the Greek word (*apokalupsis*) meaning “appearing”] of Jesus Christ on the last day. Then His grace shall transport us to our eternal home while the great wrath of God’s judgment will cast the unbelievers into the eternal hell. Since the day we received Christ into our hearts, this grace has already been coming to us, “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).

Conclusion

In the meantime, while we pass the time of our sojourning here on earth, so long as our hope is fully set on the final appearance of His return, we shall continually receive a greater portion of His grace in our trial-filled journey in this world—to the end that we may complete our journey and receive the final gift of God’s grace, i.e. our glory. ♦



BIBLE WITNESS WEBSITE REVAMP

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Bible Witness website revamp is slightly delayed. While we were initially hoping to get the website up and ready by end-March 2020, the website revamp will now be ready by **end-May 2020** instead.

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HUDSON TAYLOR (1832-1905) PART I

RETOLD BY JENNY LOK
ILLUSTRATED BY ANDRONICUS KOSHY

Retold from:

- “To China With Love” by Hudson Taylor, published by Dimension Books, Bethany Fellowship, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota, the United States
- “Hudson Taylor—God’s Man in China” by Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor, published by Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, the United States
- “Hudson Taylor and Maria, Pioneers in China” by J. C. Pollock, published by Kingsway Publications Ltd, the United Kingdom
- “God’s Adventurer” by Phyllis Thompson, published by Overseas Missionary Fellowship (IHQ) Ltd, Singapore

The eagerly anticipated moment finally came on 21 May 1832. Beaming with joy, James Taylor and his wife welcomed their firstborn son into their home in the Yorkshire mining town of Barnsley in England. How they thank God for this “child of many prayers”! On bended knees, they had prayed earnestly for a son who would be “set apart unto the LORD” (Exodus 13:12; cf. Numbers 3:13; 8:17). Indeed, God was gracious to answer their heartfelt prayer!

James Taylor and his wife named their son, James Hudson Taylor (a combination of both of their family names). Soon, their household grew as God added more children to their family, among whom was Amelia, 3 years younger than Hudson.

Hudson spent his childhood days in a most godly environment. He was taught the Word of God through regular family worship. Everyone at home had to set aside about half an hour daily for some personal time with God. Before long, even the youngest in their midst found “the secret of a happy day” with the Lord.

James Taylor, the head of the home, was a stern disciplinarian who led by example. He instructed his children how they ought to be responsible, punctual

*Begin promptly
whatever the work
in hand. To loiter
does not help...*

*...it only
makes the
task more
difficult.*

and a lover of good habits. If any child was seen as being tardy, he or she would be admonished thus: “... begin promptly whatever the work in hand. To loiter does not help, it only makes the task more difficult.” One of his favourite rules at home was—“See if you can do without.” This, he felt, was good training for the children to exercise self-control, especially in learning to say “No” to simple pleasures of life, when they needed to.

Equally important was Hudson’s mother’s influence on her children. From her, Hudson learned to enjoy reading and cultivate an “unusual attention to details”, a characteristic which became useful in adulthood. Personal neatness and courtesy were also expected of every single child. So from an early age, Hudson was never demanding but always patient. One particular incident gave a striking example of this wonderful demeanour: during a meal when Mrs Taylor was distracted by her guests and unable to attend to Hudson’s need, he did not fret but asked politely, “Mamma, do you think apple pie is good for little boys?”

On many occasions, James Taylor, a Methodist local preacher, would gather with his fellow-workers and discuss foreign missions, especially to faraway lands. Frequently, he would lament: “Why do we not send our missionaries to China? That is the country to aim at, with its teeming population, its strong, intelligent, scholarly people.” So passionate was he about this that he prayed that God would send his own son to the mission field, particularly to China.

Hudson used to listen to such mission stories with great interest and excitement. Once he remarked, “When I am a man—I mean to be a missionary and go to China!” Everyone was amused because they could not see how Hudson could ever make it to China, being often plagued by poor health in his childhood. Moreover, he looked so small and frail that even his parents had put aside temporarily any thought of him becoming a missionary to China. Because of his feeble frame, he fell sick ever so often that to remain in school was really tough for him. Therefore, both parents had no choice but to let him continue his studies



at home, where he would, at the same time, help his father at his chemist shop on the Market Place.

Hudson's childhood days passed by and soon he reached his teenage years. Despite having received godly instruction from his dear parents, Hudson's heart was still full of rebellion and unbelief. He tried really hard to behave like a Christian, but failed miserably. "There is no hope for me beyond the grave. The best I could do is to take my fill of this world," he thought sadly.

At that time, about 15 years of age, Hudson was already working in a local bank at Barnsley. He looked pleasant with his "boyish face" and "sandy-coloured curly hair, grey-blue eyes, straight nose", and was popular at his workplace. Daily, he came into contact with the clerks, who loved merry-making and scoffed at "old-notions" of Christianity. Soon Hudson yearned for money, a fine horse for hunting and a grand house to live in. To Hudson, it was truly a struggle to live a godly life. There was no more joy but sorrow in his heart. However, due to much overtime work by gaslight, Hudson's eyes suffered severe inflammation that made him unable to continue working in the bank. From then on, Hudson began working for his father, learning the different prescriptions for various ailments. Nevertheless, he remained restless and unhappy. He felt he could never work hard enough "to pay off bad deeds by good". Both his parents were very concerned and tried their best to reach out to his



soul. Likewise, Amelia (his younger sister), who was the closest to him, was moved to pray for him 3 times every day.

Then came one afternoon, in June 1849, when Mrs Taylor was away and Amelia happened to be out for the day. Hudson wondered how he should spend his time alone—maybe there was something to read in his father’s library? Leisurely, he flipped through a few books, trying to find one that would interest him. After a while, he could not find anything worth reading and was about to give up when his eyes fell upon a basket of Gospel tracts. He pulled one out, settled himself comfortably in a corner of the barn behind the house, and started reading. He was very certain that there would be a story at the beginning, and a sermon or moral at the close. “I will take the former and leave the latter for those who like it,” he thought to himself.

Hudson read on, his heart rather disinterested until a particular phrase struck him—“The finished work of Christ”. His immediate question was, “What was



finished?” It dawned on him that Jesus died on the cross to pay, once and for all, the penalty for our sins! There was nothing else for him to do but “to fall down on [his] knees and [accept] this Saviour and His salvation, to praise Him evermore”!

Miles away, at that same moment, for hours, Hudson’s mother was likewise on her knees, praying fervently for the Holy Spirit to work in her son’s heart. She trusted in God and rejoiced in His assurance that Hudson would be saved. Meanwhile, Hudson had confided in Amelia the newfound joy within him and she promised not to reveal his secret to anyone just yet.

Mrs Taylor soon returned within a fortnight. Hudson ran excitedly to the door and broke the good news to her. “I know, my boy. I have been rejoicing for a fortnight in the glad tidings you have to tell me.” Greatly surprised, Hudson asked, “Why, has Amelia broken her promise? She said she would tell no one.” Only then did Mrs Taylor reveal how God had graciously answered her pleadings for the soul of her son. Henceforth, Hudson firmly believed in God’s promise and the power of prayer.

Sometime later, Hudson chanced to pick up a little diary that belonged to Amelia. Not knowing that it was hers initially, he opened the diary. Hudson’s heart was both thrilled and warmed at the thought that Amelia had actually pledged to pray daily for his salvation until the day God would mercifully save him. Precisely one month later, her prayer was granted. What a wonderful start to his Christian life!

The early days after Hudson’s conversion were filled with joy, gratitude and love for God. However, the daily struggle with sin soon left him rather weak and helpless. In early December 1849, Hudson became so wearied with much doubt and fear that he went into his room, knelt down and poured out his heart before God. “Oh God, I would go anywhere, do anything, suffer whatever your cause might demand, and be wholly given to your will and service—if you would deliver me and keep me from falling.”

A few months later, God’s message came to Hudson, loud and clear: “Then go for me to China.” God had spoken and his soul was delighted and ready to obey. As far as Hudson was concerned, God’s promise in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 was very dear to him—“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

Little was known about China missions in Hudson’s days. So for a start, in early 1850, he borrowed a book on China from a congregational minister. He realised, after reading it, that he would do well to go for some medical studies as part of his preparations for the work in China. Apart from this, he began to take time to exercise to improve his physical strength as a way to overcome his frailties. In order to prepare himself for a tough missionary life, Hudson dispensed with many home comforts, among which was his feather bed. He also started to distribute tracts and engaged in Sunday school teaching, as well as visiting the sick and needy.

One Christmas holiday, Amelia came home from her studies. She was not alone. Together with her was a young, attractive music teacher who charmed everyone at home with her sweet lovely voice akin to that of a nightingale. She was Miss Vaughan. Hudson's heart was stirred and he would be extremely happy to have a wife like her to go with him to China. Amelia too was glad that Hudson had found a potential wife to be his companion in China. "My brother would not be lonely," she thought. Alas, Miss Vaughan was not keen to follow Hudson to China! Finally, with a heart full of fear and hope, he came before God in earnest prayer. He knew that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11b). Besides, he was reminded of Proverbs 3:6—"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Thus, with much assurance and confidence in God's Word, Hudson gave up his desire to marry Miss Vaughan, for he realised that she was not suitable for the tough life in China...

(To be continued)



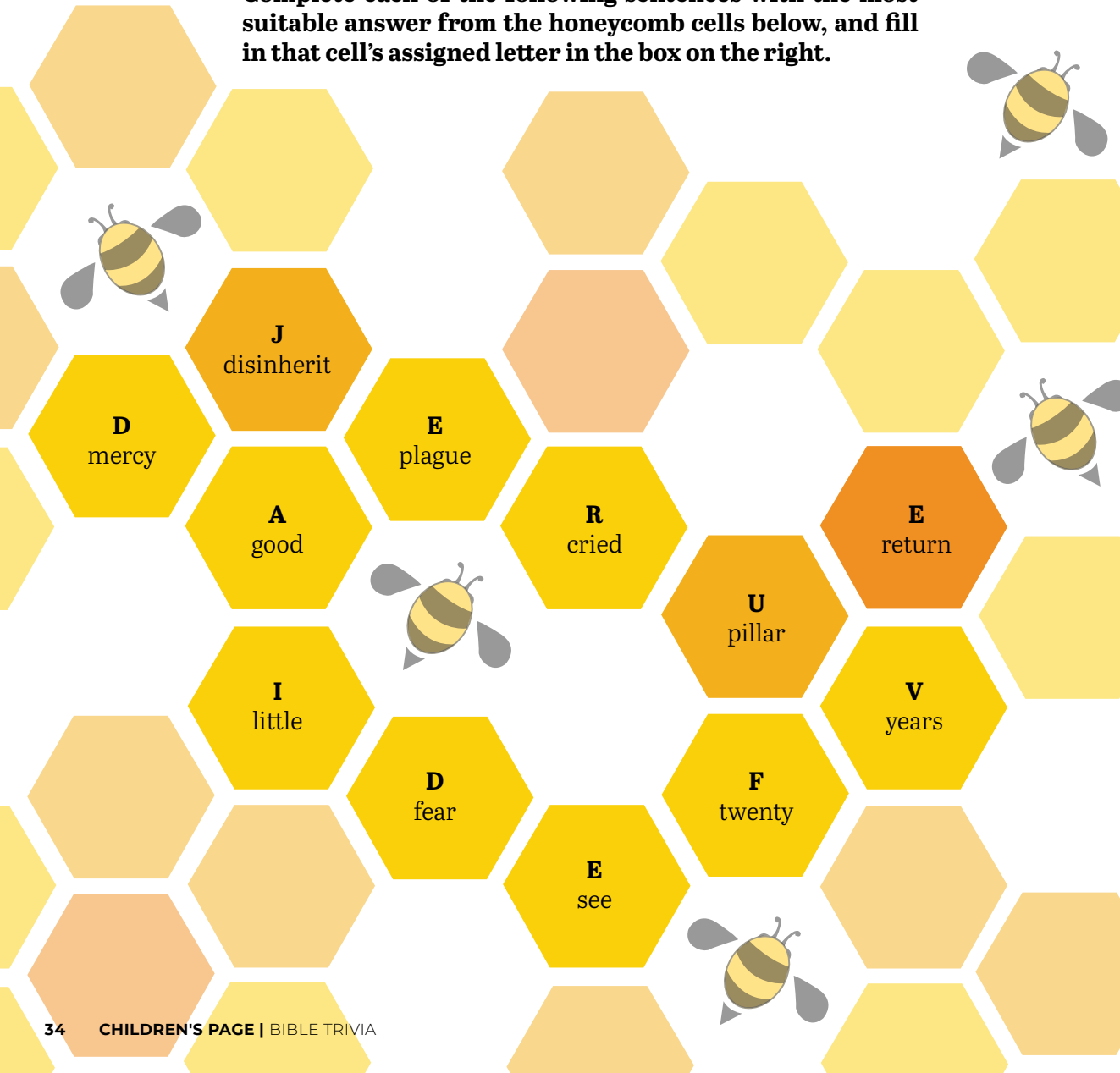
BIBLE TRIVIA

NUMBERS 14

SARAH YONG

After spying out the land of Canaan for forty days, the twelve selected spies returned. Ten of them feared the enemies and brought back an evil report of the land (cf. Numbers 13:31-33). Only two spies trusted that God would give them the land to possess it.

1. Read the respective Scripture verses in Numbers 14. Complete each of the following sentences with the most suitable answer from the honeycomb cells below, and fill in that cell's assigned letter in the box on the right.



1. The children of Israel lifted up their voice and _____, murmuring against Moses and against Aaron. (v. 1)
2. They questioned the LORD's plan for leading them into the wilderness and they wanted to _____ into Egypt. (v. 4)
3. Joshua and Caleb tried to assure the people that the land was exceedingly _____, even a land flowing with milk and honey. (v. 7)
4. They told the people not to _____ the inhabitants of the land, for the LORD was with them, but the congregation became angry. (vv. 9–10)
5. This provoked the LORD, and He spoke to Moses of His intention to _____ the children of Israel for their unbelief. (vv. 11–12)
6. Moses interceded by recounting how the LORD had led the Israelites by a _____ of cloud by day, and of fire by night. (v. 14)
7. The LORD, according to His great _____, promised to pardon His people in response to Moses' intercession. (v. 19–20)
8. However, all those who had seen the glory of the LORD and yet did not hearken to His voice, would not _____ the Promised Land. (v. 22–23)
9. All those from _____ years old and upward who murmured against the LORD would perish in the wilderness. (v. 29)
10. Only Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun, and all the _____ ones would enter the Promised Land. (vv. 30–31)
11. Their children would wander in the wilderness forty _____, after the number of the days in which the twelve spies searched the land. (v. 33–34)
12. The ten men who had searched the land and returned with the evil report, died by the _____ before the LORD. (v. 37)

2. Important to put into remembrance! The verse indicated in the message formed by the boxed letters above tells of an important warning.

It reminds us never to take God's pardon and mercy for granted, by highlighting how the LORD afterward _____ the people whom He had earlier _____ out of _____, because they _____ not.

Answers to Bible Trivia—Numbers 13 (Volume 20, Issue 1, pp. 30–31)

Part 1: (1) Reuben, (2) Simeon, (3) Caleb, (4) Issachar, (5) Oshea, (6) Palti, (7) Zebulun, (8) Manasseh, (9) Ammiel, (10) Asher, (11) Nahbi, (12) Geuel

Part 2: grapes, pomegranates, figs

Part 3 (from top to bottom): Canaanites, Jebusites, Hittites, Amorites, Amalekites.

BIBLE WITNESS WEB RADIO

PROGRAMMES & AIRTIME

Morning Devotions

Led by Pastor Prabhudas Koshy, pastor of Gethsemane B-P Church.

Weekdays: 6.15am, 7.00am,
8.00am
Weekends: 6.15am, 7.00am

Bible in a Year

Bible reading programme read by Alexander Scourby; made available by Litchfield Associates.

Weekdays: 6.45am, 10.15pm
Saturdays: 12.25am, 8.45am,
6.00pm
Sundays: 5.00am, 8.30am,
1.30pm, 5.30pm,
11.00pm

Evening Devotions

Led by Elder Mah Chin Kwang and Elder Alan Choy, elders of Gethsemane B-P Church.

Weekdays: 8.30pm, 10.00pm
Saturdays: 9.15pm, 11.00pm
Sundays: 9.15pm

The Pilgrim's Progress

An audio dramatization of John Bunyan's famous book; made available by Answers in Genesis.

Weekdays: 4.30pm, 6.30pm
Saturdays: 6.45pm

The Best of J.C. Ryle

A collection of short readings from the puritan writer.

Saturdays: 12.00am, 8.30am,
6.30pm
Sundays: 7.15am, 4.00pm,
7.30pm

Faithful Men

A BWWR production aimed at teaching and building up men in every area of their calling.

Mondays: 2.00pm
Tuesdays: 9.00pm
Wednesdays: 9.00am
Thursdays: 3.30am
Saturdays: 2.00am, 10.00am
Sundays: 9.30pm

Women of Virtue

A BWWR production aimed at catering to the needs of sisters in the church.

Mondays: 9.00am
Thursdays: 2.00pm
Fridays: 3.30am, 9.00pm
Saturdays: 5.00pm

The Spiritual Battles of a Christian

A BWWR production that teaches of the many battles that we Christians face in this world.

Mondays: 3.30am, 9.00pm
Wednesdays: 2.00pm
Thursdays: 9.00am
Saturdays: 3.00pm, 9.30pm
Sundays: 2.30am, 6.00pm

Youth Bible Hour

A BWWR production giving godly counsel specially for youth.

Tuesdays: 3.30am, 9.00am
Thursdays: 9.00pm
Fridays: 2.00pm
Saturdays: 8.00pm
Sundays: 3.30am, 2.00pm