

# Bible Witness

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# HONOUR

(Part 1)



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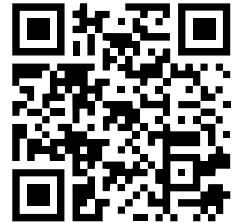
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**Editor** Prabhudas Koshy **Assistant Editor** Ho Kee How **Publishing & Circulation Co-ordinator** Lok Kwok Wah **Technical Editors** Jenny Lok, Lok Kwok Wah, Mah Lean Choo **Layout & Illustrations** Matthew Peh **Children's Story Illustration** Andronicus Koshy **Publisher** Bible Witness Media Ministry of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore **Printer** Ee Tai Press Pte Ltd **Mailing Address** Bible Witness Media Ministry, 33 Ubi Crescent, Singapore 408584 **Telephone** (65) 6741 1910 **E-mail** [bwmm.gbpc@gmail.com](mailto:bwmm.gbpc@gmail.com) **Website** [www.biblewitness.com](http://www.biblewitness.com)

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# HONOUR

## (PART 1)

Volume 21 Issue 5 | September–October 2021



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#### **honour**

(Hebrew *kabed* [verb]  
and *kābôd* [noun])

The Hebrew word  
denotes various  
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such as “heavy”,  
“rich” and “glory”.

Thus, the word  
“honour” conveys the  
sense of worth, value,  
quality, price.

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# EDITORIAL

Friends and readers,

Bible Witness has now entered its 21st year of publication. Forasmuch as the LORD, our Ebenezer, has helped and blessed the publication of this magazine hitherto, we renew our dedication to Him to publish His truths unashamedly in the years ahead, as He permits. We count it an unspeakable honour to be part of the BW ministry, which God has raised for spreading the sound doctrines and wisdom of His Word. Like the apostle Paul, each of us in the BW team would say with thanksgiving, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8).

We know that proclaiming the truth will not always please everyone; it irks many, even within Christendom, to hostility. But all who love our God and the infallible truths of His Word must persevere. We continually lean on the LORD’s good hand to empower us to be an honourable publication ministry for His name’s sake.

The articles in this issue and the next will deal with the biblical teachings on the topic of “honour”. It is a topic of great importance to every earnest Christian because it defines his biblical obligation to God and to all whom God has made it their due. The Bible stipulates in Romans 13:7,

“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”

Christians are urged to honour God (1 Samuel 2:30; Malachi 1:6), their parents (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2), the elderly (Leviticus 19:32), authorities (1 Peter 2:17), church leaders (1 Timothy 5:17), faithful servants of Christ (Philippians 2:29), spouses (1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:33), widows (1 Timothy 5:3), employers (1 Timothy 6:1), fellow believers (Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 12:23–24), and fellow men (1 Peter 2:17).

God’s people are also instructed in no uncertain terms that they ought to honour God-ordained ordinances and institutions, such as the Sabbath day (Isaiah 58:13) and marriage (Hebrews 13:4). Lastly, the Bible calls Christians to live honourably by avoiding dishonourable activities [e.g. fornication, homosexual activities, etc. (cf. Romans 1:26; 2 Timothy 2:19–21)], and by maintaining purity, charity and tenacity in their life and conduct, for the praise of our God (Romans 2:7, 10; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4; 1 Peter 1:7).

Praying for your spiritual progress...

Heartily in His service,  
Prabhudas Koshy  
(Editor)



# WHAT IS HONOUR?

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

## Biblical Honour

**H**onour! It is a prominent word in the Holy Scriptures.

What does “honour” mean? In the Old Testament, it is primarily the translation of the Hebrew verb (*kabed*) and its derivative noun (*kābôd*), both of which denote various shades of meaning such as “heavy”, “rich” and “glory”. Thus, the word “honour” conveys the sense of worth, value, quality, price. To honour someone is to esteem and value that person in a

worthy manner. When someone is honoured, he is viewed and treated with dignity and respect that is due to him.

Biblically, true honour is inextricably tied to God’s perfect truth, holiness, wisdom, justice, and glory. Divine plans and purposes alone provide the true pursuit of genuine and sublime honour. Hence, anything contrary to God’s glorious nature and truth should be deemed as downright dishonourable. Man’s highest honour is tied to the glory of God. The greatest dignity and blessing of a man on this earth is that

he lives each day in joyous communion with the God of glory. Nothing is more dignified and honourable for a man than that the most High God is pleased with him.

The apostle Paul affirms this biblical truth in his instruction to the Corinthian church, “But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth” (2 Corinthians 10:17–18). This divine instruction has also been correspondingly proclaimed by the prophet Jeremiah: “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23–24).

## **Desire God’s, Not Man’s Honour**

The honour that should interest Christians is that which is from God. Only the honour from God is perfect, while human appraisal and praise, whether it be one’s own or from another, are flawed by corruption and failings. Proverbs 25:27 warns us, “... for men to search their own glory is not glory.” Man’s own restricted estimation limits him in pursuing what he deems glorious. God alone can show us what is most virtuous and excellent in honour, and we should glory only in

that which God esteems as honourable. What else is more valuable—and hence honourable—to Christians, than that which is acceptable and pleasing to their God of glory?

God’s Word promises honour to those who would live by the wisdom of His Word—“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee” (Proverbs 4:7–9). Deliberately disregarding God’s honourable words (the highest and only true Source of honour) and going after the imperfect plaudits of ignorant man, is tantamount to folly and is dishonourable indeed. He who covets human applause will be kept away from the approbation of God.

Alas, some men desire and pursue human praise, and they foolishly make it their passion. Did not Christ, our Lord, bemoan the Jewish leaders’ undesirable preoccupation with honour from men? He lamented, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John 5:44). The Jewish leaders, who were keen to extol one another for their ostentatious religiosity, failed completely to recognise the glory of Christ, about whom John wrote: “we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14b). Because their minds were obsessed with receiving honour from one another, they failed utterly to recognise the divine glory and honour of Christ, the Messiah. Oh, what great spiritual tragedies beset

those who value human applause and accolades more than divine honour!

## Reject the World's Distorted Honour

Christ boldly asserted, "I receive not honour from men" (John 5:41). He also said, "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God" (John 8:54). Throughout His life and ministry on earth, Christ analysed every honour which men had devised for Him; every honour which was contrary to His Father's honour, He rejected! Such determination to wholly reject human honour divested of divine purposes show that for Jesus, true honour is to be in full compliance with divine truth, wisdom and purposes. Such was also the disposition of Paul and his co-labourers concerning their

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**GOD'S WORD  
PROMISES HONOUR  
TO THOSE WHO  
WOULD LIVE BY  
THE WISDOM OF  
HIS WORD.**

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honour—"Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others..." (1 Thessalonians 2:6).

Modern human society, in general, is on an all-out war against all things honourable in God's sight; this ungodly world has nothing truly honourable for Christians to be fascinated with. While we are in this world, God's desire concerning us is that we escape its "corruption" and "pollutions" (2 Peter 1:4; 2:20). In this perverse modern age, biblical morals and spiritual virtues are denounced in almost every realm of life. Increasingly, what is honourable in God's sight is deemed dishonourable, and what is dishonourable is deemed honourable. Pursuing the world's honour is detrimental to our spiritual progress and fruitfulness. Hence, we are admonished not to conform to the world (cf. Romans 12:2). Every Christian who cherishes the worldly ideologies of life will soon embrace things that are of godless honour.

Therefore, let us put away all aspirations for worldly honour. To be honourable in God's sight, we must be shaped, not by our society's culture, but by biblical virtues. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). ☞

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**REV. (DR) PRABHUDAS KOSHY**  
*is the pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church and the editor of Bible Witness Magazine.*



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Bible Witness Magazine is a publication of Bible Witness Media Ministry. By the grace of God, the Bible Witness magazine has been in print for twenty years. Each magazine is filled with articles centred around a particular theme. Each article is carefully written to apply the teachings of the Bible and Reformed theology to everyday life. As we remember God's goodness upon the ministry, it is our prayer that our resources will aid you in your Christian walk.

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# OUR OBLIGATION TO HONOUR (ROMANS 13:7)

SAMUEL JOSEPH

## Honour Due to Authority Derided by World

The modern world has something of a fraught relationship with the concept of authority. The merest display of authority almost always seems to inspire resentment, as though the most natural reaction to authority should be to suspect it, and the most noble response, to subvert it. The idea of honour, unfortunately, as part of the proper posture of those under authority, is derided as hopelessly archaic.

Sadly, the world suffers from a fundamental impoverishment of its conceptual foundations.

There is, in fact, a gaping hole where these foundations ought to be—a hole which leaves the notion of authority ungrounded, and that of honour displaced. No wonder, then, that the biblical teaching of honour as an obligation (something which ought to be given, and need not be earned) seems so strange to so many in the world.

## **Honour Due to Authority Upheld by Scripture**

That rendering honour to authority is indeed the biblical teaching, is clear from the apostle Paul's injunction in Romans 13:7—"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." These are words of ancient pedigree, flowing from the Moral Law of God, even the fifth commandment—"Honour thy father and thy mother"—which, in the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 64), requires "the preserving the honour, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals".

In other words, there is a hierarchical structure to human life and society, which ought to be respected by all; respect for this structure entails taking upon oneself the obligation to honour those who are placed in positions of authority. Sometimes this "honour" takes the form of tolls and taxes ("tribute" and "custom"), as we give voluntarily of our own resources to support the function of authorities. Sometimes this "honour" takes the form of deference and obedience ("fear" and "honour"), as we yield voluntarily our own preferences and impulses in submission to authorities. Whatever the specific details in each particular case, Scripture clearly teaches that it is our Christian obligation to give honour to parents, to elders, to employers, to civil magistrates, etc.

But what is the basis for this teaching? Why must this hierarchy be respected, and why must the obligation to honour be so readily accepted? Whence come the "dues" spoken of by the apostle, as belonging to those in authority? The answer is found in the immediately preceding context: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1). We know from Scripture

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**WE HONOUR THOSE TO WHOM HONOUR IS DUE,  
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how sinful men, in denying God His place in their thoughts (cf. Psalm 10:4), will inevitably be left without a reason for authority, or a motive for honour. Only with God enthroned in our hearts can that “gaping hole” be filled! Now there is a foundation and framework: we honour those to whom honour is due, because it is God who has, according to His sovereign and eternal purpose, made it their due.

## Honour Due to Authority Practised by Christians

This biblical framework helps us to navigate the oft-treacherous “waters” of human experience in a fallen world. We give honour, but not in flattery or in craven fear of man. We give honour, but not selfishly to win favour for ourselves; we do not honour the rich merely in the hope of being enriched (James 2:1–4)! We give honour, but not conditionally; we subject ourselves to authorities over

us “with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward” (1 Peter 2:18). We give honour, but not blindly, for we soberly recognise that where there is a contradiction, “[w]e ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29b). In a word, we give honour to men, but always in the fear of God.

Finally, when we undertake our obligation to honour in the light of Scripture, there is placed before our eyes a most blessed hope that encourages us to persevere. We are reminded by Paul (in Ephesians 6:2–3) that the fifth commandment is expressly stated as “the first commandment with promise”, and that by keeping it we are justified in expecting an extension to our welfare and length of days. Indeed, a society where the biblical obligation to honour is regarded and obeyed, will be a stable and prosperous society—because it is a society obedient to the ordinance of God, the Creator of all things. 🌿

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**SAMUEL JOSEPH** is a preacher of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church.

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# MEN OF HONOUR

## (PSALM 49)

**SUJITH SAMUEL**

**H**onour is a virtue that God demands from mankind. Being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), we ought to seek God's honour. But many long for the honour of men instead. As such, many pursue after and delight in the pomp and riches of this world, rather than in God. Let us consider the contrasting characteristics of men who seek the world's applause and men of real honour.

## **Men of Pomp**

These men are those who seek honour in outward things of this world. Psalm 49 gives a picture of such men. This psalm serves as a summons addressed to all men in the world, "both low and high, rich and poor, together" (vv. 1–2). After this generic summons, the psalmist directs the world to hear the words of wisdom, wherein a major portion of this psalm talks about the folly of dishonourable men.

### **They Trust in Wealth**

Wealth is needed for our earthly life here. God has provided and ordained this as a means by which our daily needs will be met. God in His special providence provides wealth to some in abundance while He allows some others to remain poor. Apart from playing some role in determining our status in society and our physical well-being, wealth has no eternal value. In fact, the psalmist warns, "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (vv. 6–7).

Those who put their confidence in wealth do not understand the finiteness or temporal nature of it. Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). The value of a single soul is greater than all the wealth or riches of this whole world. A wealthy man cannot, even with all his money, transact redemption for the soul of a person. Yet, many like to boast of their great earthly estate. Such boasting is superfluous and mere pomp, as God can turn his situation upside down and make him a poor man any time.

### **They Perish Like Beasts**

One day, all created beings will have an end. Death is no respecter of persons. All human beings, irrespective of their status in society, have to face death. We come to this world naked and empty-handed. Even if we are wealthy, we cannot take any of the possessions we earn in this world. Knowing this, those who put their trust in the pomp of this world would try to preserve their honour and fame even after death. They may create big houses, establishments or institutions which will preserve their reputation. As the psalmist points out, "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish" (vv. 11–12).

Many wealthy, accomplished men also have this wrong inner thought or attitude. While they donate or give for a good cause or to a charitable organisation, they want to ensure that

their names are announced or recorded in publications so that the world would remember and honour them for their generosity. But they and the memories of their good deeds will perish like the beasts. We don't remember or celebrate the death of animals. All such men of pomp, the psalmist adds, will end up like the beasts—"Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them" (v. 14a).

All men of pomp will have a tragic end. Even as they put their confidence in wealth, it will be taken away from them. Memories of the good honour they earn from the world will be forgotten. They themselves will perish as they do not honour God who has created them and provided all these honour and wealth to them. The psalmist then contrasts such men with himself (v. 15)—and by extension, all those who find honour in the sight of God. Let us see where they put their trust and what their destiny will be.

## **Men of Honour**

These are men who seek honour in things outside of this world. They don't put their trust in perishable things. They don't boast about their possessions as they understand that all things they have come from God. They like to redirect all the honour and glory to the Source of all these blessings—who is God Himself (cf. 1 Timothy 1:17).

### **They Trust in God**

The psalmist expresses full confidence in the redemption God promises. Thus, he understood that even if his

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enemies triumph over him by using the wealth or possessions they have, he will ultimately be "on the winning side". He says, "But God will redeem my soul..." (v. 15a). The wealth and possessions of this world cannot save a soul. The men of pomp (and their boastings) are short-lived, as their souls are on the way to destruction. But the psalmist has the full assurance that his soul will be redeemed by God.

The world may despise him for his faith in the promises of God and the redemption promised through Messiah. But he cherishes these unchangeable promises of God as more valuable than gold and silver (Psalm 119:72). Just like Boaz, a wealthy man who paid the

price of the field and married Ruth. It was his faith in God, more than earthly benefits, which encouraged him to do it. He viewed the inheritance of the LORD as more valuable than gold and silver (cf. Ruth 4:5–10). Here Boaz shows he is a real man of honour who trusts in God in his demonstration of kindness towards Ruth and her family.

## They Live Forever

The psalmist further says, “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah” (v. 15). He is saying this in contrast with the destiny of those who put their trust in wealth, as highlighted in the previous verses: “Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling” (vv. 12–14). The destiny of such men is death and

destruction, whereas the destiny of men of honour is to be in the presence of God in a blessed estate.

Is there anything more honourable than to be in the presence of One who is full of glory and honour (1 Chronicles 16:27) for ever? The psalmist expresses this confidence that his soul will be redeemed and the Lord will receive him. He will not perish like the animals. Death or the grave doesn't have power over him as his soul is safe in the arms of God. His destiny is to live for ever with God.

## Conclusion

In the final analysis, who are the real men of honour? They are the ones who put their faith in God and in His promises of redemption. They don't perish like the beasts, but they will inherit eternal life. ✨

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**SUJITH SAMUEL** is a preacher and missionary of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, and serves the Lord in India.

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# A VESSEL UNTO HONOUR

## (2 TIMOTHY 2:21)

**HO KEE HOW**

**G**od honours those who honour Him (cf. 1 Samuel 2:30). One way we honour God is by our commitment to personal sanctification. For sure, the moment we become regenerated, we are sanctified positionally (cf. Hebrews 10:10, 14). But we don't stop there; we need to go through progressive sanctification, which is ongoing throughout our entire Christian life (cf. Ephesians 5:26–27;

1 John 3:3). And that entails a constant battle, a relentless fight to the end—against sin and the dazzling temptations of the world, especially those that pander to our sensual appetites.

Unfortunately, in these days of loose living and unrestrained indulgence in our modern society (affecting even the church), we see many Christians reduced to living a mediocre, stunted



life devoid of spiritual victory. They are being held back by “the sin which doth so easily beset [them]” (Hebrews 12:1b) which, like extra weights placed on a runner in a race, thwart their efforts in victorious living, and cause them to forfeit the honour that comes with being “overcomers”. Hence Paul’s words to young Timothy constitute a timely and timeless reminder to the consecrated Christian: “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21).

## Sanctified for Fruitful Service

The picture Paul has in mind is a large house well furnished with all sorts of vessels (2 Timothy 2:20). The Greek word for “vessel” means a hollow container for holding liquids (purportedly for drinking, cooking, washing purposes respectively). Evidently, these vessels are made of various materials. Those made of gold and silver are deemed more valuable (“to honour”) than those of wood and earth (“to dishonour”). Naturally, such will therefore be displayed more prominently in the house, and used for more auspicious or honourable occasions. It goes without saying that these will also be cleansed and sanitised more thoroughly and regularly, and kept in good, hygienic condition—free from contamination, filth, stains—so that they may be “meet (i.e. fitting, proper) for the master’s use” (v. 21b).

This figure of a vessel is instructive. For the Christian to be valued by the

Lord and deemed “meet for use” (i.e. useful, profitable), he must be clean and upright in character, as corroborated by the word “sanctified”. To attain that, he must first “purge (i.e. cleanse thoroughly from defilement) himself from these” (v. 21a). Now, what would “these” refer to? The nearest antecedent for “these” that fits the immediate context goes back to “iniquity” (which is a plural noun in Greek) in v. 19b. Undeniably, a consecrated, holy life is essential for fruitful service. Great zeal, abilities, talents, giftedness must be preceded by personal sanctification, which doesn’t come overnight—one has to be “prepared (i.e. made ready and suitable for use) unto every good work” (v. 21c).

Incidentally, the word “prepared”, together with “sanctified”, are passive participles in the Greek, implying that the Christian is being acted upon by an agent. This alludes to the Holy Spirit’s working in one’s life. The consecrated Christian is being “sanctified” and being “prepared” by the influence and moulding of the Holy Spirit—even as he swims against the tide of the corrupt world in which he lives, and “walk[s] not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1b).

## Hindrances to Fruitful Service

Alas, if we are truly honest with ourselves, we have not always “walk[ed] in the Spirit ... (so as to) not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Paul likens the Christian life to a race and a battlefield, which involve struggle (2 Timothy 2:3–5). What are the things

that can handicap our service? There are at least two sore areas against which we struggle every day.

First, a sinful flesh. Admittedly, though our souls are saved, we still live in our present mortal, corrupt body, which is “sold under sin” (Romans 7:14b), waiting for “the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23b) when Christ returns. Meanwhile, while still on earth (as Paul so grimly cautions), “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:18–19). That sums up succinctly our inner battle with our depraved flesh. Though we may have legitimate bodily needs and appetites that may be properly satisfied, they (like food, drink, sex, etc.) can degenerate into carnality if unduly craved for and wrongfully indulged in. Hence Paul’s warning to “flee also youthful lusts (i.e. desires for things unclean or morally forbidden)” (2 Timothy 2:22a), which can ruin the usefulness of God’s servants.

The second sore area we need to contend with is an unclean mind. This perhaps is the greatest hindrance, for the mind is the battlefield where victory or defeat is decided. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7a). How often those terrible sins of the flesh originate in the mind. Satan uses all he can in the environment and the mass media (*keep a watch on that internet!*) to provoke an evil, impure mind in us. The way to conquer an unclean mind is through “the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26). “Wherewithal shall a young

man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psalm 119:9). Sexual purity begins with the mind—“whatsoever things are true, ... honest, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

## Conclusion

Why should Christians continue to live a spiritually restricted, thwarted life? In fact, many are fighting a losing battle, being held back by those “terrible handicaps” of besetting sins (of the lusts of the flesh and of the mind). Dear brethren, many saints (past and present) have shown that this tenacious battle against “every weight” of sin can be won (cf. Hebrews 12:1a). But can lesser mortals like us, you ask, ever attain to that? Can we not?

Let me state the obvious: it is God’s purpose for every child of His (without exception) to live a victorious, consecrated, honourable Christian life (1 Thessalonians 4:3–4). It hinges on the condition that we appropriate the Holy Spirit’s power to overcome those “personal handicaps” of a sinful flesh and an unclean mind. Remember, there is no favouritism with God—“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

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**HO KEE HOW** is a preacher of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church and the assistant editor of the Bible Witness Magazine.



# HONOUR THE LORD WITH YOUR SUBSTANCE!

(PROVERBS 3:9)

**REGGOR B. GALARPE**

**A**s God's people, it is our sacred and solemn duty to honour the Lord. The Westminster Shorter Catechism expressed it clearly in this manner: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." This—in answer to the question: "What is the chief end of man?" (Q. 1)—affirms that the very goal, aim and purpose of our existence is to glorify God.

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." We are to seek after the glory of God and to glorify Him at all times and in all that we do. Indeed, "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17). We

are to glorify Him, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

In Proverbs 3:9, we are commanded to “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase”. The word “honour” (which means “to respect, reverence, show esteem, or give consideration to”), when used in relation to God, is very much related to the glory of God. Hence, to honour the Lord is to glorify the Lord. This very act in itself is an act of worship; it is all about God and His glory. Thus, to honour the Lord is to worship Him.

## The Principle

This verse actually has two commands in which we are to honour the Lord—first, “with [our] substance”, and second, “with the firstfruits of all [our] increase”. The first part of the verse may be considered as the **principle** on which the **practice** is based. We can also think of the first part as the attitude that motivates the act. While the command to honour the Lord “with our substance” reflects the God-honouring attitude towards material possessions, the act of liberality in honouring the Lord is encapsulated in the command to honour the Lord “with our firstfruits”!

While the Scriptures speak of various ways in which we can honour the Lord, we have here in Proverbs 3:9, a straightforward statement about honouring Him in the giving of our substance. The word “substance” refers to our possessions, assets and wealth. We should know that all of our substance come from God in the first place, so it is only fitting that

we should honour Him with our substance. In so doing, we acknowledge Him as the Source and the Owner of all that we have.

This principle is in line with God’s precepts, as delineated in the following Scripture verses:

- “But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (Deuteronomy 8:18).
- “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1).
- “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills ... If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof” (Psalm 50:10, 12).
- “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:8).

Realise that it is not about God desiring to have our possessions. It is all about God deserving the honour and glory when we acknowledge Him and put Him first in everything, as manifested when we worship Him in the giving of our substance, especially when given heartily and sincerely.

## The Practice

The term “firstfruits” is something familiar to the people of Israel. It refers to the first crops to be gathered at harvest time, and also the firstborn

of the flock. The Israelites understood this offering requirement of the Lord very well. We read of such remarkable practice in the Old Testament:

- “The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk” (Exodus 23:19).
- “The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him” (Deuteronomy 18:4).
- “That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there” (Deuteronomy 26:2).

More than just a designation of being first in terms of order, “firstfruits” can also refer to the best of one’s produce. So, to give God the firstfruits is to give Him the best and the choicest part from all one’s crops and livestock. Consider the issue that God raised

against His people in Malachi 1:6–8, “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.” Obviously, God is not honoured when you do not give Him your best or, worse still, when you give Him your leftovers!

As God deserves our best, we ought to give Him not only our “firstfruits”, but also our tithes! Yes, the command to honour the Lord with our substance undoubtedly includes the giving of our tithes along with our offerings! This is alluded to by what the LORD said in Malachi 3:8—“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.” Think about it,

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**TO HONOUR THE LORD IS TO GLORIFY THE LORD.  
THIS VERY ACT IN ITSELF IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP...  
THUS, TO HONOUR THE LORD IS TO WORSHIP HIM.**

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we are not just dishonouring God, we are actually guilty of “robbing God” when we withhold our tithes and offerings!

## Conclusion

Honour the Lord with your substance! Indeed, we honour the Lord when we give Him the priority in the use of our possessions. We honour Him when we give unto Him the “firstfruits” of all our increase—cheerfully, generously and reverently.

If you would uphold the principle and practice expressed in the command, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase”, then you can look forward to the promise: “so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Proverbs 3:10). The Lord is pleased to bless those who bless Him, and those who honour Him with their material possessions. ☞

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**REV. REGGOR B. GALARPE** is a missionary of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, and serves as the pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, Cebu.



# HONOUR THE LORD'S DAY

## (ISAIAH 58:13-14)

JOSEPH POON

**“**If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isaiah 58:13-14).

### Are You a “Nine Commandments” Christian?

Sadly, many ignore the fourth commandment (“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”), because “it is not relevant today”. But it is! Besides linking this commandment to His creation work (Exodus 20:11), God deemed the observance of this

commandment as being a perpetual covenantal sign that distinguished His people from others (Exodus 31:13–17), as well as reflecting our honouring of Him (Isaiah 58:13). That’s not all. Obeying the fourth commandment will also bring refreshment for our spiritual benefit (Mark 2:27; cf. Exodus 31:17). From the practices in the New Testament, we see that the Lord’s Day has replaced the Old Testament Sabbath Day.

## How Should We Keep the Lord’s Day Holy?

Isaiah 58:13–14 provide useful directions. Do remember, it is the “day”, that is, the entire day, not just the time we are in church.

1) Watch what will cause you to “turn away thy foot”. Consider carefully where you go and what you do. Make plans ahead of time, for yourself and your family, so that this day will be “set apart” (i.e. holy) for God. Refrain from activities that you should and can carry

out on other days (cf. Exodus 20:9–10), like shopping, exercising, school work, office work, co-curricular activities, or enrichment lessons.

2) Seek not your own pleasures. After a long busy week, you are tempted to use the Lord’s Day to catch up on your sleep, engage in social activities with your friends or family, get a chance to relax over high tea, watch football, go to the park to play, pursue your hobbies, enjoy your favourite pastime or leisure, and so on. But Scripture admonishes, “(turn) from doing thy pleasure on my holy day”. Remember also, keeping the Lord’s Day holy is our covenantal witness. How do you evangelise your friends if you do not honour the Lord yourself?

3) Delight in setting apart the day to honour God. Scripture further exhorts, “call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and ... honour him”. Honouring God regarding the sabbath is making the day about Him, not “me time” or “family time”. If you have not settled in your heart that you want to honour God, you will never keep that day holy, let alone delight in doing so. You honour

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**IF YOU HAVE NOT SETTLED IN YOUR HEART  
THAT YOU WANT TO HONOUR GOD,  
YOU WILL NEVER KEEP THAT DAY HOLY,  
LET ALONE DELIGHT IN DOING SO.**



God by “not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure”. You worship Him in the church, serve Him by being part of any outreach available through the church or on your own, draw close to Him by attending any Bible studies, by having your family and personal devotions, as well as by being in communion with God in prayer and singing. If God is your delight, this sabbath day passes so quickly! Notably, even what we talk about, both inside and outside the home, should change—“nor speaking thine own words”. This is probably where we fail miserably without realising it. It is a day to talk about Him. We can recount with one another what we have learned from the Sunday sermon, Basic Bible Knowledge class, Sunday School, and Bible studies of the week. Instead of yakking about ourselves, we ought to engage in

spiritual conversations that turn others to God. It may be awkward initially, but be the catalyst. We honour God by drawing people towards Him.

Encouragingly, Isaiah 58:14 tells us about the spiritual outcome of keeping and honouring the Lord’s Day—“Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” Our spiritual delight in God will grow, He will use us to fulfil His purposes on earth and to be a means of blessing to fellow believers! ☞

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**REV. JOSEPH POON** *is the pastor of Bible-Presbyterian Church of Western Australia.*



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# HONOUR THE KING!

## (1 PETER 2:17)

HIEN NGUYEN

**I**n biblical times, almost all of the nations were under absolute monarchic rule (i.e. under the rule of a king). So, readers living in those biblical times would be familiar with what the apostle Peter was inspired to write concerning God's command: "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **Honour the king**" (1 Peter 2:17).

Here, the verb "honour" in Greek (*timao*) means to esteem, revere. God's

Word teaches us not only to honour God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:23), and parents (Matthew 15:4), but also to honour all men and the king as well. Granted, nowadays, just a few countries are under absolute monarchy, [like Brunei, Eswatini (Swaziland), Oman and Saudi Arabia], though several other countries embrace what is called "constitutional monarchy" (like Australia, Japan, Malaysia, the UK, etc.), while the majority of countries are ruled by the elected government

of the day (like India, the Philippines, Singapore, the US, etc.).

So then, is God's teaching still relevant to all peoples who are not under absolute monarchy? Certainly, it is. The apostle Paul was inspired to write, "Let every soul be subject unto **the higher powers**. For there is no power but of God: **the powers that be** are ordained of God... For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil..." (Romans 13:1, 3a). That being the case, let us briefly consider what it means to honour the rulers, such as kings, queens, presidents and prime ministers.

1. **Honour the rulers** (1 Peter 2:17) **and humbly show our respect before them**. "Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men" (Proverbs 25:6).

2. **Subject to the rulers and their commandments**. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers..." (Romans 13:1a) and "[s]ubmit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether

it be to the king, as supreme" (1 Peter 2:13). We ought to comply with the laws of the land. This will go a long way towards ensuring the proper regulation and orderly functioning of society (*including submitting to the regulations and restrictions during this pandemic time*). As Solomon wisely admonished, "I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment" (Ecclesiastes 8:2).

3. **Do not speak evil against the rulers**. "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought" (Ecclesiastes 10:20a). We ought to honour our rulers even in our thoughts, so we should not speak or write silly things against the rulers.

4. **Do not resist the rulers**. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans 13:2). It goes without saying that we should not join those demonstrators who protest or those who resist the rulers. Indeed, "My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change

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**WE OUGHT TO COMPLY WITH THE LAWS OF THE  
LAND. THIS WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS  
ENSURING THE PROPER REGULATION AND ORDERLY  
FUNCTIONING OF SOCIETY.**

(i.e. those who transgress a royal mandate)” (Proverbs 24:21).

5. **Pray for the rulers.** “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Timothy 2:1–2). We should pray that the rulers would love the people, do justice and do good things for the country.

6. **Be responsible for our votes in choosing the rulers.** The onus is on us to make sure that we vote for rulers who:

- have good morals and value highly the truth. “Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy” (Proverbs 20:28). We should not vote for rulers who support homosexuality, same-sex marriage, abortion, and other abominable practices.
- love the people and defend the poor. “The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever” (Proverbs 29:14).
- do justice without corruption. “The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it” (Proverbs 29:4).
- are wise and righteous. “A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment

scattereth away all evil with his eyes... A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them” (Proverbs 20:8, 26).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event that the rulers command us to do things against God and His Truth, we are to honour and obey the Lord, the King of kings, above all else. When the Jewish rulers commanded the disciples not to preach Jesus Christ and His Gospel, “Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). When King Nebuchadnezzar commanded all to worship his idol, Daniel’s three friends said to him, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:17–18).

As God’s saints living in the midst of the respective societies which God has placed us in, we bear good testimony to our Lord Jesus Christ by honouring the rulers—only according to God’s Word. ☞

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**REV. HIEN NGUYEN** is the pastor of Brisbane Bible-Presbyterian Church in Australia.

**Answers to Bible Trivia—Numbers 26  
(Vol. 21, Iss. 4, p. 49)**

**Part A:** 1) 43,730; 2) Simeon; 3) 40,500; 4) 76,500; 5) 64,300; 6) Zebulun; 7) 52,700; 8) Ephraim; 9) 45,600; 10) Dan; 11) 53,400; 12) Naphtali; Total in Israel: 601,730

**Part B:** 1) Moses; 2) Joshua; 3) Caleb

# BIBLE TRIVIA

## NUMBERS 27:15–23

SARAH YONG

### The Appointment of A New Leader

As a result of Moses' sin borne out of provoked anger, he was forbidden from entering the Promised Land. As such, a new leader was to be chosen to lead the children of Israel forward.

- A. Read the Bible passage in question, and then complete the activity by filling in the blanks using words found in the textbox below (note: some words may be used more than once).

before	bring	give	go	lead
lay	over	put	set	take

**And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying...**

**And the LORD said unto Moses...**

Let the LORD God \_\_\_\_\_ a man \_\_\_\_\_ the congregation, which may go out \_\_\_\_\_ them, and which may \_\_\_\_\_ in before them, and which may \_\_\_\_\_ them out, and which may \_\_\_\_\_ them in.

\_\_\_\_\_ Joshua the son of Nun, and \_\_\_\_\_ thine hand upon him; and \_\_\_\_\_ him before Eleazar the priest, and \_\_\_\_\_ all the congregation; and \_\_\_\_\_ him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt \_\_\_\_\_ some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation may be obedient.

- B. Read Deuteronomy 34:9 and complete the verse.

And Joshua the son of Nun was \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel \_\_\_\_\_ , and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

# HUDSON TAYLOR (1832-1905) PART IX

**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

Finally, the militias, together with Burdon and Hudson, arrived at the magistrate’s office. They passed through some huge gates and came within view of a large Chinese tablet inscribed with the words, “ming chi fu mu” (the father and mother of the people). Upon seeing that, Burdon and Hudson were confident that they were truly in the residence of a high-ranking mandarin.

At the entrance, the militias went in with their name cards while both young men waited. Within minutes, they were invited to meet Ch’en Ta Lao-ie (the Great Venerable Father Ch’en), who was once Tao-tai (an official who is in charge of the civil and military affairs of a few territorial departments) of Shanghai. Both young men knew that they would not be poorly treated as this mandarin would understand the importance of being respectful to foreigners.

They were perfectly right. The mandarin in front of them appeared to be the highest-ranking official in Tungchow, for he wore a cap with an opaque blue button on it. He greeted them with a wide smile and said warmly, “Welcome, sirs, to our residence. Allow me to provide tea and refreshments after your long journey. This way, please.” The mandarin led Hudson and Burdon to a private room in an inner apartment. After they had settled down, Hudson spoke in an earnest voice, “Ch’en Ta Lao-ie, thank you for giving us your time. This is my fellow missionary, Mr Burdon. We came to Tungchow to preach the Gospel to your people. I hope you do not mind if we give you a few copies of the books and tracts that we’ve brought along.”

“Thank you very much. You may leave them here,” replied the mandarin politely.

Hudson attempted to briefly explain what was written in the tracts and books they had just given to him. The mandarin gave them his full attention, and so did the other officials who accompanied him at the reception. Thereafter, two servants came in bearing platters of steaming buns and dumplings, as well as cups of aromatic tea. Hudson could almost hear his stomach rumbling. The young missionaries were indeed grateful for some food and rest after spending long hours on the road. They were not disappointed, for they had a really wonderful and refreshing time, after which both sought permission to visit the city, and to give away the tracts and books before they returned to Shanghai. At the same time, they informed the mandarin of the rough treatment by the militias and pleaded with him to provide them with protection in the city. The mandarin



kindly agreed to all their requests and personally saw them off at the steps of his official residence.

Shortly, they were on their way, seated on chairs carried by coolies. There were even runners ahead who used their pigtailed to pave the way for the two missionaries. "Swish, swish" went the pigtailed like whips, on the shoulders of people who blocked their path. It was indeed an amusing sight! Eventually, both young men were thankful to be able to locate their hired wheelbarrow men. To their joy, an attendant had also been ordered by the magistrate's office to accompany them midway to the river, where they got into their boats and set sail for their return trip. "All praise to Thee, Heavenly Father, for your gracious protection and deliverance!" Hudson rejoiced, looking forward to more opportunities to preach the Gospel to the people of China – the land of his service to God.

After his eventful trip to Tungchow, Hudson certainly did not let up on his evangelistic plans. He spent the whole summer making great efforts to venture, once again, into inland China, particularly Nanking, which was about 200 miles of Shanghai. The Taiping rebels had made their headquarters there, and Hudson wanted so much to meet with them to share the Gospel. However, he did not make any headway and after a while, had to give up the idea.

Unknown to Hudson, the Rev. William Burns of the English Presbyterian Mission was making similar moves to reach out to the Taiping rebels. He too was disappointed when it became clear that it was impossible to visit the Taiping rebels to speak a word for Christ. Rev. Burns finally decided to stay on in Shanghai for a while to carry out some evangelistic work.

It was in autumn of that year when Hudson met Rev. Burns. Hudson was pleased to find a kindred spirit in a land far away from home. With thanksgiving in his heart, he prayed to the Lord: "Oh Heavenly Father! It is truly Thy Providence that brought Rev. Burns into our midst. What a beloved and God-fearing man he is! Help me to learn from Thy servant, Rev. Burns, that I may love and serve Thee effectively. In Christ's name, I commit our combined evangelistic efforts unto Thy good hands. Amen."

By now, Hudson had decided to follow the advice of the Rev. Dr Medhurst, a highly-respected leader of the London Mission to adopt the attire of the local Chinese. Except for his grey-blue eyes, Hudson looked every inch like any of the natives. Gone was his sandy-coloured curly hair! Instead, his head was clean shaven, with a pigtail hanging from his crown. He had also given up his usual English clothing for good, and donned a long blue gown. As for footwear, he felt very much at home in a pair of cotton slippers. What a transformation!

Hudson was happy to abandon his English attire for the sake of the Gospel. In fact, when he and Rev. Burns first travelled to the different cities and towns to evangelise, the natives were so warm towards Hudson, clasping his hands and



inviting him into their homes. Oftentimes, with big smiles on their faces, they would say, "Welcome, welcome to our home. We are honoured to have you. Please come in and we would like to hear you speak." On the other hand, Rev. Burns was told, "We are so sorry, there are just too many people here. Please wait outside for a while." Not only was Rev. Burns not given a warm and friendly reception, he was also harassed by some inquisitive and rude children, who repeatedly pointed and laughed at his English attire. Rev. Burns, being a spiritual man, did not take offence but considered the matter carefully and, in the end, he too decided to follow the Chinese way of dressing. He humbly acknowledged before God, "Thank Thee, Lord, for teaching me to follow the example of my young friend and companion, Hudson. Though youthful, he has much wisdom in this matter."

Glad to work alongside one another, both Rev. Burns and Hudson travelled in their boats to visit the various towns and cities to preach the Word. Many happy



**Rev. William Burns**  
in the local Chinese Attire

days were spent praying for God's blessing, taking turns to speak to the residents about Christ and His love, enjoying fellowship over meals, as well as visiting teashops to meet with the locals so as to share the Gospel and distribute the Scriptures and books to those who were keen to learn more.

As both missionaries laboured on, the truth of God's Word in Luke 10:2 came through loud and clear: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few". Rev. Burns was moved to pray, "Almighty God, thank you for so many folks who are so willing to hear Thy Word. Oh, send forth Thy Holy Spirit to open their eyes to see the Truth. Please help us, for we can do nothing without you. Though we may be feeble and few in number, use us Lord for the glory of Thy kingdom. In Christ's precious name we pray. Amen!"

Much strengthened by God's Word and prayer, Rev. Burns and Hudson entered yet another town by the name of Wuchen, also commonly known as "Black Town". True to its name, this town was notorious as a den of salt smugglers and many other wild and lawless people. Who knew what might await anyone who ventured into such a wicked place?



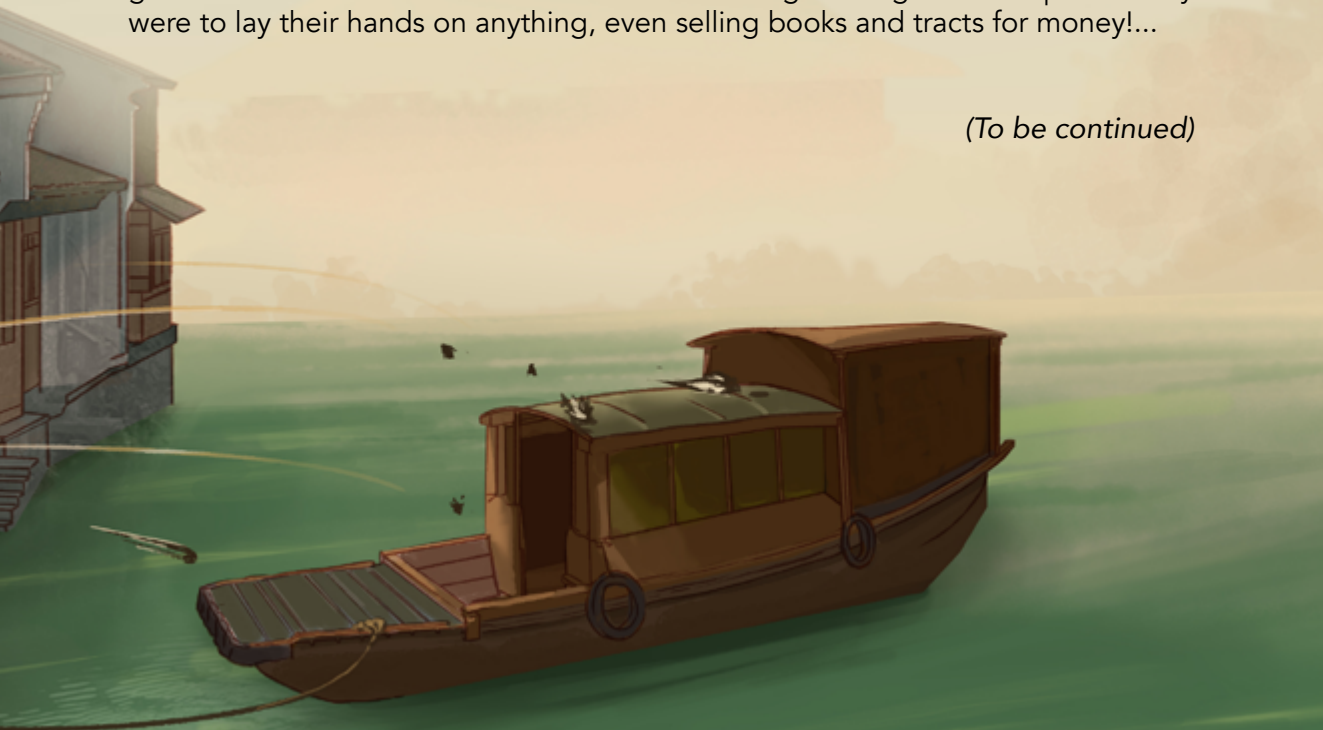
Surprisingly, the first two days of witnessing to the locals went very well. With the help of two natives named Tsien and Kuei-hua (who were the early converts), the two missionaries spoke to the people of Wuchen and distributed many tracts. They were delighted with the good number of hours of fruitful labour that the Lord had allowed them to carry out. However, this peaceful state didn't last long...

On the third day, after having spoken to two separate groups of people about the Gospel, Rev. Burns and Hudson decided to take a break and have their lunch. Hudson went back to his boat and was about to enjoy his favourite tea when he heard a great commotion outside. "Thump! thump! thump!" All of a sudden, the roof of the boat started to cave in. Hudson jumped to his feet and ran out to investigate. Outside the door stood about five men who were jabbering away and simultaneously taking aim at the boat with huge lumps of frozen earth. Hudson stared at them in confusion, his heart racing.

"Please do not destroy my boat further, sirs. This is my only means of transport!" Hudson pleaded with them as he prayed silently for God's help to restrain these evil men.

Just then, Tsien, their native helper came by with the help of a passing boat, and started engaging those aggressive men in a conversation. He was heard saying to them, "Hey, brothers, don't be angry. Just take these tracts for now. Our supply of books is low. The next time, please. Is it fine with you?" Tsien hastily pressed some tracts into their hands and they left shortly after. Later, they learned that three of the men were salt smugglers while the remaining two were natives of Wuchen. They attacked Hudson's boat because they could not get hold of the great number of books that the missionaries brought along. How desperate they were to lay their hands on anything, even selling books and tracts for money!...

*(To be continued)*





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