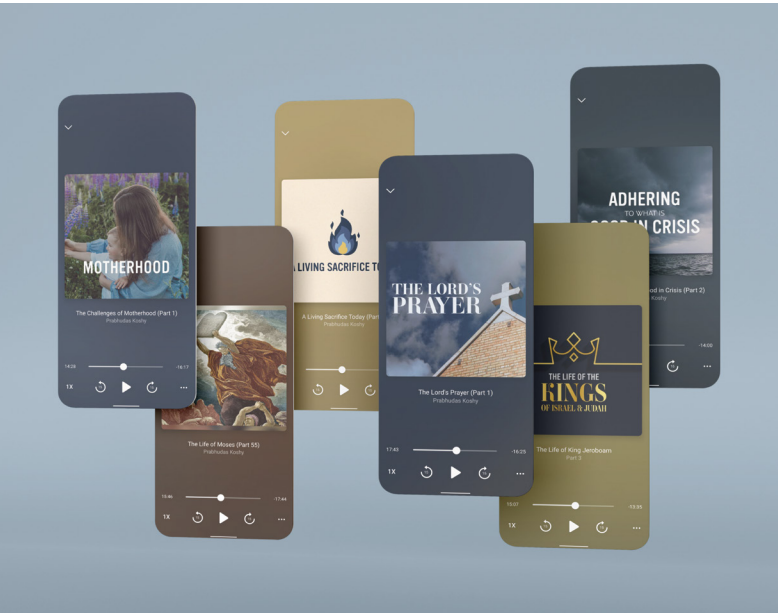


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FOR FAITHFUL LIVING**



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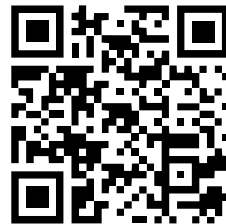
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On the Cover ▲

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”
—Psalm 84:11



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All articles in this issue were written by the Rev. Dr Prabhudas Koshy, Pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church and Editor of the Bible Witness Magazine.

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NO GOOD THING WILL HE WITHHOLD!

PSALM 84:11

When doubts and fear assail our hearts in the face of great financial need in the support of church ministries and overseas mission stations, we do well to seek strengthening from God's precious promises through His Word. Let us meditate on and apply one such promise—Psalm 84:11—into our hearts, that we may receive divine empowerment to be strong in faith and be committed to the work in a manner worthy of God's calling.

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11).

A SUN AND SHIELD

The sun, which is most majestic among all inanimate creatures, is regarded as a token of all manner of excellency, provision and prosperity. The sun is the ultimate source of every form of energy existing in the physical world! We observe in Revelation 21:23 that when finally we shall live in God's presence for ever in heaven, we shall be rid of all our needs and sorrows in the heavenly city, where our Lord Himself shall be its light and glory. “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Clearly, the emblem of the sun conveys the impressive truth that by His light, we shall be led and cared for.

Come to think of it, every time you lift your arm, or take a step, you are drawing on the energy the sun has given you. The vegetables, grains and fruits we feed on derive their growth from

the rays of the sun. What an emblem of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being! The Lord is not only our Provider, but also our Protector. He is “a sun and shield” to us. “The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in” (Psalm 121:8a). “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways... lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Psalm 91:11–12).

Yes, the LORD God is a shield. He is a shield against our chief enemy, the devil. Satan's dislike and malice is principally levelled at us when we become subjects of divine influence. Remember his malice against Jesus' disciple, Peter? “Simon, Simon,” said our Saviour, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift thee as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31–32a). The Lord had been a shield to His dear disciple's faith. Otherwise, the believer's faith would have been decimated!

Imagine what great prospect we have when these two characteristics of God combine together to act on our behalf! “For the LORD God is a sun and shield...” (v. 11a). O! the LORD is a sun above, and a shield around, us. He is a light to show the way and a shield to ward off its perils. It is a blessed experience to journey with such a Companion, to live and work with such a Master. None can fail under His supervision; none can have any reason to be discouraged.

GRACE AND GLORY

Further notice what we shall receive from the Hand of Him who is “a sun and shield” to us! He “will give grace and glory” (v. 11b). The Lord has both grace and glory in infinite abundance.

And Jesus is the fullness of both! As His people, we shall receive both grace and glory as free gifts from the God of our salvation. Under the name of “grace”, all spiritual good is wrapped up; under the name of “glory”, all eternal good is wrapped up!

O, God’s people, what more can we desire? We do not know anything better than this offer. This is more than what we can ever imagine. Indeed, the Lord has offered us the highest good! He gives us plenty of grace to labour and abound in God’s work. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). That’s not all. He also gives great glory to all who labour. For such abounding in good works manifests God’s favour in establishing the work of our hands. And that’s to our “glory”.

HE WITHHOLDS NOT GOOD

All who are committed to live a life that is worthy of the Lord can be

The Lord is not only our Provider, but also our Protector.

sure that He will not withhold good things from them—“... no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (v. 11c). When God gives us His grace, it makes us walk uprightly; this in turn secures every covenant blessing to us. What an all-encompassing promise (cf. Matthew 6:33)! God possesses all good, and there is no good apart from Him. There is no good which He will refuse them “that walk uprightly”. Our uprightness must be practical—we must walk in truth and holiness, then shall we be heirs of all things good.

Admittedly, God at times withholds riches, honours and bodily health from certain men who walk uprightly. Doesn’t this negate His promise? Now, we must realise that God’s good things for His people are not just material prosperity. There are greater good that God wants to bestow upon us which are spiritual and eternal. If at any time, the material good prevent our progress in the spiritual realm, He may withhold them, for they are not good ultimately. Thus, some apparent good may be withheld; but no real good will be denied us. The good things of God are chiefly peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Spirit in this life, and the consummate presence of God in the next. Surely, God will never bestow these good things upon the wicked; neither does He withhold them from the godly.

In the fulness of God’s time, all things good shall be in our actual possession. Meanwhile, according to our need and capacity for receiving, God shall measure out the divine bestowal. This is true, not of a favoured few, but of all the saints for evermore. ■

HATH GIVEN UNTO US ALL THINGS!

2 PETER 1:3

Are you anxious about tomorrow? Have you been asking yourself with a troubled heart: “Will my faith survive the crisis I’m facing?”; “Will I be able to overcome temptations?”; “Will I be able to provide for my family?”; “Will our church have the funds needed to sustain a Resource or Media Centre?” The apostle Peter has declared a very assuring truth that will help drive away doubt, anxiety and fear.

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

FULL PROVISION BY HIS DIVINE POWER

This assurance is undergirded by two great facts. The first biblical truth that Peter shares with us is that “his divine power” is at work for us. Can you truly fathom this infinite power of Christ at work for you? His limitless, irresistible, all-conquering, divine power is beyond our comprehension; it far surpasses what our finite minds can ever ask or think. If such a great power is working for you, there is no reason to be agitated, even in your most distressing situation. His divine power will make a way for you even through you have a sea of troubles before you.

The second comforting biblical truth in this verse is that “all things” are already “given unto us”. The phrase “all things” is emphatically placed in the original language of this verse. It is Peter’s desire that we will not miss the knowledge of God’s full provision for the practical living of our life and for our exercise of godliness. None of His children is deprived of obtaining the fully sufficient provisions of Christ’s divine power. All our needs, both physical and spiritual, are already taken care of. Nothing shall prevent their availability.

To tap into His wonderful provisions, Peter reminds us that it is “through the knowledge of him” that we will fulfil the ultimate purpose of our calling as Christians, which is “glory and virtue”. As we live in the intimate knowledge of Christ, we will experience the full provision of His power for a glorious and virtuous living. So, let us always show our faith in the might of the Lord. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10).

Scripture is replete with biblical examples of godly men who trusted in God’s unfailing power to do their tasks valiantly for His glory (e.g. David, King Asa, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest, among others).

So, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1a), may we thus be strengthened in our hearts to trust in the infinite power of God, that we might overcome the hurdles to achieve great things for the Lord. Brethren, be “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power” (Colossians 1:11a), and “Attempt great things for the Lord, expect great things from the Lord” (William Carey).

EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES

God has given unto us not only “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (v. 3a), but also His precious Word, “whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises” (v. 4a). Peter here says that all promises “are given unto us”. He uses the perfect tense of the verb to affirm God’s permanent bestowal of all His promises. Because God preserves His inspired Word through the ages till the end of times—yea, even every “jot” and “tittle” of His inspired Word (Matthew 5:18)—we can be absolutely sure that we have all His “exceeding great and precious promises”. Indeed, “The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:24b–25).

There are several reasons why the biblical promises are referred to as “exceeding great and precious”:

Firstly, they are God’s promises, and therefore His divine attributes are inherent in His promises. They are pure, true and faithful. “For all the promises

of God in him are yea, and in him Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20). Many things that men promise may never be given, but all of God’s promises will be fulfilled.

Secondly, the promises of God are timeless. Believers of every age and generation can say concerning the biblical promises that they “are given unto us”. Their relevance and efficiency shall not wane with time. With time, circumstances may change, but the promises of God are sufficient to help us to meet new challenges, needs and troubles.

Finally, the use of the linking word “whereby”, as the first word in v. 4, is instructive. It suggests that the promises of God are given so as to lead us to “glory and virtue” that are mentioned in the preceding verse (v. 3b). The purpose of which is: “that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature (cf. ‘glory’), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (cf. ‘virtue’).” To God be the glory! ■

With time, circumstances may change, but the promises of God are sufficient to help us to meet new challenges, needs and troubles.

OWE NO MAN ANY THING!

ROMANS 13:8

In these days, when there is a great material need in the ministries of the church, many would have no qualms in proposing that the church take loans from the bank with interest. Some more ‘discreet’ ones would propose that church leaders approach rich members of the church to take interest-free loans from them. They call it wise financial planning for the management of the church’s needs. Borrowing money has become a norm in many modern churches. In fact, don’t be surprised that there are very few churches without debt today!

BE DEBT-FREE!

Scripture, however, strongly speaks against being in debt—though it does not prohibit borrowing altogether. “Owe no man any thing...” (Romans 13:8a). Borrowing is always presented in the negative—“the borrower is servant to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7).

If our church borrows, we will have to be committed to the lender more than the advancement of the Gospel work. We will be compelled to consider repaying the lender, before attending to the material needs of church ministries and support of mission stations for the furtherance of the Gospel and edification of the believers. All our ministry decisions have to take a back

seat as debt payment overwhelms our minds, and cuts deep into church resources meant for ministry use. So, though borrowing per se is not a sin, let us not unwisely come under its domineering constraint. “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12).

No church that functions biblically would end up in debt, because God will provide for His work. Such confidence finds great support from the Bible. In Deuteronomy 28:12, God had promised His people that if they would obey His commandments, they wouldn’t have to borrow—“The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.” Indeed, over the course of the history of the Israelites, God had built three worship structures through His people—a tabernacle, and two temples. But never did He ever ask His people to build by making use of “credit facilities”!

We can trust God to keep His promise. Since He has promised to provide everything needed for His work, let us not wonder whether He wants us to borrow for the carrying



out of the ministries of His church. Our Lord Jesus, the Head of the church, will fill us with all things needed for the functioning of His body, the church. Let us thereby trust in His provision through “the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:23).

BE GIVERS, NOT BORROWERS!

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another”. One way to exhibit love is by giving. The biblical alternative to borrowing is generous giving by God’s people. Christians are to give in a generous, joyous, sacrificial way, in accordance with what God has blessed and by the leading of His Spirit. This is what believers of the Old Testament and the early Christians did. Sadly, there is a great difference between the early Christians and many modern Christians in their attitude towards giving. Most Christians of our time are

very calculating and hesitant to give sacrificially, whereas most of the early Christians would give sacrificially, even all that they got, by selling all that they had (cf. Acts 2:45; 4:34–35).

If God would call us to undertake a great task for His glory, He can accomplish it through the resources and gifts of His people.

If only Christians would give as God clearly instructs them to, there would never be a need for churches to borrow. Come to think of it, the needs of the church are opportunities to exercise our faith and duties. If God would call us to undertake a great task for His glory, He can accomplish it through the resources and gifts of His people. If we are willing to be used and be spent for the Lord, He will strengthen us even more to give, for the Gospel’s sake.

BE GENEROUS GIVERS!

Following are some biblical guidelines to be generous givers for the glory of the Lord and for the support of His church.

Remember that all our wealth and possessions belong to God.

Our attitude with regard to our assets is revealing. If we think that all of our possessions are ours, we will not get anywhere. Scripture reminds us: “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:8). We need to start with an attitude which recognises that our assets belong to God. “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1). Then we will be motivated to give generously by saying, “If He gave me all these things, what right have I to keep them from Him, when His work requires them?”

May this biblical conviction motivate us, as it did King David, who confessed that he and his people gave generously because they acknowledged that God had blessed them with whatever they possessed. “Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my

people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee” (1 Chronicles 29:13–14).

Recognise that giving according to God’s will today is more important than securing wealth for tomorrow.

We cannot put concern for our assets before the present needs in God’s kingdom. Only faithless people and immature Christians would ignore the will of God for the sake of their future material prosperity. God rebuked the Israelites who did not bring their tithes and offerings appropriately and adequately to the temple. He called them robbers. “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8).

Scripture reminds us that we should never hold back our hands from helping someone who approaches us with a real need. “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee” (Proverbs 3:27–28). This is a sin, as James admonishes us: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). Hence Paul urges the saints, “that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (1 Timothy 6:18).

When we give, let us not worry about our future need.

Many hesitate to give generously and sacrificially, because they worry that if they give, they will not have sufficient

funds for their future needs. But Scripture assures us, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9–10).

To the Philippian church, which gave abundantly to the ministry—though experiencing “great trial of affliction” and “deep poverty” (2 Corinthians 8:2), the apostle Paul assured them, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Such promise is also for us today! May the Spirit of God direct us to take some of our assets, which we have categorised for investments, to give to the Lord’s work. It is God’s business to see to our need. We are not to worry for the future.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, it is not how much you give that matters, but the attitude of your giving. 2 Corinthians 9:7 tells us, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” If we exercise the above biblical guidelines concerning giving, the Lord will strengthen and enable us to “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). ■

TRUST NOT IN UNCERTAIN RICHES!

1 TIMOTHY 6:17–18

If the Lord has given you good health and wisdom to earn money, enabling you to have enough for your needful expenditure, even leaving you with surplus savings, what shall you do with your riches? The apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy 6:17–18, gives us the pure and perfect wisdom of God concerning how Christians ought to lay up their treasures: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate”.

RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARDS RICHES

The first attitude is that “they be not highminded”. As an old saying goes, “The mind grows wanton in prosperity, for it is hard to endure good fortune with calmness.” Abundance of money often makes people very proud of their achievements and causes them to consider themselves better than others. Ego compels them to live a luxurious life. The increasing prosperity and luxury invariably inflate the pride,

which consequently hardens and debases our hearts. So if you have wealth, do not glory in it.

The second attitude is that we “**trust (not) in uncertain riches, but in the living God**”. Have you heard the saying, “Treat money like your God, and it will plague you like the devil”? The reason for such miserable ordeals in the life of a lover of money is that he is trusting in “uncertain riches”. The Book of Proverbs warns us, “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (Proverbs 23:5). Since “riches are not for ever” (Proverbs 27:24a), we therefore should trust God more than our wealth. It is our living God “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (v. 17c). Our trust in God can only be verified if we by our lives prove that God, and not money, is our Master. Don’t let money be your master, but let it be your servant. It will do us much good if we can remember Martin Luther’s words: “God only, and not wealth, maintains the world; riches merely make people proud and lazy.”

The third attitude is that “**they do good, that they be rich in good works**”. The love of money is the parent of all wickedness. J.C. Ryle said, “Nothing I am sure has such a tendency to quench the fire of religion as the possession of money.” We must not allow the wealth that we have to affect our spiritual and moral commitment. Money is given unto us, that we may increase in “good works”. Good works are the fulfilment of the Lord’s will concerning us. Every work of self-gain and self-glory is evil work. Always remember that your money is to help you further God’s will. We can never

be used or blessed by the Lord, if we do not have a full commitment to give all for His glory.

The fourth attitude is that we must be “**ready to distribute, willing to communicate**”. When we receive money, most of us immediately think of the best way of keeping or multiplying it. It is wrong to withhold from the needy, when the Lord has not withheld it from us though it was more than sufficient for all our needs. The Scriptural exhortation is: “distributing to the necessity of saints” (Romans 12:13), and “to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). More blessings come from giving than receiving (cf. Acts 20:35). Give according to your income, lest God make your income according to your giving! The right mindset is: “Get all you can, save all you can, and give all you can” (John Wesley). Note this attitude of giving must be accompanied with “readiness” and “willingness”. The words “ready” and “willing” in v. 18 call us not to delay when it comes to giving to the needs of the Lord’s work or for the poor. We should give as we would receive—cheerfully, quickly and without hesitation.

LAYING UP RICHES IN HEAVEN

“Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:19). These further words of Paul assure us that if we cultivate the right attitude about investing the money we have (as per Scriptural teaching), we shall have “a good foundation against the time to



come”—not only for the rest of the time in this world, but also for eternity.

This biblical attitude has also been corroborated through our Lord Jesus’ teachings. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:19–20). Jesus also taught us that He will reward us—“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42).

We therefore do well to heed Paul’s exhortation to the Galatian Christians: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if

we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9–10). That is biblical investing of our lives and resources for sure returns! ■

THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL!

1 CORINTHIANS 4:2

“**M**oreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Throughout biblical history, there have been faithful men of God, whose top priority was to serve their heavenly Father faithfully in their endeavours. They differed from one another, but there are at least seven things they all had in common. These seven common traits may be labelled as principles for faithful living, as will be discussed below.

HAVE A SENSE OF PURPOSE

The first requirement for faithfulness is a sense of purpose. It is helpful to determine what is the objective of our life. The Christian needs to establish ideals. As Paul said, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air” (1 Corinthians 9:26). He had a specific goal in his life for Christ the Lord. This represented the picture of what he wanted to become. One thing is certain—we will never labour for something more than our ideals. Therefore, let us set our ideals high so that even if we fail to attain all, we achieve more than we would with lesser goals.

Purposefulness does not mean we must have a long list of things we want

to do. It can be a simple, God-centred statement as “I come to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:9). Whatever you choose as the motto of your life (which can be a verse from the Bible), it should be Christ-centred. Having established our objectives, we need to continually review them. Only by constantly focusing our minds on the goal shall it ever be attained. Being continually reminded of the goals we are striving for in our Christian life will help us overcome temptations and trials that can distract us from our spiritual pursuit. They provide a target to aim at.

STRIVE FOR SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE

Ideals, however, are meaningless unless we strive to attain them. Once we determine what manner of person we desire to be, we need to strive to be the best of that kind of person, by trusting in the grace of God. The flawless model for the Christian is Jesus our Lord. The apostle Paul not only endeavoured to personally copy Christ but encouraged others to do likewise: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Striving for spiritual excellence is what Paul urges in Romans 12:6–8, 11, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether



prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness... Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”.

SURRENDER ALL

Christian ideals can be achieved only through a life of surrender, continually yielding oneself to the Lord and His will. To be a surrendered Christian means to give of oneself and one’s possessions to the Lord and service of His church. Our consecration in service is reflected by how much we put in, and most importantly, how much of our heart is in that contribution. Moses is one

biblical example of a surrendered Christian. He surrendered all the glittering material glory of Egypt and yielded his life totally to the glory of the invisible One who has called Him (cf. Hebrews 11:25–27).

The Christian life is a journey of surrender and unreserved offering to the Lord at every stage of life. Christ must have absolute authority over a Christian’s life. No matter what may be the yoke he has to bear, he must yield himself with the assurance that Christ will fill him with His glory. The contributions we make to the Lord’s cause are not only financial; they also include the dedicating of our time, talents, influence. The familiar words of a well-known hymn sum it up best: “Take my life... my hands... my feet... my voice... my lips... my silver and my gold... my love... myself—and I will be ever, only, all for thee”.

ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY

It is one thing to make a commitment to a life of surrender, but another to carry out that commitment in real life. We must take personal responsibility for doing that which we have promised (cf. Ecclesiastes 5:4–5). To carry out our personal responsibility faithfully, we must avoid three common pitfalls: making excuses; blaming others; and focusing on problems rather than solutions. If the Christian continually succumbs to these pitfalls, how can he be entrusted with the immensely greater responsibilities of reigning with Christ in the life to come?

The measure of our accepting responsibility in the present is the measure by which we shall be judged as to our future work for the Lord. “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). This principle is well illustrated in the Parable of the Talents, where “His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21). By taking responsibility in keeping to his commitment, the Christian can finish his course faithfully and joyfully.

MAKE STRENUOUS EFFORT

Consecrated living requires dogged commitment. Faithfulness is not proven in the “sunshine” of life, but demonstrated during the “dark storms” of trial and trouble. Trusting God where He cannot be traced, following the footsteps of Christ when they

lead through misunderstanding and persecution, proving faithful when faith itself is weak—these are the true tests of Christian character.

Paul’s stirring recount of his trying experiences in 2 Corinthians 11:23–28 shows the strenuous efforts he made in manifesting his faithfulness: “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, ... in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

**The Christian life is
a journey of surrender
and unreserved
offering to the Lord at
every stage of life.**

Despite overcoming the odds through such perils, Paul did not feel confident of having achieved the victory, but said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Philippians 3:13). And again he said, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27). Unflagging effort is required, not just for the short run but over the entire Christian race. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

MANAGE YOUR TIME WISELY

Time is the Christian’s rich asset. The world has many allurements to attract our attention and call for our time. Many of these are necessary things. We all need time for work, for eating, for sleep. If we have a home, its upkeep does take time. If we have a family, they justly make demands of our time. The admonition of the apostle Paul is clear: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16). Management of the 24 hours we are given daily is a formidable task that requires prioritisation and is a mark of our faithful stewardship.

SELF-EXAMINE CONSTANTLY

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5a). Because the Christian race is a lifelong one and requires the Christian to keep his eye

on the goal, it is well that he often assesses his spiritual condition. When we find ourselves slacking, it is time to rededicate and call to mind our original commitment. Self-examination needs to be a constant matter of prayer, for we often do not know our own heart. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). It is comforting in this regard to recall the words of John, “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God” (1 John 3:20–21).

Self-examination should lead to renewed effort and not to a state of depression. Our goals are worthy goals. Our race is an honourable race which requires constant diligence. We need to examine our heart to see if the motive is pure. We need to examine our service to see if we are yielding our all. We need to examine God’s Word to see if we correctly understand its principles.

CONCLUSION

Faithfulness, then, requires steady application of spiritual principles. Having established a sense of purpose, let us strive for excellence by committing ourselves to it and taking the responsibility thereof with great effort so that, through proper management of our time and through constant self-examination, we may obtain the prize set before us. Let us, like the apostle Paul, “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). ■



TESTIMONIES

FROM PARTICIPANTS OF THE BIBLE WITNESS
ISRAEL BIBLE STUDY TOUR 2023

Abigail Koshy

I really thank God for a wonderful time in Israel as part of the Bible Witness Israel Bible Study Tour 2023. It was a blessed eight days in the Promised Land, tracing biblical events in God’s promised land for Israel. Visiting the Promised Land has always been my earnest desire, and I am thankful to the Lord for the answered prayer to go as a family this year. God has provided

for all our needs along the way, and given us the strength to carry the little ones in all our travels. Praise the Lord for endurance, safety and good health. Each day was fast-paced and filled with many places to see—from Joppa (near Tel Aviv) to the Sea of Galilee and the surrounding towns where Jesus had ministered. Enroute to Jerusalem, we crossed through the Judean wilderness (present-day West Bank), walked through the old city and the city of

David, and visited significant sites around the Dead Sea.

The Bible indeed comes alive! Most places we visited were archaeological excavations of biblical cities, and various locations of biblical events. I was struck by the beauty of the land: the olive trees and palm dates, vast lakes and bountiful springs, as well as the rolling wilderness and arid weather. I loved its topography: vast hills and valleys, deserts, plains, lakes and seas—places which our Saviour trod and travelled across during His earthly ministry. Above all the sights, most of which are overrun by sheer idolatry and vendors seeking the tourist dollar, one thing stands out clear to all who believe in the Truth: “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

Finally, I thank God for our very knowledgeable Jewish tour guide who, along with Pastor’s daily devotions, made the trip an in-depth Bible Study in a moving “classroom”. May our continual prayer be: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces” (Psalm 122:6–7).

Pr Cornelius Koshy

I thank God for the grand opportunity to go through Ethiopia and visit the brethren who serve in the Gethsemane Church and GBI campus in Alem Gena. Ethiopian Airlines’ resumption of

the route from Singapore to Tel Aviv (through Addis Ababa) was just in time for the BW Study Tour to Israel—praise the LORD! As Paul says, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). We seized this opportunity to show our love to our fellow Ethiopian brethren (cf. Romans 12:9a—“Let love be without dissimulation”), and to spend time in worship and thanksgiving for God’s faithfulness through the past 17 years! I also thank God for nine GCC singers who cheerfully sang the encouraging hymn, “He Leadeth Me”, bringing a part of Singapore-style singing to brethren in Ethiopia. The whole team was treated to a sumptuous spread of authentic Ethiopian cuisine, which was concluded with live-roasted, ground and brewed Ethiopian coffee!

The bus ride back to Bole International Airport for our connecting flight to Israel was a test of faith! We did not anticipate an afternoon traffic congestion, and many of us were anxious because we had only about two hours to travel back to the capital (Addis Ababa), get our luggage and check in to the next flight. Some urged the driver to “go fast!”; others tried to contact the airline. Everyone prayed earnestly, and when we finally reached the airport, Pastor led us in a prayer of thanksgiving, and the team moved quickly as one unit to the gate. We praise the Lord for truly, “He leadeth me, O blessed thought ... By his own hand, he leadeth me!”

On a personal note, I thank God for this third visit to the Holy Land, which strengthened my geographical knowledge of the biblical accounts.

At each site, I was transported back to its biblical narratives, and my heart was encouraged by the spiritual lessons and promises attached to each location. There was also a renewal of eschatological anticipation for Christ’s return during this trip. Apart from visiting Meggido, where the nations’ armies would gather to battle Christ (Revelation 16:16), we spent an hour in a private garden in Gethsemane, on the western slope of Mt Olive. This was a special booking made possible by the tour agent. Gethsemane (church) was in Gethsemane (cf. Luke 22:42)! Pastor exhorted from Zechariah 12–14 and we contemplated Christ’s second coming, which would unfold in the very space and land where we were. Such contemplations, made in meaningful places, tend to be etched deeply and enduringly in one’s mind.

May the joys of living in Christ and our love for Him endure all the way till He calls us home, or when He returns! All glory be to God!

Dns Diana Chan

Glory be to the Holy One of Israel, our Redeemer! I thank God for His grace, mercy and strength in enabling me to join the Bible Witness Israel Bible Study Tour 2023. The main reason for me joining the tour is that I would like to visit Gethsemane BPC, Ethiopia, which was our transit point on our way to Israel.

When we were in Ethiopia, it was a joy to meet Rev. Ephrem, Pr Engida, and the other preachers and their family members, as well as several of the church brethren! It was so heart-

warming to see how the brethren were so formally attired, so cheerful and ready to receive us. I praise God that both the brethren from Ethiopia and Singapore could congregate for worship in the church in Alem Gena, led by Pastor Koshy who also preached the Word of God. Praise God for a song item rendered by Pr Cornelius and Sis. Abigail, as well as a song presentation by our Church Choir members who were there. Thank God also for the Christian hospitality of the Ethiopian brethren who hosted us to a lovely lunch.

I thank God for Pastor and Dn Lok for their labour in planning and organising the tour, even having to make ad-hoc changes during our journey. Thank God for His grace, good health and protection throughout the trip. Praise God for the unity, encouragement and care for one another. It was encouraging to see the stronger adults helping and supporting our senior brethren, especially in manoeuvring difficult terrain and steps. Special mention must be made of the young adults who constantly availed themselves, ever ready to provide additional help.

Praise the Lord for the lessons learnt from GBI on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah, as well as 1 Samuel. Biblical history was brought to life as we journeyed through the land of the Old and New Testaments. The various sites, such as the wilderness of Judea, Ziph, and Gibeath, brought to mind how David and his six hundred men had to flee from King Saul and his three thousand soldiers in the wilderness, desert, hills and caves. Praise God for preserving His servant, David, and his loyal men. Indeed, “God is our refuge

and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

Almost every morning, before embarking on the journey, we would assemble in quietude in a room. Pastor would lead us in singing, devotion and prayer, and remind us to focus our minds on God in the Bible Study tour. I also thank God for the culminating point at the end of our tour, which was our worship in the chapel at the Garden Tomb. We had Holy Communion, in remembrance of God’s plan of salvation for mankind through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, for our sins. May the remembrance of the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, continue to spur us to love the Lord, trust in Him and serve Him.

To God be the glory,
great things He had done!

Pr Edsel Locot

I praise and thank God for granting me and my family the privilege to join the recent BW Israel Bible Study Tour. I praise God for providing all our needs. I also want to thank Pastor Koshy and family for hosting us and taking care of us while we were in Singapore.

My wife and I are so happy that aside from going to Israel, we could also go and visit the mission station in Alem Gena, Ethiopia. As we entered the premises of the mission station, my heart was filled with joy and excitement to see my fellow missionaries, especially Pr Bayera and Pr Bedada whom I met for the first time. As we were fellowshiping, I was

so happy to see little Theophilus and little Eunice interacting and mingling with the little ones from Alem Gena. As we worshipped the Lord, my heart was filled with awe concerning how the Lord had made a way in gathering us together for worship. I praise God for the hospitality of our Ethiopian brethren, who provided us with a very delicious Ethiopian lunch.

Throughout the entire Study Tour, I was so amazed by how God had enabled the Zionist Jews to return to Israel and reclaim their land with the Bible as their only proof of ownership. I found it interesting that while the Arabs do not accept the Bible, the Zionist Jews have been further backed by archaeology, which serves as supplementary proof. The land of Israel is rich in Biblical archaeological sites, and I’m sure many more shall be uncovered in the future. Indeed, the places and names mentioned in the Bible are not fictional or mythical, but factual and authentic, proven by archaeology. I am so privileged to see with my own eyes the many Biblical archaeological sites in Israel, which help me to have a deeper understanding of the Scriptures.

Of the many archaeological sites that we visited, I like to mention two that struck me very much as a preacher. As we stepped on the top of Mount Carmel, the LORD God reminded me of how blessed I am for knowing Him and for serving Him as the One Living and True God. Then, as we went to the ruins of the town of Chorazin, my heart was again filled with thanksgiving to God for enabling me to receive and believe the Gospel being preached to me many years ago. I could have been so stubborn and arrogant like the people

of Chorazin by refusing the Gospel and rejecting Christ. But through His regenerating power, I was justified and reconciled to God, enjoying now the hope of eternal life in heaven and no more being under God’s curse.

As I reflect upon the many historical periods of Israel, I am confronted with the reality that all the great men of yesteryears were all gone, but the LORD our God remains the same. As the Word of God says in Psalm 90:1–2, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

All praise and glory to God for this blessed opportunity!

Juvy Locot

I praise and thank God for giving us the opportunity to join the Bible Witness Israel Bible Study Tour. When Pastor Koshy told us about it, I could not contain my joy; I could not help but shout and jump in expressing my delight, for it is such an indescribable blessing we received!

It was an added joy also when we found out that we would be also visiting the mission church in Ethiopia. Finally, I would be able to meet the missionaries with their families and the brethren there, and see the mission church in that part of the world. Indeed, what a blessed time of fellowship we had, though it was short. Such sweet fellowship in the Lord truly gives us joy and encouragement.

How grateful and thankful I am to witness the places where I could only read about before in the Bible. It is such a great encouragement and a revival to us (as a missionary couple) to walk where our Saviour walked. We had been through a lot of trying moments in the mission field that caused us some discouragement and disappointment, but the Lord is so good to revive and renew us.

Throughout the trip the Lord made me realise one thing, that is “my calling”—my calling to teach the children, as a wife, as a mother and as a child of God. This was especially so when we went to the Nazareth village, wherein the tour guide Daniel explained to us about the process of producing olive oil. The olives are smashed and pressed hard for hours to produce good oil, and he said the meaning of “Gethsemane” is oil press. It was in Gethsemane wherein Jesus had prayed many times, and it was there that He said, “not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

To be sure, many are the difficulties and hardships God may allow to press us, but they are only purposed by God to produce “good oil” in us, that we may continue to grow to be more like our Master. In serving Him, difficulties, trials and persecutions are to be expected, but we must imitate what our Saviour did—to be focused only on doing His purposes and will, which is what the LORD pleases—until His return or when He calls us home.

Judy Chan

Praise the Lord for a very blessed time spent in our mission church

in Alem Gena, as part of the recent Bible Study Tour in Israel. I was very moved by the hospitality and love extended to us by our missionaries in Ethiopia. Through the fellowship with the brethren in the mission field, I learned about contentment—“But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).

God has also blessed me with many spiritual lessons through the Israel Bible Study Tour. The two main lessons I’ve gleaned are:

1) Saving faith. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). We believe in God, not because

we have seen some physical, tangible evidence, but because we have heard His Word faithfully preached in the church! “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

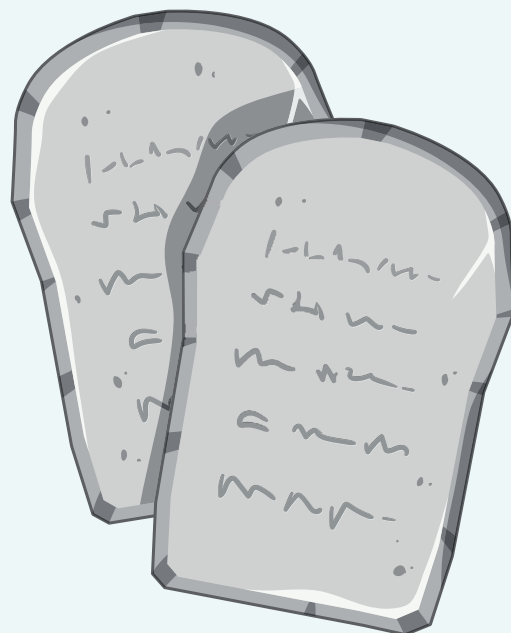
2) Be doers of the Word. “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). My faith will be in vain if I only know but not do His Word!

Praise the Lord for His sustaining grace and wisdom upon Pastor, Dn Lok and all brethren involved in the planning of this trip! May the Lord’s goodness unto us in this trip be gratefully remembered. “O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 136:1).

BIBLE TRIVIA— DEUTERONOMY 30

SARAH YONG

Moses continued to exhort the children of Israel to obey God in order to enjoy His blessings. Read the verses from Deuteronomy 30 (indicated in brackets), and then fill in the blanks on the facing page to complete each statement.



The LORD their God will...

- _____ Israel’s captivity,
- have _____ upon them
- return and _____ them from all the nations, whither the LORD hath _____ them.

(Verse 3)

- _____ them back into the Promised land, and they shall _____ it
- do them good and _____ them.

(Verse 5)

- _____ their hearts, that they may _____ the LORD with all their heart and soul.

(Verse 6)

- make them _____ in every _____ of their hand
- again _____ over them for good.

(Verse 9)

The children of Israel were supposed to...

- return and _____ the voice of the LORD
- do all His _____ that Moses had commanded them.

(Verse 8)

- _____ the LORD their God
- _____ in His ways
- _____ His commandments, statutes and judgments.

(Verse 16)

- _____ life, that both they and their children may live
- _____ His voice and _____ unto Him, “for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them”.

(Verses 19–20)

Answers to Bible Trivia—Deuteronomy 11 & 28 (Vol. 23, Iss. 4, pp. 34–35)

Part A: O, B, D, I, N, C; “OBEDIENCE”

Part B: “above all” (v.1); “smitten”, “flee” (v. 7); “holy people” (v. 9); “open”, “work” (v. 12); “curses” (v. 15); “destroyed” (v. 20); “smitten” (v. 25); “serve” (v. 48); “nation” (v. 49); “scatter” (v. 64)

Anna Reinhard

(d. 1538) – Part II

Retold by Jenny Lok
Illustrated by Andronicus Koshy

Every night, Anna enjoyed reading the Bible with Zwingli.

Patently, Zwingli would explain certain aspects of Christ's character that she had difficulty understanding. As always, Anna listened with rapt attention.

When Zwingli started translating the Bible into Swiss German (which was Anna's own language), she had the privilege of listening to his reading of the proofs (some of which were submitted by other theologians). Anna was absolutely captivated by the "fresh, divinely-inspired, lovely narratives"!

Imagine her great delight when the whole Bible was published in 1529! She even received a personal copy from Zwingli and since then, it had been her most loved and treasured book, which she actively encouraged others to read.



Despite the lack of a college education, Anna had "a wonderful grasp of the deep things of theology" and was highly regarded as "a woman of thoroughly established faith". Zwingli was so confident in her sound judgment that he often sought her opinions and comments on his religious writings before he actually published them!

She was indeed his "useful helpmeet".

Among Zwingli's friends and guests, which included many Protestant refugees, Anna proved to be an excellent hostess who was ever ready to welcome them with open arms. One dignitary found her hospitality so marvellous and unforgettable that he praised her for being an "angel-wife". Busy as she was in taking care of Zwingli's associates, as well as visiting the sick, bringing with her "medicines and delicacies", and most of all, "words of Scripture",

Anna never neglected her children – three from her first marriage and four with Zwingli. Together with Zwingli, who shared her love for music, Anna enjoyed teaching the children to play instruments, such as "the lute, the dulcimer, and the horn".



Under her loving and gentle care, her children grew not only in physical stature, but also in the knowledge and wisdom of God's Word. The three older children, namely Gerold, Margaret and Agatha, were happily married to godly spouses at a very young age.

Anna truly rejoiced in God's faithfulness and provisions!

There was no doubt that God was constantly watching over Anna and her family, and Anna was assured of it. Nonetheless, her heart was often troubled because of the Roman Catholics, who sought to assassinate or kidnap her husband.

To prevent that from happening, she had to ensure that Zwingli did not go out alone. Frequently, she would remind him,

My dear, please be very careful where you eat or drink in case your enemies intend to poison you.

On the night of 28 August 1525, Anna's family was awakened by loud thuds and slight shaking of their house. It appeared that some people were hurling rocks at great speed. Soon pieces of wood were seen flying all over the place.

Whoever you are, if you have any business with me, you should come to me tomorrow.

Stop your sinful act!

There was silence.

The culprits had apparently escaped in the darkness of the night!

Zwingli and Anna's troubles did not end on the night of the stoning of their house. There was increasing hostility between those of the Reformed faith and the Roman Catholics because of many cantons (divisions/states) turning to the Reformed faith.

Such converts to the Protestant faith were often subject to fines, torture or imprisonment.

Matters came to a head when Zurich disallowed the hostile cantons to trade with them, thus depriving them of "many of the products of the more fertile valleys". Angered by the move, these threatened cantons armed themselves and arrived right at the doorsteps of Zurich on 11 October 1531. The Zurichers were in no way ready for this sudden attack! Immediately, the men in Zurich were told to assemble and be ready to defend their city. Among those that gathered for the battle were "some old grey-haired men, several members of the councils, the boldest of the citizens, ministers with their congregations, and a number of peasants".



Anna's heart was heavy with sadness as she stood with her beloved who were about to leave for the battle against the enemies – Gerold, her son; Benhard Reinhard, her brother; her son-in-law (Agatha's husband) and Zwingli, her husband, who was appointed chaplain of the Swiss army. With her younger children around her, Anna bade farewell to her husband, trying her very best to be brave as she comforted her little ones who were weeping.

The hour is come that separates us. Let it be so. The Lord wills.

We shall see each other again if the Lord wills. His will be done.

And what will you bring back when you come?

Blessings after dark night.

Anna kept these words close to her heart.

After a short prayer with his family, Zwingli gave his wife and children an affectionate hug, and prepared to take his leave. Armed with his battle axe, Zwingli mounted his horse, gave a quick wave, and was off to the battlefield!

Out there, "an army of over eight thousand bold, well-equipped [and] experienced men" was waiting for him and his fellowmen!



The battle between the Swiss army and the Catholic forces had begun!

In the living room of their house, Anna and her children were on their knees in prayer.

They could hear sounds of heavy artillery bombardment.

Not long after, a huge cry of grief arose when news of the defeated Swiss army spread throughout Zurich.

The Swiss army suffered heavy casualties, and Zwingli was one of them!

Before Anna could react to Zwingli's death, more heartbreaking news followed: Gerold, her eldest son, as well as her brother were also killed!

Only her son-in-law (Agatha's husband) managed to survive, though severely wounded.

Anna lost her beloved all within a day!

BOOM!

BOOM !

"O God, strengthen me [in] this trying hour.

This is my house made desolate.
Thus are the tenderest ties that bind me to this world [severed]."

Anna bowed her head in earnest prayer, even as her heart pined for the departed. In her darkest hour of deep sorrow, Anna could only find solace in God's Word –

"...God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Anna was not alone in grieving for her dead husband. Many who had known Zwingli and his Reformation work had sent in kind and tender letters of condolences.

One wrote: "O pious, beloved woman, be faithful; neither you nor we have lost Zwingli and the others: for he who believeth in Christ hath everlasting life (cf. John 3:16)..."

Anna's faith did not waver despite Zwingli's untimely death, for she remembered God's promise in Hebrews 13:5 – "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." God, in His unfailing love, did provide an "earthly comforter" in the person of young Henry Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in the Reformation work.

Bullinger and his wife readily received Anna and her children into their house with much love and compassion, and even provided for the children's education. For the rest of her life, Anna devoted herself to prayer and the godly upbringing of her children and grandchildren. Of her four children with Zwingli, William and Anna (the youngest) died young while the surviving children, Regula and Ulrich, led pious lives which greatly honoured their mother and the memory of their father.

In her final years, Anna became very sickly, but bore her affliction without any complaint. On 6 December 1538, her soul entered into the very presence of her Saviour, where she would savour sweet eternal rest. There were indeed "blessings after dark night for her"!

Zwingli's last words to her finally came to pass. As Bullinger would describe it: "I desire no more happy end of life. She passed away softly, like a mild light, and went home to her Lord, worshipping, and commending us all to God."

Anna Reinhard's life was marked by so much pain and suffering that she was known as "the Reformation's Weeping Mother". It was her love for God and His precious truths that strengthened her to bear all burdens in her role as Zwingli's helpmeet, both at home and in his pastoral ministry. Her tireless support to Zwingli had enabled him to thrive in his calling as the founder of the Reformed church in Zurich and the leader of the Swiss Reformation. Enduring many years of tears and sacrifice, Anna had done her utmost for the Reformation cause. In truth, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Proverbs 31:10).

Anna was doubtless such a worthy woman, who had been a shining light for Christ in her own quiet corner.



BE RESOLVED IN YOUR HEART!

BIBLE WITNESS DESK & WALL CALENDARS 2024

Bible Witness Desk and Wall Calendars for 2024 are now available. The theme for our 2024 calendars is "Be Resolved in Your Heart!" The calendars feature 12 calligraphy works of Sis. Joanna Lim, a member of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church. Each calligraphy piece contains a verse from the Psalms that reminds you to put your trust in the LORD.

You can purchase your calendars today at <https://biblewitness.com/calendar-2024>