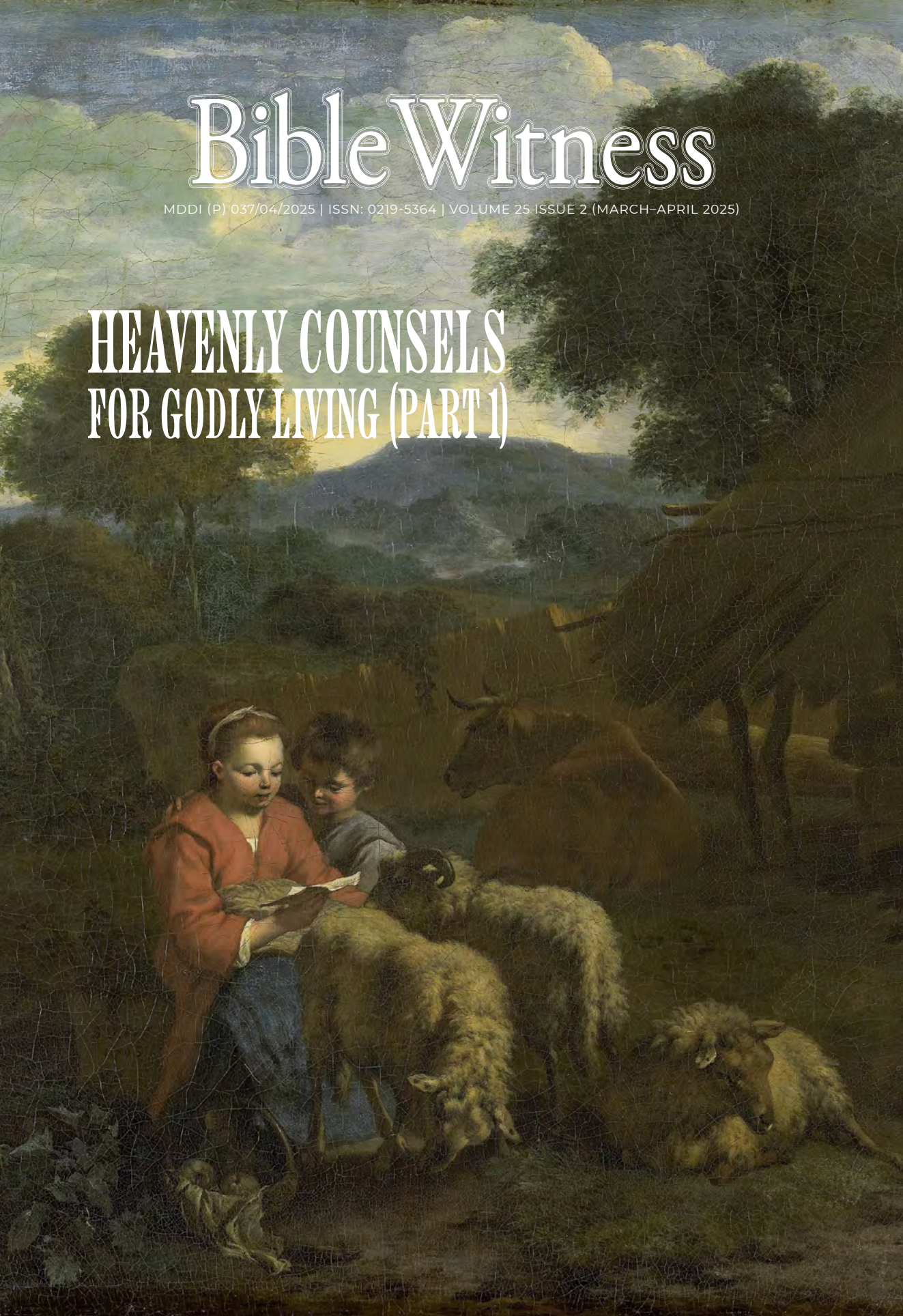
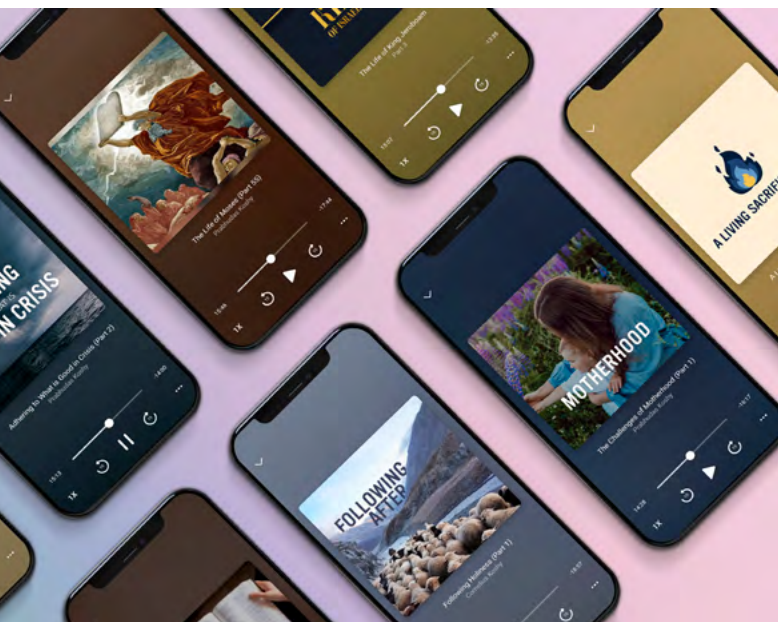


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HEAVENLY COUNSELS FOR GODLY LIVING (PART 1)





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“For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life”.
—Proverbs 6:23



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ABOUND IN THE WORK OF THE LORD!

(1 Corinthians 15:58)

A great number of people in churches today do not see the need to serve the Lord fervently. They seem disinterested and ignorant of their part in the work of the Lord. When it comes to serving the Lord, some appear to be irresponsible and negligent. There are also those who appear to be interested in serving, but are unwilling to get involved. But these should never be the case with genuine Christians.

As Scripture commands us in 1 Corinthians 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always **abounding in the work of the Lord**, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” Let us see

why it is important that we abound in the work of the Lord.

SAVED TO SERVE THE LORD

Unregenerate man cannot serve God, for his thoughts and ways are evil and defiled. Unto the wicked God says, “What hast thou to do to declare my statutes...?” (Psalm 50:16). No form of homage rendered by the wicked can be acceptable. Until the person is justified, his work cannot be received by God. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (Psalm 24:3–4). Only the redeemed in Christ can ever be reckoned by the Lord as servants in His household. You must begin with faith in Jesus; you must first experience a work done within you by God before you can go forward to work for the Lord.

Every one who has truly experienced the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Spirit knows that he is also taught, encouraged, equipped and enabled to serve the Lord. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). These good works, of course, include works of charity, works of kindness and benevolence, works of piety, reverence and holiness. Whatever God bids you to do, is good work. Works of love to Jesus, done out of a desire for His glory, are certainly good works. The common actions of everyday life, when they are done well, out of gratitude—these are all good works. May we all abound in them!

TRUE FAITH EVIDENCED BY ABOUNDING IN GOOD WORKS

True, you are saved by grace through faith, and not by works of righteousness; but after you are saved there comes this precept: “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men” (Titus 3:8). If you have commenced well, be careful to maintain good works; and if you have maintained them, go on to increase them.

Needless to say, faith is presupposed as the absolutely indispensable foundation of good works. You cannot work that which will please God if you are without faith in Him (cf. Hebrews 11:6). God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, so there is no bringing of any sacrifice of good works unto Him without corresponding faith. Living works stem from a living faith; likewise, a loving faith will manifest in loving works. Hence the absolute necessity for our abounding in good works, if indeed we are saved by faith in Christ Jesus. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12).

TRUE SPIRITUAL GROWTH EVIDENCED BY ABOUNDING IN GOOD WORKS

When we are focused on increasingly doing that which is good and acceptable before God, it is less likely that we will engage in vain attempts to please ourselves and others. This is the true

measure of one's spiritual growth, even our service for the Lord. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Galatians 6:3-4).

To be Christ-like on this earth is to work to fulfil the Father's will. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Every true follower of Christ would desire to be like Him, even in doing His will concerning His kingdom. What is your greatest passion in your life? Let it be to finish His work, just as Jesus Himself did during His life on earth.

TIME COMING WHEN NO MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABOUNDING IN GOOD WORKS

Now is the time for all of us to serve. There may not be a tomorrow, if we waste our time today. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). "The night cometh, when no man can work" tells us that when the work is assigned by God, He also sets its extent and limits. As sure as night comes in its due season to the earth, so death comes to you. You cannot put it off. There are no manoeuvres by which night can be deferred, nor by which death can be postponed.

"The night cometh", however much we may dread it; it comes with stealthy tread, and in its appointed time. "The night cometh" for the pastor, who has laboured for his flock. "The night cometh" for the evangelist, who has

preached with earnestness. "The night cometh" for the Sunday School teacher, who has loved her charges. "The night cometh" for the missionary, who has worked for souls. "The night cometh, when no man can work"!

Dear reader, do you need to be reminded that "the night cometh" for you? "The night cometh" at last when the eye shall be closed, the limbs grow cold and stiff, and when the pulse shall be feeble and finally stop its beating.

So work "while it is day", to fulfil all that the God of life has set before you. Abound in His work to which you are called—which is an immeasurable privilege that affords us a blessed share in many undeserving spiritual experiences! ■



WALK IN INTEGRITY!

(Proverbs 20:7)

“The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him” (Proverbs 20:7).

A righteous man whom God will bless is a man of spiritual integrity. Spiritual purity and wholeness are what God seeks in us. Daniel of the Bible was such a man, and his spiritual integrity made him an extraordinary believer. Based on Daniel 1, we shall learn precious lessons about living a

life of spiritual integrity that receives God's special blessings.

INTEGRITY SHINES BRIGHTER AGAINST ADVERSITY

Jerusalem was besieged and her king, Jehoiakim, was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army. The Jews were taken captives to the far land of Shinar (Babylon). This disastrous ordeal fell upon them because the LORD was displeased with

them for their sins. He gave them up to the violence and cruelty of the invading Babylonian army, which led many Jews away as captives.

However, this Babylonian captivity set the stage for Daniel's uncommon display of integrity. Let us realise that adversity of any kind—even chastening for sin—provides the “rich soil” for nourishing and strengthening one's spiritual integrity. Without the adversities of Babylon, Daniel's integrity would not have shone as brightly as it did. These troubles provided great opportunities for Daniel to make significant spiritual impact on various pagan kings and their great kingdoms. How amazing is the fact that the captivity offered Daniel a long period of opportunity to display the power of true spiritual integrity.

Perhaps you are currently experiencing adversities that are especially challenging, and you may not yet understand what God is accomplishing through them. But know that your integrity will be tested in some way in the process. So, like Daniel, you can pray for the wisdom to understand His will and for the faith to trust Him throughout. And like Daniel, you can be enabled by God's grace to manifest good virtues in times of testing.

INTEGRITY PLACES HOLINESS ABOVE FAME, FAVOUR AND FORTUNE

When King Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, he instructed Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to take some hostages from among the royal families of Israel. Among those selected were

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Daniel 1:6).

Nebuchadnezzar's plan was to train these young captives in the ways of the Babylonians, and then appoint them to the service as his officers. There were many captives, each of whom was young (probably in his early teens), handsome, and without physical defect. In addition, each had superior intellect, education, and wisdom. Being among such a select group of people could have led to pride in Daniel and his three friends. But self-glorification meant nothing to them. Their priority was to serve their God with holiness. Because of their passion for holiness, though Nebuchadnezzar could enslave them and press them to be trained in the ways of the Babylonians, he could never diminish their allegiance to the LORD. Nebuchadnezzar could offer power, influence, and fortune to those Jewish teens, but none of those things were attractive to them as much as “the beauty of holiness” (1 Chronicles 16:29). Their most outstanding desire and pursuit was to hold fast their spiritual integrity and keep themselves undefiled for the LORD's glory (Daniel 1:8).

Like Babylon, our society is enamoured with physical beauty and human capabilities. It can offer much fame and fortune to us if we employ our God-given abilities to please its philosophy, pleasure and glory. However, every true child of God must let his eyes be focused on his spiritual character, and use his talents and abilities for God's glory. Let's prayerfully guard our hearts against the subtle pride of this life, which undermines spiritual integrity and Christian character.

INTEGRITY LIVES FOR BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

Undeniably, King Nebuchadnezzar had so much material riches to offer his Jewish slaves: the best food, the best education, and high positions in the great Babylonian kingdom. A man with worldly ambitions would have easily complied with the king's requirements without hesitation. Even believers who do not possess strong biblical convictions would also have compromised. But Daniel, being a man of deep biblical convictions, was not easily persuaded by great material prospect to compromise his spiritual integrity.

We notice that Daniel did not object to the education that the king offered him. This could have been because there is no direct prohibition in the Bible against pursuing education from the secular world. But Daniel was not going to accept everything that

accompanied his Babylonian education without discernment. He sorted out the good from the bad, and the true from the false. He refused food and drink that were prescribed by the king for their physical nourishment, because they could have included food offered to idols, meats of unclean animals (like pork), and strong wine, which were forbidden in the Old Testament. Likewise, we should be discerning to discard all that are not biblical as we pursue our secular education and jobs. When we are urged to do things that break God's commandments, we, like Daniel, should stand steadfastly on the biblical principles. Only such persons can display true spiritual integrity.

In fact, Daniel had every reason to compromise: he was young, away from home, and facing severe consequences if he defied the king's order. Yet he was unwavering in his obedience to the LORD. No peer pressure or intimidation can ever destroy our pursuit of godliness, when we base our decisions and course of life on biblical principles. Check your life to see whether you have compromised anywhere. Dare to be a Daniel in your life's situations, that God's power may flow through your life of integrity.

INTEGRITY LIVES IN THE JOY OF GOD'S FAVOUR

God delights in granting special mercies and blessings to hearts that are set to please Him alone. Not all of the divine blessings towards Daniel unfolded at once. But certainly there was clear indication of God's special favour. In Daniel 1:9, we see a glimpse of God's great reward for Daniel who chose not to defile himself—“Now God had

Check your life to see whether you have compromised anywhere. Dare to be a Daniel in your life's situations, that God's power may flow through your life of integrity.

brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.”

The special favour and love shown by this officer of the king to Daniel was because of God’s unseen Hand working to reward Daniel for his loyalty. The Hebrew word translated as “favour” speaks of “goodness” and “kindness”, whereas “tender love” denotes unfailing compassion. As God worked in the heart of the officer, he manifested special favour towards Daniel. This special favour was necessary, that Daniel may be protected from the king’s wrath, particularly when he decided to refuse the king’s meat and wine. Daniel surely knew that refusing the king’s prescribed menu would lead to dire consequences. But his spiritual integrity dictated that he should take that risk. He counted it a joy to be in favour with God rather than with the king. When he had the right perspective of life, God placed him right under His favour.

Sometimes taking a stand for the Lord can make others our enemy. But if we, like Daniel, wisely and gently disagree with whatever that is unacceptable to God, then God will undertake to see to our safety and progress. Take a stand for the Lord, and the Lord will take His stand with you. When you stand up for the Lord, let your eyes of faith discern every evidence of God’s providential care and sign of His protection, that your heart may be cheered in the face of threats and troubles. That will further encourage you to continue exercising your spiritual integrity in standing up for the Lord.

Proverbs 29:26 reminds us, “Many seek the ruler’s favour; but every man’s

judgment cometh from the LORD.” So, may we pray with faith and assurance in the Lord’s goodness to those who walk in integrity: “For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield” (Psalm 5:12). Amen. ■



AS FREE, AND NOT MISUSING YOUR LIBERTY!

(1 Peter 2:16)

There are many misguided Christians these days who think that once they are saved, they are free to do whatever they like and live however they like, supposing that God’s grace and forgiveness are freely available, no matter how much they sin (cf. Romans 6:1–2a). The apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 2:16, addresses this misconception of Christian freedom, urging believers not to misuse their liberty as “a cloak of maliciousness”—“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”

While the freedom offered by Christ is complete (cf. John 8:36), believers often struggle to understand and apply it correctly. The apostle Peter deals with the challenges of fully experiencing this freedom.

LIBERTY IS FREEDOM FROM SIN'S BONDAGE

Firstly, in the preceding context of 1 Peter 2:16 (cf. 1 Peter 2:13–15), the apostle stresses Christians' duty to submit to civil authorities, indicating that true Christian freedom does not justify rebellion. Instead, it involves obedience and respect for those in positions of authority; it rejects any misuse of freedom for personal defiance or selfish gain. Our freedom in Christ does not release us from our God-given obligations. It is distorted perception to think that Christians are free from all moral laws and divine demands, and can indulge in any behaviour without consequences. To think of Christian liberty as a "licence" to neglect the importance of personal responsibilities and do away with the pursuit of holiness is a great error!

So Peter warns Christians, who have been justified and set free from sin's clutches, that they are to live "as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness" (v. 16a). The Greek word (*epikaluma*) for "cloke" means a veil or cover, symbolising how some Christians misuse their spiritual freedom to mask "maliciousness" (Greek, *kakia*: evil or wickedness). Some, who claim to be Christians, engage in sinful activities by hiding behind the facade of Christian freedom. When Christians within the church justify spiritually unwholesome or sinful behaviour under the guise

of spiritual liberty, they are guilty of abuse of Christian freedom. Examples include indulgence in alcohol, engaging in sensual entertainment, even pursuing material wealth at the expense of spiritual growth and service to the Lord. These actions contradict genuine freedom in Christ, leading to entanglement with worldliness and sin, rather than liberation. Christian freedom is not about selfish ambition or personal glory, but an increasing commitment to please the Lord in obedience and service to Him.

Jesus addresses such hypocritical behaviour in John 15:22, exposing the true nature of sin—"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." Jesus came to remove all the "clokes" that people use to cover their sins. True freedom in Christ means liberation from the deceitfulness and bondage of sin, and a genuine transformation towards righteousness, not an excuse to continue sinful lifestyles!

LIBERTY IS FREEDOM TO SERVE GOD ACCEPTABLY

Peter further states that believers are liberated to become "servants of God" (v. 16b). The unsaved cannot serve the Lord. In fact, in our fallen condition, none of us can be received into God's household. Only the redeemed ones in Christ are reckoned by the Lord as servants in His household. As the writer of Hebrews affirms, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). Indeed,

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart (that is, as a result of being cleansed by the blood of Christ)" (Psalm 24:3–4a). If you have received a new nature in Christ Jesus (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17), then you may not only talk of service, but also joyously enter into it.

True freedom in Christ should inspire believers to embrace their honourable role as God's servants. In John 12:26, Jesus declares that the Father will honour those who serve Him—"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." This eternal honour is unlike the fleeting nature of worldly achievements. Serving God requires following Christ alone, not succumbing to worldly ambition or self-interest. Obedient service acceptable to our righteous God is evidence of true freedom from sin and Satan's influence.

Romans 6:22 reinforces this biblical teaching that freedom from sin leads to service to God: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." This similar doctrine is echoed by Paul again in 1 Corinthians 7:22, where he draws attention to the Christian paradox of being bond-servant to God and yet experiencing "being free"—"For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." Believers are freed from sin and worldly lusts to serve Him, highlighting that true freedom in Christ involves willingly becoming "servants of God".

CONCLUSION

Christian freedom is not a licence for self-indulgence or for pursuing worldly pleasures and honours. Instead, it is a transformative liberation that should lead believers to serve God and align their lives with His righteous purposes wholeheartedly. So, let us forsake worldly ambitions and sinful behaviour, and use our lives to honour God. Know that true freedom comes from the living and true God, who has freed us from the dominion of sin and Satan to serve His glorious purposes. ■



LIVE NOT AFTER THE FLESH!

(Romans 8:12-13)

“**T**herefore, brethren, we are debtors, **not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.** For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:12-13).

WE OWE THE FLESH NO SYMPATHY

Some Christians seem to take a very lackadaisical attitude towards sin, as though they owe their own fleshly desires some sympathy and tolerance. They think that since they are still in their corrupt body and experiencing the lust of the flesh, they must be tolerant and permit some space for their fleshly desires to be entertained. But Paul says in v. 12 that Christians do not owe the flesh anything. We have to embrace this conviction that fleshly lusts must be hated. They are constantly trying to kill us. Peter warns in 1 Peter 2:11 that we must “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”. Giving in to the flesh is like joining forces with your enemy and pay for your own destruction! You are not a “debtor” to the flesh.

Until you believe that your Christian life is an active warfare against fleshly lusts which lay wait for your soul, you will probably take a careless approach to your Christian life without any earnestness or vigilance. You must have a “wartime” mindset, or else, your spiritual life will be in jeopardy. The enemy has lulled you into sleep or into a “peacetime” mentality, as if nothing serious is at stake. But God, in His mercy, has urged you in His Word to wake up and be enlisted to fight “a good fight”.

Be prepared for an aggressive, “no-mercy” approach to your sins. Read what Jesus has said, “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And

if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire” (Matthew 18:8-9). This depicts a picture of the most radical kind of assault on our own sin! The Lord is calling you to be fully convinced of the vanity of entertaining your fleshly lusts, for they will soon deal you with a deadly blow. You are to deal aggressively with your sins, and that calls for unrelenting self-control. You don’t let the flesh call the shots. You must have all the passions of your body and mind under control, and take them captive.

WE ARE IN A STATE OF WAR WITH THE FLESH!

There is something about war that sharpens the senses: You hear a twig snap or the rustling of leaves, and you are in an attack mode. Someone coughs, and you are ready to pull the trigger. Even after days of little or no sleep, war keeps one vigilant. Likewise, we need to have such wartime mindset. Make no peace with your ears, eyes, tongues, hands and feet. They will betray you like Judas betrayed our Lord. If you allow them to control your life, you are permitting them to gain a foothold in the war against your soul. Put to death the deeds of your body. The only way of obtaining self-control is by engaging yourself in an “all-out war” against every out-of-control desire. Self-control is a declaration of all-out war!

Self-control is tantamount to a total attack against all the impulses in us that would be destroying our spiritual pursuit. It is the immediate crushing of every unwholesome craving. It is the unhesitating snubbing

of the thoughts of men's praise, fame and power, love for more money, temptations towards pornography, craving for excessive food and drinks, desire for sensual satisfaction, etc. It is an absolute subduing of every violent passion—anger, jealousy, envy, unforgiveness, impatience, etc. It is also a total eradication of any sluggish or indifferent spirit towards spiritual and moral obligations.

Bluntly put, Christianity is war. It is war against our own sinful impulses. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12). Christianity is not a "live-at-peace" coexistence with this corrupt world nor with our fleshly lust. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6). Christianity is crucifixion of the old self, and having new life in Christ. When Christ died, He broke the power of sin. We can mortify (kill) sin because Christ has died to

When you refuse the sin of lust, you right away engage in spiritual activities that the Spirit wants you to do.

give us victory over sin. Now that our old self is crucified with Christ, we can mortify fleshly lusts. The Christian life is not moral self-improvement, but the "killing" of sin and living in the Spirit.

HOW TO "MORTIFY" SIN?

May we thus fight to kill the fleshly lusts by yielding to the Spirit of God whom Christ has given us. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13). Scripture gives us the following two steps.

Set Your Mind on the Things of the Spirit

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6). The mind set on the flesh results in "death" (v. 6a), but the mind set on the Spirit paves the way for "life and peace" (v. 6b). So the first step in putting to death the deeds of the body "through the Spirit" involves setting the mind on the things of the Spirit. You don't just look at the temptation and say, "No". But if you are going to put it to death through the Spirit, you have to do more: you direct your mind, your heart, your spiritual focus another way, namely to the "things of the Spirit". So, when you refuse the sin of lust, you right away engage in spiritual activities that the Spirit wants you to do.

Set Your Mind on the Word of God and All that It Commands

What are "the things of the Spirit" (v. 5b)? If we are going to have our minds and hearts riveted on them

(especially in the hour of temptation) so as to mortify sin, what should we be looking at? Instructively, the only other place in the New Testament where the very phrase, "the things of the Spirit", is used is in 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14—"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Here's where Paul talks about his own teachings as God-inspired revelations. So in this context, "the things of the Spirit" are the words of God spoken by the apostles. Thus, when Paul says, "they that are after the Spirit (do mind) the things of the Spirit", he means that they set their minds on the words of God and the realities they stand for. These

are "the things of the Spirit" which the natural man rejects, but the spiritual person embraces. So, to put to death the deeds of the body "through the Spirit" is to firstly set your mind on "the things of the Spirit", which invariably involves embracing the words of God, and all that they prescribe.

Indeed, this is especially significant because the Word of God is called "the sword of the Spirit" in Ephesians 6:17. Swords are used for slaying enemies. And that is what we are to do "through the Spirit", according to Romans 8:13. Kill the deeds of the body by the Spirit by fixing your mind on "the things of the Spirit". This would mean that you welcome and embrace the Word of God in your mind and heart. In so doing, this would enable you to take the sword of the Spirit, which is quick and powerful (cf. Hebrews 4:12), and is therefore effective to "kill" sin. ■

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PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD!

(2 Corinthians 7:1) **“H**aving therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God**” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Here, the apostle Paul is stirring our hearts to the pursuit of holiness. Paul was fully aware of the corruption of our human nature, the weakness of our flesh, and the influence of the old man upon our lives (Romans 7:18; cf. 1 John 1:8). Our flesh and new nature are constantly at war with each other (Galatians

5:17). This warfare will not end until we cease to live in this world. But in the meantime while we sojourn here on earth, we are to “den[y] ungodliness and worldly lusts, (that) we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). In the presence of God’s enemies and ours, we are to “shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15), through our righteousness, godliness, and holiness of character, so that men and women may see our good works, and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Truly, our character and conduct in this world reflect how diligent we are in our pursuit of “perfecting holiness”, as highlighted by 2 Corinthians 7:1, where Paul calls our attention to four things: the motivation for, the challenge of, the goal of, and the path of this pursuit.

MOTIVATION: PROMISES OF GOD

Firstly, the apostle Paul holds out the promises God has given to inspire our hearts to this holy endeavour—“Having therefore these promises”. What are the promises to which he is referring? In the preceding passage (6:16–18), Paul mentions five promises which are given to all who obey the truth. These five promises are for all those who trust Christ and follow Him in obedience.

1. His constant presence within us (6:16b). God has said, “I will dwell in them”. We are the temple of God. The great God whom the heavens cannot contain, the omnipresent God who refuses to dwell in shrines and temples made by the hands of men, promises to dwell in us (John 14:18, 23; cf. Colossians 1:27). What a great reason to live holy!
2. His communion with us (6:16c). God has promised, “and (I will) walk in them”. This denotes the communion God is pleased to extend to His people, and the promise of His gracious presence with us whilst we sojourn here, before passing on to the heavenly glory. Wherever the believer goes, the Lord is there! The Lord God goes with us.
3. His covenant faithfulness (6:16d). The Lord Almighty promised concerning you and me, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” This is the language of God’s oath in the covenant of grace (cf. Jeremiah 31:33). He is our God by special design of His grace. And by the sovereign operations of His grace, we are His special, peculiar people (cf. Psalm 110:3)—the people of His eternal love, the people of His redemptive purpose, the people of His saving grace, the people of His unfailing faithfulness.
4. His congenial acceptance of us (6:17b). God further said, “I will receive you”. What a divine sympathy towards wretched men like us! What wonderful, good news! We are “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). God receives every sinner who comes to Him by faith in Christ, because He has forever received us in Christ, who is our Substitute and Mediator. He receives us now, He receives us forever, and He shall receive us up into heaven.
5. His confirmed adoption of us (6:18). The Lord moreover has said to every true believer, “And (I) will be a

Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters” (cf. Galatians 4:4–6; 1 John 3:1–2). God Himself is our Father! He takes care of us as His children. Like a father, He provides, He prepares an inheritance, He disciplines us. We are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty!

Having such promises as these, we ought to be inspired to do anything we can for the honour of our God. We should be willing to give ourselves unreservedly to our great God, including in our pursuit of holiness.

CHALLENGE: CLEANSING OF OUR LIVES

Secondly, Paul challenges us to be cleansed—“dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit”. Of course, you cannot cleanse away your own sins. That is God’s work alone:

“What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!”

When Paul exhorts, “let us cleanse ourselves”, he is saying our responsibility is not to cleanse one another, but to cleanse ourselves. We need to be more concerned about our individual cleansing before we think of others’ cleansing. Note that we are to cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of both the “flesh” and “spirit”. Inordinate sins of the body (such as adultery, fornication, drunkenness, theft, murder) are rather prominently noticeable, and we therefore take pains to avoid and guard against them. However, the filthiness of the

spirit, or the mind, are things that others do not see. They are more inward than outward. Therefore, we tend to be less on guard against them. Yet, these inward evils (such as envy, covetousness, malice, wrath, worry, unbelief, and judgmental or unforgiving spirit) are just as vile as the outward deeds of the flesh.

Admittedly, we cannot eradicate sin absolutely from our lives here on earth. But we can and must cleanse ourselves. We have to fight against sin as long as we live in this world. It is a work of faith (cf. Acts 15:9; 1 Peter 1:22). We must continually flee to our cleansing “Fountain”, where we wash ourselves by faith in the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7–9), as well as bathe in the “laver” of God’s Word (John 15:3). And we must put off the old man, say “No” to the flesh, and put on the new man, say “Yes” to Christ (Ephesians 4:21–32). Moreover, let us take care that we avoid every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

GOAL: PERFECTING OF HOLINESS

It must be unequivocally stated that when Paul speaks of “perfecting holiness”, he is not talking about perfecting God’s work of justification or God’s work of sanctification. Rather, he is talking about the manner of our testimony in this world. Paul says that the believer is to carry on a course of righteousness and holiness to the end. To the end of his life he is to live in holiness. As he is to go on believing in Christ, so he is to go on living soberly, righteously, and godly to the end of his days. Though no one can claim to have attained the perfection of holiness in this life, we can never allow ourselves to be satisfied with anything

less than the perfection of holiness in character and conduct.

Perfecting holiness is the goal we seek, which is nothing less than conformity to the character and conduct of Christ. “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). It is not attained overnight, but involves an ongoing “good fight of faith” against the infirmity of the flesh; it entails progressive sanctification.

Dear saint, set the perfection of holiness before you as your goal. Strive to attain it in experience, and trust Christ alone for it. And soon we will have that perfection of holiness which we desire, for though “it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he (Christ) shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

PATH: FEAR OF GOD

Finally, Paul mentions the path by which we ought to walk to accomplish the perfecting of holiness—“perfecting holiness in the fear of God”. The fear of God is not the dreadful, terrifying fear of unbelief, but the reverential fear of faith and love. Scripture teaches us that only when we live in the fear of the Lord will we learn to shun all evil, for “by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Proverbs 16:6). Similar Scriptural exhortations include the following:

- Job 28:28—“And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”
- Proverbs 8:13—“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and

arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”

Indeed, the fear of God is the root of faith, worship, and obedience. It will also cast out the fear of man, guarding against one common cause of sin. So, the counsel of God is: “Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long” (Proverbs 23:17). ■

Wang Ming Dao

(1900-1991) - Part VI

Retold by Jenny Lok
Layout & Art by Andronicus Koshy

Back at home in Peking, Yong-Shung pondered over the offer of a teaching post in a primary school in Baoding, Hebei province.

He recalled what his old friend (whom Yong-Shung had met in Tung-Hsien a few days ago) had told him:

Yong-Shung, this is a golden opportunity to use your talent. Besides, you've been out of job for quite some time. So do not miss this great offer!

However, in Yong-Shung's mind, it was far from being the ideal job that he had been waiting for.

Given that I had completed one year of university studies, my abilities will be greatly underused if I merely teach some primary school kids!

Also, the salary is so low that I can barely make ends meet. There will be no savings at all!

With that, Yong-Shung proceeded to post a letter to the school in Baoding to inform them of his decision to decline the offer,

only to change his mind shortly after.

Why? Maybe it's better to be in Baoding than spending my time aimlessly at home.

That's really more miserable!



On 11 September 1919, Yong-Shung left Peking for Baoding to begin his teaching job.

Upon entering the school courtyard, he could not help but feel disappointed by what he saw.

How dull and unimpressive the school building looks!

The classrooms are so small and the students are dressed in such simple country style.

This truly falls short of my expectation!



Just as Yong-Shung was wallowing in self-pity, an Englishman appeared and came forward to shake his hands.



I'm Mr Thomas Biggin,
the Principal of this school.

We welcome you to our
Presbyterian boarding school
here in Baoding!

Thank you, Mr Biggin.
I'm grateful to be given this
opportunity to teach
in your school.

Yong-Shung replied with a respectful bow, his face immediately turning red as beetroot.

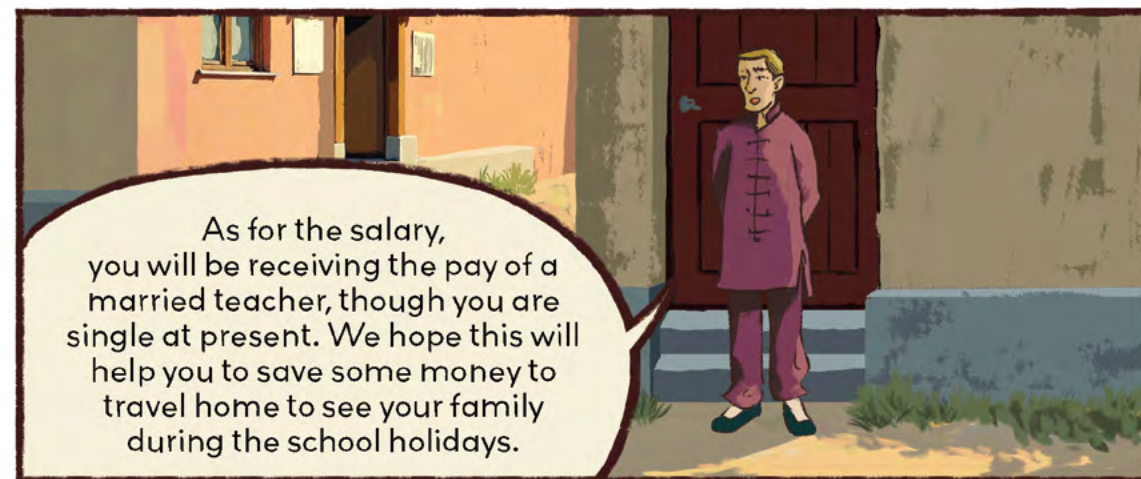


Well, I learned
from your friend who has
recommended you, that you are very
knowledgeable and capable, and so I've
arranged for you to teach two classes,
one in the Higher Primary and,
the other in the first year
Middle School.

*Mr Biggin's words of commendation
sounded like music to Yong-Shung's ears.*

This is better
than what I have
expected.

*Yong-Shung started to feel
more confident about the future.*



As for the salary,
you will be receiving the pay of a
married teacher, though you are
single at present. We hope this will
help you to save some money to
travel home to see your family
during the school holidays.

Yong-Shung's heart leapt for joy.

Things couldn't be better!

*Since then, Yong-Shung tried his utmost to teach his
students not only in the school subjects, but also in the
worship of God and Christian living.*



*He set aside every evening after school for a time of prayer
and studying God's Word with the students.*

*However, Yong-Shung knew that he lacked the confidence to teach on
the topic of the resurrection of Christ, despite the fact that he
truly believed Christ did rise from the dead.*

Yong-Shung's diligence and righteous ways influenced the students for the better, but unknowingly raised the ire of his fellow teachers. They would say to him,

Teacher Wang,
we know that you are working very hard
to please the Principal. Besides, we also
believe that by spending so much time
with your students, you intend to
establish your authority
in this school!

Oh God,
how have my fellow teachers
misunderstood me and spoken evil of me!
Help me, dear Lord, not to give up but to persevere
in teaching my students your Word as I can
see how enthusiastic they are about
learning the Truth.

*After many months of teaching the students in Baoding,
Yong-Shung's attitude towards the preaching ministry began to change.*

Previously, he thought very lowly of this area of service to God.

*Now, the preaching ministry had become a life-changing work to him –
to transform the human heart, and preach against the evils of society
and the corruption in the church.*

*In the summer of 1920, Yong-Shung made a very significant
decision to change his name to "Ming-Dao".*

明

"Ming"
means to "testify"

while

道

"Dao"
refers to "the way,
the truth or a doctrine".

*So, "Ming-Dao" simply means
"to testify of His Truth" or "testify of the Way".*

*Wang Ming-Dao was very excited about answering the call of God to
the preaching ministry. He recalled what Mr Thomas Biggin, the
Principal, had spoken to him some time ago:*

Teacher Wang,
when I do return to England, if it is
possible, I shall help you to obtain a
study grant to fund your theological
training in England.

Certainly, Wang Ming-Dao was elated.

Wonderful!
Now I can study in the university for four
years, after which I shall go for another
three years of theological studies in China.
Then I will proceed to England for a
three-year course at a theological college.

Wow, in ten years' time,
I can be an outstanding pastor
and evangelist!

*Wang Ming-Dao had high hopes
indeed for his future preaching ministry.*

Meanwhile, on his brief trip home in early September that same year, Wang Ming-Dao had a tearful and heartfelt conversation with his sister about her salvation in Christ.

Why are you crying?

Jie, I'm full of sorrow because Ma and you have not come to accept the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour.

Yes, I've heard much of the Gospel in my younger days and through your sharing in recent years. I know I need to repent from my sins and turn to God for forgiveness of my past wickedness.

Now is the time. Do not delay!

Yes, I'm ready to confess my sins, repent and turn to Christ!

Both brother and sister wept with joy of gratitude to the Lord for His great mercy and gift of salvation.

Unexpectedly, Wang Ming-Dao had to extend his home stay due to an ear infection, and so was able to spend more time talking to his sister about the Christian faith. He was fully assured that she was saved in Christ! Praising God for what He had done in his sister's life, Wang Ming-Dao returned to Baoding on 4 October to continue in his teaching job.

More than a month later, on the evening of 21 November, Wang Ming-Dao had an opportunity to talk with a new colleague in the school.

Preacher Wang, have you ever thought that there may be hidden sins in a Christian's life?

That's not possible!

Wang Ming-Dao cried aloud, his anger rising as he felt that such a God-abiding Christian like him could not have allowed sin to remain in his life.

Well, there are some Christians who are busy serving God, not to glorify Him, but to bring fame and honour to themselves.

The words of Wang's colleague hit him like a thunderbolt. Suddenly Wang realised that, yes, pride was the root cause of his misery. Though he was active in the Lord's work, he lacked the power of God in his life, all because he was too full of self-importance. Truly, Wang Ming-Dao knew deep down inside that his arrogance had destroyed the joy of serving God.

That very evening, Wang Ming-Dao went on bended knees and confessed before the Lord: "Oh God, my heavenly Father! Many times, I have thought so highly of myself that I fail to see the faults of others hidden deep within me. Oh, how wicked I am in all my ways! Before thee, I am unclean and all my righteousness are nothing but filthy rags! (cf. Isaiah 64:6)". Wang Ming-Dao remained on his knees, by his bed, for a long while as the Holy Spirit convicted him of pride in his life and, in the silence of the moment, he dedicated himself fully to the Lord's service all the days of his life.

BIBLE TRIVIA—JOSHUA 7

SARAH YONG

A. Read the whole passage in Joshua 7, and then choose a suitable phrase from Column B to complete the partial statement in Column A, by drawing a line to connect them both.

Column A

- 1) The children of Israel had committed a trespass,
- 2) Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai and said unto them,
- 3) The men returned and reported that the inhabitants were few,
- 4) However, they fled before the men of Ai,
- 5) Joshua asked God if He had brought them across Jordan,
- 6) The LORD told Joshua that Israel's defeat was because
- 7) They had to sanctify themselves before the LORD,
- 8) Finally, Achan from the tribe of Judah was taken, and Joshua told him
- 9) Achan said that among the spoils of Jericho, he had seen
- 10) The messengers found the items in the midst of his tent,
- 11) So Achan, together with his family and belongings, were brought unto

Column B

- so only three thousand men went there to fight them.
- only to deliver them into the hands of the Amorites.
- and the anger of the LORD was kindled against them.
- to make confession of his sin before the LORD.
- "Go up and view the country."
- they had sinned and transgressed His covenant, and were accursed.
- and thirty-six of them were killed, so the people became fearful.
- the valley of Achor, where they were stoned, and burnt with fire.
- so the next morning, the people had to be brought before the LORD, tribe by tribe.
- a garment, and shekels of silver and gold, and he coveted them.
- and the silver under it, and brought them out unto Joshua and the people.

B. Each completed statement above contains an underlined word. Use the bold letter from each underlined word, and fill it in the respective blanks below according to the corresponding statement number. The answer to the following question will then be revealed:

What commandment did Achan transgress?

— — — — —
9 4 7 10 8 4 1 5 9 6 7 9 2 7 11 3 9

Answers to Bible Trivia—Joshua 6 (Vol. 25, Iss. 1, p. 26–27)

Part A: 1) straitly, 2) Joshua, 3) six, 4) priests, 5) covenant, 6) shout, 7) mouth, 8) seventh, 9) trumpets, 10) accursed, 11) house, 12) consecrated, 13) flat, 14) sword, 15) fire, 16) household
Part B: "The Fall of Jericho"



◀ "Achan voor Jozua" ("Achan before Joshua"), Jan Luyken, Etching, Rijksmuseum

Bible Land Bible Study Tour

Dates: 7th–20th September 2025

Bible Witness Media Ministry will be organising a Bible Land Study Tour to Greece and Turkey. The tour will take the team through key sites from Paul's missionary journeys in Greece, select locations of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 (located in western Turkey), and the island of Patmos. Visit biblewitness.com/2025-bible-lands for the itinerary.

Pastor Prabhudas Koshy will lead and teach this Study Tour. You will also have blessed times of fellowship with your fellow travellers, making friendships.

If you're interested in joining this study tour, please sign up today with Bible Witness Media Ministry at retreat@biblewitness.com

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