

## **Writings:**

*Articles from a Worker's Desk (Vol.1)*



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(Vol.1)*

By:

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Dedicated to my son, my firstborn, Eiren Caleb.

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## Preface

God uses written messages as much as those preached from the pulpit. The Bible Itself is the proof of that.

This book is the first volume of written articles regarding different topics, and they were written with prayer from the desk of a servant of the Lord in His work, a husband, a father.

May these *Writings* be blessing to those who find joy and solace in reading, and maybe someday, just like the author, may you find the inspiration to write down your thoughts, and let them be used by God for His purpose.

“Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun *they that handle the pen of the writer.*” Judges 5:14

A worker in the Lord’s Vineyard,

Paul Jake A. Tolentino



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# 1



## On Racial Discrimination

Recent cases of killing with hinges on racial discrimination (Ahmaud Arbery, a black 25-year old man who was jogging was shot and killed by a father and son in Georgia last February; and George Floyd, a 46-year old colored man killed in a police arrest in Minneapolis, MN, last week) have heightened tensions in the United States and started strings of protests, and later on riots and lootings, for the past few days. Not just the US, but also protests in other countries even the social media world, with hash tags like #runwithmaud, #ican'tbreathe and #blacklivesmatter, erupting the cyber scenes.

Discrimination based on race and skin color had been a major issue in the United States – it was the main cause of

the American Civil War. It was the same cause that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr fought and died for. But this issue of racial discrimination is not only an American issue, and a new one at that, but had been of old. It was a custom and had been a cornerstone of some economies of some nations in recent history. The European migration of African slaves had been a legal trade not more than a few centuries ago, yes, even during a time of Christian evangelism in the global scale. Let's take into consideration the passage in the Scriptures that was used for justifying racial discrimination:

Genesis 9:24-25, "When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done unto him, and he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."

Here we find the so called "Curse of Ham", pronounced by the Patriarch Noah, who after the flood became a vineyard man, who later on becoming intoxicated by wine, was naked in his tent. His son Ham saw the nakedness of his father, and went outside to tell about it to his other brethren, Shem and Japhet. The other two covered the nakedness of their father while walking backwards, so that they would not see it. Noah later on learned what happened and pronounced the curse.

First, there are some implications on what sin, it was, to see the "nakedness of his father", to harbor such a great judgment and punishment. There are some indicatives of this, such as maternal incest, and the like (we won't speculate on this much, as we would be departing from the topic), but we could say that the sin was generally of two categories: 1. Parental/authority disrespect and 2. Sexual in Nature (e.g.

nakedness).

We must take note that the curse was imposed upon Canaan, who was believed to be the youngest son of Ham. This is indicative of Canaan having the same inclination to the sin of his father Ham, and the patriarch under the spirit of prophecy having seen Canaan and his descents walking in the same sin. This proven to be true as the Canaanites were people known to have sexual sins and idolatry as prevalent throughout the region. We can see that these people, for example, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them were described by the Bible as, “giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh” Jude 7. Strange flesh means other flesh, they go after, or were addicted to that which was contrary to nature, to gratify their lusts. So we have the word Sodomy from the place, and this was also true to the cities about them. The Canaanites were walking in the same sin as of their father Ham, not acknowledging the authority of God, who determined the natural course of things, even marriage and sex. (One may note on the same spirit prevailing today, regarding the sanctity of marriage and sex, being perverted.)

The curse of being servant of servants was upon Canaan alone, not the entire family of Ham. This does not indicate that God promotes discrimination of race of any descent, but this was a natural result of the sin they walked into.

The Africans are believed to be from the family of Ham, and this particular passage in the Scriptures were misinterpreted and misused by many nominal Christians in the past to support slavery of the blacks. The people of African descents were made subjects of slavery because of

two practical reasons: 1. Their relatively primitive culture that time, allowed for being more prone to exploitation by the more “civilized” Europeans; 2. Their physiques and built are durable and strong, supposed to be fit for hard and manual labors. But this passage in the Scriptures provided for a “Biblical justification” for the slave traders, many of which are from “Christian and Bible-believing countries”. Such a thinking and misappropriation of Scriptures created a culture of having subhuman, fit for the more arduous and low jobs.

Does the Scripture justify the discrimination of black people and of other races on that regard? Absolutely not. Ignorance of the whole picture of God’s redemptive plan would make one believe so. The nation of Israel got to a point of taking pride out of their being the chosen nation, but remember the Lord Jesus rebuking them for that attitude! “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Matthew 3:9. The Messiah coming to the world needed a family, a nation from where He would come, and it was through the nation Israel, “Whose are the fathers, and of whom concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” Romans 9:5. Yes, they were the chosen people, but for a purpose, and that is to become a kingdom of priests, a nation that would be showing forth unto the nations the rulership and communion with God, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” Exodus 19:5-6

It has been hinted throughout Scriptures that God

has a plan of a future union of the nations under one body and citizenship – the term Jew did not apply to Job, a native of Uz (some relates to Aram or one of Nahor’s children in Genesis 22:21); Melchizedek was from Salem (primitive of Jerusalem, a land of Jebusites, Jebus); Caleb was the son of Jephunneh, a Kenizzite(a tribe from Canaan); Rahab was from Jerico(a city in Canaan); Ruth was a Moabitess (although relative to Israel, a sworn enemy of the nation); the Wise Men who recognized the new born Messiah was from the east; Jesus spent some times of his childhood in Egypt; did a miracle in Tyre to a Syro Phoenician woman; and eventually, the church grew and multiplied throughout the Greco-Roman cities of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Colossae, Rome, and others, more than it grew in Jerusalem in Israel.

Consider the following passages:

Amos 9:11-12 The prophecy that the heathen nations will become part of the tabernacle of David, which was fulfilled in Acts 15:16-17

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. “

Ephesians 2:11-19, Paul speaking to the Ephesian church, of Jews and Gentiles being one in Christ:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that

which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Ephesians 3:4-6, Paul speaking of the mystery of Christ, that Gentiles will be fellowheirs and part of one body in Christ:

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Romans 3:29, On having the same God,

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

Romans 10: 12, On having the same Lord

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Colossians 3:11 Christ is all, and in all

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

So we see the picture, God through the redemption in Christ Jesus, the God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world unto himself, is calling people from all nations and tribes, all races and colors into one family, into one body. Our

God is the God and saviour of whosoever will, not just a particular skin color. As the whole world had been under sin, all becoming guilty of missing the mark, and transgressing the laws of God, in Christ Jesus, anyone is welcome to partake of the same spiritual drink, and be baptized into one body.

The Lord was clear in his commission, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:” Matthew 28:19. Having such a commandment from the Lord, we ought to see everyone as a prospect brother, or sister in the Lord, a potential fellow disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and a fellow child in the Kingdom.

John saw in his prophetic vision regarding the saints coming out of the Great Tribulation, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;” Revelation 7:9.

Lastly, James 2:8-9,

“ If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. “

Brethren, finally, we must be clear on this – Racial Discrimination and partiality in treatment of people, in any form, or basis, for that matter, is a sin against God. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11), neither should we – not on the basis of their skin color, not on the

basis of race nor descent, neither of the past that they would want to be, and could be through God's grace and gospel be delivered from.

Probably we would hear such incidents more in the future, from here and there, for we are living in a corrupt world under sin and the influence of spirit of wickedness. But we are looking toward a new heaven and new earth, where all of this crimes and discrimination would be non-existent. But in the mean while, as the church, the body of Christ, the model of new creation, we do it, we practice and live it here, right now wherever and whenever we can.

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 2



## From Empty Nets to Empty Boat

“And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." Luke 5:3-7

Here we find the account of Luke of how Jesus called the first disciples, who were fishermen. They were washing their nets on the shore after a disappointing night of no catch. Jesus taught the people on Simon's boat, and after He finished teaching them, He commanded Simon to launch out into the deep, and let down their nets for a catch.

The Sea of Galilee is not really a sea, but rather a lake, or a body of water enclosed by land. It is approximately 7 miles wide and 12.5 miles long. It is also called the Sea of Tiberias, and Lake of Gennesaret (which was a town allotted to the tribe of Naphtali). It is freshwater, and had been a source of food for the people for around 5,000 years straight, until last 2010, fishing was banned for 2 years(source:news.bbc.co.uk), for fishermen using nets with small holes therefore depleting the supply of fish, especially the so-called "St. Peter's fish" or tilapia, and also because of infection. Later on, the government released 1 million small tilapias to the lake to revive the supply and also to eat of the growing and toxic weeds.

The fishing industry flourished in the times of Jesus, as the tetrarch Herod Antipas established good system for the industry. In the gospels, we could read many times about fish – in the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew 7:10), the Lord used it in the miracle of feeding the multitude (Matthew 14:17 and Matthew 15:34), used it to provide their tax payment (Matthew 17:27), taught a parable about fishing (Matthew 13:47), and the Lord ate fish after the resurrection (Luke 24:42; John 21:9-10). According to Josephus, an ancient Jewish historian, there were about 230 fishing boats operating in the Sea of Galilee during that time.

Usually they do fishing in partnership, and was the case with Andrew and Simon and the Zebedee brothers, John and James. Each boat could carry approximately half ton. And fishing in that time was highly profitable, not just for the fish themselves but also through the byproduct, especially a fish sauce called garum, that was used by Romans in their meals. Garum distributors made substantial amount of money per year. Magdala, a town in Galilee was known to be a town where fish were processed to produce such products.

Going back to our key text, we just read an experienced fisherman was told by a carpenter by trade, to launch to the deep and cast their nets. If there was ever a time to best catch fish, it would be at night, for they will not be scattered by the sunlight, but rather be attracted together by the small light coming out of the fishermen's lamp, and also the fish would not be able to see the nets set by the fishermen. And if ever there was a best spot to fish, the fishermen by trade would know it, but they did all they could, to the most of their professional ability, knowledge and skills last night, to no avail. Usually they cast their nets 7 to 8 times

a night, and this is hard work and requires persistence, bodily strength and stamina to do. They did this all night without any results, and now, a Teacher tells them to do it again, as if He knows any better(haha!). Surely He did and He still does know better than any of us.

“Nevertheless at thy word,” was Peter’s final answer, and it was of obedience. Before this he said, “Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing.” He had all the right justification for not obeying the Master’s command. He was the professional, and in his own professional opinion, it was useless, as they did the same all night! What difference would it make in the morning? But, “nevertheless at thy word” – that “nevertheless at thy word” made all the difference. The Master’s Word made all the difference!

If only we would do the same every time the Lord is speaking to us regarding some things, things that we think we have the full knowledge of. If only we would be like Peter every time God wants us to step by faith and not by sight! Only if we would say the same utterance and obey every time the Lord wants us to trust Him with all our hearts and lean not unto our own understanding!

At the Word of Jesus, the fishermen launched into the deep, and they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, too many that their nets brake. It seems it was not only Peter who obeyed the Words of Jesus, even so did the fishes! The same lake, the same nets used, probably on the same usual spots, what made the difference was that the Master of the Universe was there, and His Word of Power upholds everything in the cosmos! For in its beginning, He spoke and there was light. He spoke the dividing of waters through the

firmament. He spoke and the fish of the seas were created. The same Creator spoke this time, and no matter where all the fish were hiding the night before, they would rush into the fisherman's nets to participate in the miracle of the bountiful catch.

This was enough for Peter to understand who this Carpenter/Teacher was! He had been in this business long enough to comprehend what he saw was nothing short of a miracle. "When he saw it", when all this unfolded before his very eyes, he had a certain realization of divine presence and potency. "He fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. "Isn't this like the Prophet Isaiah upon seeing in his vision the "Lord sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." (Isaiah 6:1)? When he said, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."(Isaiah 6:5)?

Oh what great paradox Peter exclaimed! To say depart from me, while falling at His feet! To recognize our unworthiness of Him, and of His grace and love, and mercy, is also to realize all the more our need of Him! Were we all not in the same paradoxical feeling as he had? Depart from me O Lord for I am unworthy of your greatness, I am not worthy of the love, undeserving for the grace – all the while crying at His feet, for we are so helpless, and we don't have no hope outside being the recipient of His unmerited, undeserved love. The more we declare our poverty in spirit, the more we declare our need of Him; and He draws closer to us, and does not push us away. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8a)

Peter's declaration of faith, his recognition of the Divine, was received by the Master, and in response, a commission was assigned to him and his partners. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Just as with Isaiah's mouth being cleansed by the coal from the altar, and was sent to be God's messenger; just as Moses from being a shepherd, to being commissioned to deliver Israel after a Divine encounter, Peter from then on received his calling, his direction in life forever changed, or should we say, found, from being fishermen to being fisher of men – all it took was an experience of a Divine encounter.

Have you found your life calling? Your life purpose? Everything else is either preparation to, or distraction from, your ultimate God-given purpose. All the hard works nightly on the Sea of Galilee were Peter's training. Moses' 40 years in the desert shepherding was God's practicum before graduating in the 'University of Wilderness' with a 'Master's Degree in Leading a Stiff-Necked Flock'. David's flights and fights against bears and lions, were his training program for him to know in the future how to fight a giant, and how to flee from a mad king. On the other hand, evil influences and friends, ungodly activities, and even worldly successes are and can be distractions that pull you away from your life purpose that God gave you. We must take care and be sure that we discover and fulfill God's purpose in our lives; for being successful in many other things won't matter, if we leave that one thing undone. "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it" (Colossians 4:17).

"Then they forsook all, and followed him" (Luke 5:11b)

After receiving the call of their lives, they straightway left their trade, their lives so far, to follow Him, yea, to die for Him even. All this after a night of empty catch, after a night of despair and frustration; a night of much toil but with no results. We could even trace the hand of God in all these empty nets, in preparation for a miracle of plenty catch and of broken nets; that led to the beginning of found calling and purpose, and of abandoned boats. Some sleepless nights of toils and struggles are God's prelude to our lives' turning point. Sometimes they are the overtures that make the following details all the more colorful and vibrant; the sudden change in tempo in God's musical masterpiece makes the listening heart skip a beat; the contrast between empty and full, despair and victory, would make the object of the miracle realize God's sovereignty in all things.

Have we thanked God for "missed" opportunities? Doors that closed? Unanswered prayer (or sometimes God-answered prayer in the way we did not expect and hope? Because 'no' is also an answer)? It may take time and experience, also wisdom and trust, to see God's providence in all things, yes even in empty nets. Sometimes, just like in the case of Balaam, God opens the mouth of a "donkey" to speak to us and to prevent us from going our ways, for "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12)

That was the case for the fishermen – the night of disappointment led to a morning of appointment. Yes, that day they were appointed to be disciples and later on apostles. God tests our obedience in the midst of disappointments and frustrations. Probably, Peter's "nevertheless-at-thy-word-obedience" made his case for

being a potential disciple established. The Lord is looking for people who would listen and follow Him despite the odds. He is looking up to now for people who would do what He commands, even when at times, things don't seem probable. He is still looking and calling "nevertheless-at-Thy-word-people" to send and do His work.

If there are some good qualities Peter had at this point, it would be his work ethics (for being a fisherman at this time, still up to today, requires hard work); and obedience to the Master's word. And most of the times, that's all that God requires. Persistence and not skills; obedience and not wits. Just like did Mary, most of the times all we need to do is to say, "Behold the handmaid (servant) of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Luke 1:38a.

That was how they were called to being full time disciples; from partial and casual engagements, to lifetime involvement and commitment; from listening by the shores of Galilee, to witnessing "in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth"; and yes, what it took was a night of no catch and obeying the Words of Jesus despite. Later on, after the resurrection, when they again lost direction, the same pattern of empty nets and Jesus giving direction from the shore, restored Peter's life purpose of feeding the flock. (John 21:1-19)

For sure the day when they were called by the Lord to follow Him was a day that Peter would always remember. The night before, their boats were full of fishermen, but empty of fishes – but in the morning after Jesus stepped on that boat, it was full of fishes, but empty of its fishermen. They all left and followed Him without even caring for the

catch; and we can say the rest is history, or rather, we should say, the rest was the Gospel.

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 3

## Brought Under the Power of Wireless Mobility

One of the most drastic changes/improvements that happened for the past decade was that of smartphones. Ten to fifteen years ago, cellular phones were not that smart. Before, ordinary phones could only collect and store phone numbers and messages, but now, it can be used to store and process audio, photos, videos, documents and applications. Processors, memory cards, video cards and internet connectivity made our common smartphones as portable, pocket-sized personal computers.

With its capabilities, smartphones became more and more relevant and crucial to everybody's lives: that of a student, a professional, and a plain housewife alike. Wireless mobility became the world's greatest attention grabber. This led to many innovations and developments in connectivity, in the local and even global society. Facebook, which started in 2004, hit worldwide in 2006, with just the need of a valid email address to sign up. Since then, it skyrocketed, and other social networking sites were launched such as Twitter, Instagram and MySpace. YouTube, since its launch in 2005, has now expanded tremendously, that today, everyday, about one

billion hours of content is being watched.

Yes, our smartphones are very handy, as it now replaced our notebooks, calendars, calculators, and even the hard copy of the Holy Bible. Not only that, it also became a handy entertainment tool, replacing TV's, Mp3 players and video game consoles. With the vast cyber social networks, it also now tends to replace real person-to-person interaction. Usage and purpose has become very wide, that people nowadays tend depend on this technology too much. Here are some statistics, from [www.bankmycell.com](http://www.bankmycell.com):

- \* The average smartphone user checks device at least 47 times a day or 17,155 times a year.

- \* 85% of smartphone users check device while speaking with friends and family.

- \* 80% uses cellphones within 1 hour of waking or going to sleep.

- \* Average use of smartphone is about 2 hours and 51 minutes a day.

- \* Use of smartphone and tablet is 4 hours and 33 minutes a day.

- \* 1 hour and 16 minutes spent on top 5 social networking sites.

- \* Average user will tap, swipe, click 2,617 times a day.

Also, according to [Statistica.com](http://Statistica.com), there are more than 3 Billion

smartphone users worldwide. Also, there are more smartphones than people on the earth today (lefronic.com).

Yes, there's nothing wrong with smartphones, actually, it has many benefits to us, if put in proper use. But that's the thing – proper use. Are you aware that there is such a thing as smartphone and internet addiction? There is also a term for the fear of not having your smartphone with you: Nomophobia, short for No mobile phone phobia. We have certain limitations and prohibitions to cigarette smoking and liquor, but not in smartphones and internet. The age range of dependence on this technology becomes younger and younger by the hour. Yes, it is not inherently good or evil, but we have to come to terms with these questions: Is it still being beneficial, or has it become abused? Are we using these technologies, or are they using us? Do we have power over these gadgets, or are we being brought under its power?

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:12,

“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.”

Are we being too dependent on technologies? One of the symptoms a person might be having these addictions is that he feels anxious if he is not at least 5 ft away from our gadgets, at all times, yes, including sleeping and going to the bathroom. Also, there is always this feeling like the phone vibrated or hearing it alerted, only to check it didn't. There is this feeling to check the phone every once in a while, although we know there is no new notification. There is also this feeling of being left out or missing something when we are not

connected at the moment, which causes unnecessary anxieties.

Studies tell that people are not really addicted to the hardware or the phone itself, but rather to what it offers us, and what it is capable of. Through our smartphones, we access the internet and social networking sites. These social networking sites are actually designed to grab our attention, because it feeds on the data we put on it, because that is one way how they generate income, through data pooling (aside from actually feeding our minds what we “need” through advertisements constantly flashing on these sites). Companies pay millions of dollars to know what customers like and need from products. These sites were designed to be as addictive as possible. It’s trying to grab as much attention from us, to be able to get as much information from us.

Sadly, Social media sites such as Facebook, sometimes now are no longer used to connect or communicate with friends and loved ones, but rather is being used as a platform to show off. One reason why it has become so addictive is because it can be used to feed one of man’s innate and primitive characters of his fallen nature – pride. This is the love of recognition and desire to be admired by others. This is the first sin, the cause of Lucifer’s fall as stated in Isaiah 14:12-15. It is the pitfall of many great people. From our first parent’s fall in the garden, this pride has been one of our inherited fallen nature’s default.

Everyone has this inner desire to be liked, admired and recognized. All of us, we may admit or not, are concerned about what others think of us. We care about how other people perceive us. When Social media erupted, it offered

everyone the “celebrity privilege”; to be global, to be seen, followed and admired. It is one of the reasons social media becomes addictive – likes serve as little and random rewards, it feels good since there is a release of the chemical dopamine in the brain, which is associated with sudden good feelings. Most abused drugs cause the release of this brain chemical and is thought to contribute to their addictive properties (psychologytoday.com) The release of dopamine creates a reward circuit in the brain, and registers as “important’ in our system, our brain creating a lasting memory of it as a pleasurable experience. Dopamine commands the brain to “do it again”. This is also the science behind addiction to drugs, alcohol, nicotine, porn and sex. Social Media creates irregularly timed rewards, and according to American Psychologist BF Skinner, the strongest way to reinforce a learned behavior is to reward on random schedule. Robert Sapolsky calls it the “Magic Maybe”; when you look on your phone and maybe there’s a text, maybe not; there may be a new like, maybe not. When it does show up, you get a great spike in dopamine. But that feeling of pleasure disappears quickly after it comes. Therefore, it becomes easy to get into a dopamine induced loop. Dopamine starts you seeking, then you get rewarded for seeking, which makes you seek more. (medium.com)

This irregularity would eventually destroy a person’s desire, motivation and goal-oriented behaviors. It tends to lead a person to crave for instant gratification and be content with it instead of determining and working toward a real goal.

Science may blame it to brain chemicals, but we Christians know that there are spirits behind. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”(Ephesians 6:12). These spirits are working and influencing the world, want the children of God to be out of focus. The world wants us to be distracted from what we should do, and even worse, become addicted to distractions. This keeps us up, and eventually our concentration becomes fragmented and eventually destroyed. Habitual distractions will lead us to completely making us unable to focus on certain activities we do, may it be studying, or listening, worshipping, or praying.

The word distraction was used by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:35, “ And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.” The passage speaks of marrying, but can be used to a wide application. The word distraction was translated from the Greek /perispao/ meaning to be dragged around, and that’s exactly what distractions can do to us, it can drag us around and away from our focus.

There was a time when distractions were considered negative, for it means anything that prevents , or hinders a task to be completed. This was when man had small time for leisure, and more time for laboring just to survive and cope up with living. But since the industrial revolution, when advance machines were invented to help man with his tedious works, there was an increase in leisure time. Then distractions become somewhat neutral in nature, it still has that negative connotation, but somehow it become desirable at times, to find ease from work. So people often say when they got tired from working after several hours, and they got stressed, “I need some distractions!” That is to ease the mind from the

burden of work. But now, when machines, and computers, and robotics do almost all the works, we have more leisure time than work; then distractions now are slowly taking the majority of our wake time. Distraction, from being a negative thing, or something to be avoided; to being desirable at times as a means of escape; now distractions became more inviting, and even addicting. We even pay lots of money for it – from buying the latest gadgets that do all sorts of things simultaneously, to paying for subscriptions to movie and TV programs, and binge watching – distractions now became the main thing that made man busy. Oh, the irony of it.

Mark 12:29-30, “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

Loving the One True Eternal God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, would be found difficult if we would lose the ability to focus. Distractions will be able to snatch from us, time that we should be spending alone with God. Time that must be spent in reading and studying the Word of God may be hindered by letting our minds to be dragged around by Facebook notifications, Instagram Likes and Messages alert tone. How could we go deep in worship, with fragmented focus? if we lose the capacity to concentrate, because our minds have become trained and programmed to scroll for something novel every few seconds? The Facebook App scroll was designed for infinite scrolling, and usually there we are mindlessly scrolling our time away.

As did Paul say, all things are lawful to him, but not all

things are beneficial – if something, though not evil inherently, is not bringing benefits to our walk with God, we must take heed of that something. It being not inherently evil can become a potential way for the enemy to deceive us. “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy:” John 10:10a. The enemy may use these distractions to steal away our prayers; to kill our spiritual lives; to destroy our relationship with the Lord.

“All things were lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any”. When the Lord freed us from the bondage of sin, he did not do it so that would be again under bondage. We must make sure that we value the freedom we have in Christ, in that we would not allow ourselves to be brought upon the power of anything else aside from Him who set us free, our Lord and God Jesus Christ.

We must limit our screen time, and especially when we are doing something, it would help if we would drop the phone off and focus on our task. While multitasking is something that helps us do many things at once and finish more at less time, sometimes, we do so at the expense of efficiency and work quality. There are tasks that would require us to be focused and in full concentration, and this would of course be true when we are doing things for the Lord. Studying and reading the Word of God, for example, must be done without distractions, for the Bible tells us we need to search, meditate and study it. These require our full attention. For example, the word search in John 5:39, “ Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” is the Greek /ereunao/ meaning to examine and to investigate, which requires putting our mind into it. Also during Church Services, it would be more

advisable to use, if we have, the hard copy of the Bible instead of using Bible Apps in smartphones, since it has other features that would tempt and distract us from listening to the word of God. But these Bible apps are good alternatives only if, we don't have a hard copy of the Bible, or in times of emergency. As much as possible, we all should strive to have our own Bible, as it is less expensive than a mobile phone, and we can focus more reading it, than from Bible Apps.

In prayer, in Matthew 6, the Lord taught us that in prayer, one must go to his chambers, shut the door and pray in secret, primarily for the purpose of privacy and intimacy with God. But how can there be intimate communication between us and God when there are many interruptions? Therefore it would be right for us to keep our smartphones away when we are praying to the Lord.

Also when we worship, we ought to clap our hands, throw our hands in the air as a sign of praise(/Yada/ in Hebrew), how would we do so if we have our smartphones on hand? Lay it down when we worship.

Finally, we must say that these smartphones are very beneficial especially in times like these of pandemic. We use internet so that the church can still gather virtually. The Word of God is still being preached despite of religious gathering prohibition and limitation, thus, if used properly, the smartphones and internet open doors for evangelism not just in the local, but also in the global scale. We are thankful and we all subscribe to the benefits of social media and advanced communication system. Actually this very article will be posted in the social media platform it is talking about, so, we are not totally against it, but rather we must be careful in the

proper usage of these things, or we may be deceived into thinking we use them, when it in fact becomes the master of us. We must control our dependence to it and be aware of the dangers of abusing it.

So, we are not saying that we should throw away our smartphones, ipads and laptops, and start using keypad and brick gsm phones again, but rather we must be careful and mindful in using them, that they would serve the purpose of helping us in our tasks, and do not allow these to distract us in serving God faithfully and making Him our life priority. Our Lord Jesus Christ must still have the preeminence, and we must not let our smartphone, or anything for that matter, replace Him in His rightful place in our lives.

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 4

## One Thing We Had Been Losing

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13

Over the years, the church grew and developed in many aspects. From a group of Jews in an upper room in Jerusalem, now it grew and expanded to the whole Earth, sprang to different denominations and sects, all professing to be the church Jesus Christ built upon the rock, which He is.

We, Pentecostals included, grew in many different ways. We grew in number, more than ever before. More churches are being built, more pastors and ministers being ordained, more missionaries being sent to the field, more than ever before. In the local scene, we grew and developed many ministries to add and aid the church reach its goal: The Whole Gospel, to The Whole World, by the Whole Church. We developed our Sunday School Ministry, The Youth Ministry, The Music Ministry, Ladies Ministry, Apostolic Men’s Ministry, and Christian Education Ministry. We now have our own publications, websites, Bible Schools and Christian Education Institutions. We developed local church programs for Christian fellowship, evangelism and soul winning, and

discipleship. And I believe with all my heart, these programs and ideas were conceived, planned, developed and implemented in the name and for the glory of God. But despite these additions and innovations, there is possibly something we had been slowly and unawaringly losing. Something elementary, essential, important, fundamental, foundational and basic. I'm afraid we might have been losing the fear of God.

Please don't get me wrong, this is not just another revolutionary, radical mind trying to criticize the church. This is not just another holier-than-thou-pentecostal-kind-of-thinking trying to rule others out. I am speaking as one of you, and as a very unworthy one to speak up. You can just consider me as Balaam's speaking donkey. But I am part of the church. I am among you. I, myself am guilty of it. I have been observing it in my own self. But it's something the Lord has been dealing me with. I'm not concluding yet, but is there a possibility, that we lost the fear of the Lord? If we do, it's such a dreadful situation.

Well of course, there are places in the world that doesn't have the fear of the Lord. Just as Abraham said in Genesis 20:11, when they went to Gerar, "surely the fear of God is not in this place." But that should not be the case in the church. We are supposed to be God-fearing people. We should have been dreaded and terrified by the presence of the mighty God, then awed by the thought of how this so great God loved us. The word fear in the Bible, (phobos in Greek and yirah in Hebrew), is defined by the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as; 1) an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger 2): anxious concern : solicitude 3) : reason for alarm : danger

4) profound reverence and awe . In the Bible sense, fear can be a) that feeling of threat or danger you want to flee from (as of Jacob being afraid of Esau, or Elijah being afraid of Jezebel) , b) or a feeling of awareness of the justice of God and his anger toward sin or c) the awe and great reverence and respect towards God. I believe in the Bible, fear of God is the combination of the 2nd and 3rd. It is the awe and reverence we should feel towards God in the positive sense, and the awareness of His wrath should we sin and depart from His will in the negative implication. So for the rest of this article we would apply that definition whenever we mention the word fear.

Deuteronomy 10:12 says, “and now, Israel, what that the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.” The Lord required his people 4 things, but the top of the list is to fear Him. Have a deep respect and reverence towards Him. Know He is just, and righteous and holy. Well some would say, “but in the New Testament, the Lord said, to love the one true God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength, is the first commandment is not it?” But the question is, how would you do the first commandment, or any of it, if you don’t fear the one who gave the commandment? We must love the Lord our God, but at the same time, fear Him, have a deep respect and reverence toward Him. The same thing as we can say we love our parents, but if we do not fear our parents as the Bible says (Leviticus 19:3 “Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father, and keep my Sabbaths, I am the Lord your God”), we will not be obeying their words. The Lord said, if you love Him, we must keep His commandments (John 15:15), but you

cannot love Him with all your heart if you don't have fear or respect and reverence towards Him.

Wait brother, now I get it, I agree with you, we need to fear God, but how could you say we're losing it?

Well then, to answer that, let me also ask you, (again I'm speaking as one of you, folks). Why most of us, young people fall to consciously repetitive sins? Why does it seem that holiness has always been a big issue to us? Why do we commit secret sins? Why is separation from the world had always been hard? Are we even taking God seriously?

Do we lack teaching? Something wrong with our doctrine? Do we need more educational seminars? We do sins in private, do we not know God is omnipresent? We do secret sins over again, do we not know God is omniscient? Do we not know that if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:26), seeing we crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and we put him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:6)? Do we not know without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)? Do we not know the friendship of this world means enmity with God (James 4:4)? I don't think so, because being a Pentecostal myself since childhood, I grew up being told these things. Then why? Is it not, maybe, a sign, perhaps that we somehow along the way, lost the fear of the Lord in our hearts?

Prayer and personal devotion have always been a common struggle for us young people, and even to some mature Christians alike. It is very hard to maintain a good prayer life, and yet we believe prayer is the life of our

spirituality. It is indeed very hard to pray, that even the disciples asked the Lord to teach them not how to preach, or teach, or perform miracles, but how to pray. We know it's part of our Christian duties. Men should pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8). But it's also hard to even invite for a congregational prayer meeting. Why is that?

Do we not know prayerlessness is a sin (James 4:17, 1 Samuel 12:23)? Do we not know the power of prayer? Do we not have things to pray for? Do we not know praying is our way of communicating to God? Of course we do! Then why are we not communicating to Him, if we really love Him? Do we not love God? Of course we do! But loving Him, or should we say, professing to love Him, is not enough to push us into deeper communion with God, it will not push us into giving Him what He deserves, it is not enough to make Him the priority of our lives, UNTIL, we fear Him! Until we have that sense of deep respect and reverence to the master of the entire universe, you being a small part of which, until we become aware how blasphemous we had been when we don't have time for Him, we would never be pushed to that great need of a healthy prayer life and devotion. Maybe we lost it. That deep respect. And awe. And trembling before God's presence. Maybe we had lowered down the definition of God. Maybe we lost the fear.

Why are we not that zealous about evangelism? Why are we so comfortable sitting around the church whispering God is good all the time and vice versa? If God is so good, why are we not sharing it? Why is reaching the lost not that impactful to us? Has it just become a department? We are even losing the zeal of reaching our families and friends. Why

is that? Are we not convinced of the eternal life and eternal judgment? Do we not believe in hell? Or somehow, we no longer picture God's wrath in judgment day, where mercy and grace stops, because we've fed ourselves up too much with just one side of God, which is God is love? The other side of which is that He is also a holy, righteous, sin-hating God that will one day judge all men? Have we forgotten our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29)? And that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31)? Have we lost that holy fear and reverence to a holy God?

Have we become too casual with the idea of being a friend of God? Have we forgotten how Abraham, being the original friend of God, pleaded to God, humbly, and fearfully, regarding Sodom and Gomorrah? Genesis 18:27, he said, "behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." Verses 30 and 32, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once." He was dealing with the great and almighty God, so he'll do wise to plead with fear!

Have our theology, and the revelation of God, and the manifestation of God, and the knowledge of His person made us overfamiliar with God, and suddenly made us fools to forget that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10) and the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7)?

Have we become so full of the idea of the God incarnate died for us, because He so loved the world? Have we wrongfully and drastically abused God's grace and love, in that, since He died for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), now that we are "saints" so-called, we think He would be willing to bend Himself backwards, and He would be willing to

lower down His standards, just because He is afraid to lose us, hard-headed souls, that wants to go to heaven, but whose lifestyles declare otherwise? Just who do we think we are?

Have we not read in the Bible how great God is? David said in Psalms 8:3-4, “When I consider thy heavens, the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast obtained; What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?” Who is man? Just who do we think we are, before the presence of the Almighty God? Have we suddenly became Goliaths, mocking and belittling the God of hosts? Where is the fear and respect and awe whenever we worship him?

Have we forgotten how many angels serve and worship this great God? That seraphims cover their faces for they cannot withstood the splendor of His glory? Have we forgotten how the Apostle John in revelation, upon seeing the Lord in His glory, fell down on his feet as though dead?! How come we are losing fear towards such a great and glorious God? Have we no longer retained God in our knowledge? Just what happened to our definition of God?

Have we suddenly become equal with Him? Has he just became our adviser and source of inspirational thoughts to live by? Is he really our God, or in the back of our minds, we made God our slave that will do anything and everything just to make us man happy? Have we reduced His majesty to a level just enough to make Him fit into our own terms? Just who has He become in our lives? Oh God have mercy!

Why is it very hard to live holy? And consecrated and separate from the world? Because we do not perfect it in the

fear of God! 1 Corinthians 7:1 says, “Having therefore received these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” That’s the key- fear of God! We practice holiness in the fear of men, fear of our pastors, fear of the brethren, fear of the organization, but if we practice holiness in the fear of God, an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, sin-hating God, who just holds himself back because of His great love toward us, then we will be able to live holy, through the help of the Holy Ghost.

Have we forgotten every time the fear of God falls upon the Israelites, there was revival? They were very obedient to God and Moses when they saw how dreadful God was with the fire and earthquakes in Mt. Sinai. Israel turned their hearts to God from idol worship, when they saw fire fall from heaven in the contest in Mt. Carmel in times of the prophet Elijah.

Some would say that is only true in the Old Testament. But have we read the Holy Ghost killed Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to God in Acts chapter 5? Is not God immutable? Is he not the same yesterday, today and forever? Just because God revealed Himself in another manifestation, just because God showed his great love toward man, do we think God ceased to be the righteous, holy God He is? If that is not true for the New Testament church, why did the Lord, in His days in the flesh, feared in His prayers (Heb. 5:7)? If we ought not to fear God, why did the Lord Jesus himself said in Matthew 10:28 to “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”? Why did Paul say to “work out our own salvation with fear and

trembling?”(Phil.2:12) Peter also said to fear God (1Peter 2:17) and even live our life all the time of our sojourning here on earth in reverent fear (1Peter 1:17)?

These thoughts came troubling me. Have we not retained God in our knowledge (Romans 1:28)? Are we glorifying Him as God as we know Him (Romans 1:21)? Or did we turn God’s grace into lasciviousness (Jude 4)? Oh God have mercy!

Again, folks, I’m talking as one of you, a very unworthy one. I myself am observing these things in me. I’m praying that God would not allow such attitude among us, and if there is, that God would give us correction. I’m proposing a possibility, not a conclusion. The conclusion is, in Ecclesiastes 12:13:

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

Oh! Have we been really losing the holy fear of the Lord, may God have mercy upon us!

It’s like I hear the Lord saying this words again, words he first said about 2,300 years ago through the prophet:

“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: If then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear?...” -Malachi 1:6

# 5

## Advance His Kingdom – Fighting the War

No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Mark 3:27

The English word advance in the Merriam-Webster dictionary means the following:

Advance /verb/

: to move forward

: to move (someone or something) forward

: to go forward : to make progress : to continue in a process of development, aging, etc.

But if you have background on war histories, battle strategies, and even the board game chess you know that the word advance is also a common military term. In a military perspective, the word advance means the forward movement of a unit toward the enemy. So when we declare we are advancing His Kingdom, we just don't mean we are progressing the cause of the Kingdom, or we are just moving forward for the kingdom. When we are advancing the kingdom, or furthering the kingdom, that actually involves marching against enemy lines, subduing enemy strongholds, pushing against enemy boundaries and seizing enemy lands. It

is simply a declaration of an all-out-war.

So the truth is, advancing His kingdom is not just about spreading the cause, nor just moving forward and telling everybody it's a joy to be a Christian. Advancing the kingdom means preparing, positioning and engaging yourself in a war of conquering territories.

I. Be aware that you are engaged in a war

Why? Are you serious? Are we Christians not supposed to be peaceful people? Most of our young men today do not know the spiritual war, or should we say, most are losing the spiritual battle they are not even aware they are engaged in. That was the same problem with the new generation of Israelites that arose after Joshua:

A. They knew not the Lord nor His great and mighty works

And also that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. Judges 2:10

B. They knew not the wars of Canaan

Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan. Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof; Judges 3:1-2

The generation after Joshua, knew not the Lord personally, and his mighty works they have only heard as

stories and myths. Also, since Joshua accomplished his task of subduing the promise land through the wars and battles he led and won, the next generation of Israelites need not to know how to fight, and so became complacent and comfortable. They fell into idol worship so the Lord got mad at them. So in Judges 3, it says that the Lord left nations around Israel to prove them. The Lord used these nations to chastise them and to teach them war, for they knew nothing about it.

The same challenge goes to the new generation of Pentecostals. Thetimes when our pioneering pastors fought hard to conquer the land are finished. Before, one would literally suffer persecutions when he becomes converted to the cult of Pentecostalism. Some became at war against their friends and family. To evangelize the then pureblooded-Roman-Catholic-Filipinos would require great a sacrifice and sufferings. While some of these are still somehow true today, it is no longer on the same scale and level as of before. Today almost the whole world profess to be Christians. Many would congratulate you to be born again. Some of us no longer knew war . The Apostle Paul considers himself to be a soldier of Christ. So he also charged the young Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3-4; Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

To advance his kingdom, you must first know you are engaged in a war. You just declared to the devil, I'm fixing to mess your kingdom! Don t expect it to be an easy one.

II. Know who you are battling against, and who you are battling against not

Ephesians 6:12 says, For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Now you know you are in a battle for advancing His kingdom, the next question is who are we battling against? But this scripture told us first who we are NOT wrestling against. We are not fighting flesh and blood. We do not fight people. Do not fight against your persecutors, nor your friends, and family members, not even those girls in the school making fun of your long hair and your not wearing of jeans. We do not fight people, we fight the spirit behind. They are just pawns of the enemy trying to discourage you, intimidate you and neutralize you. We fight against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, spiritual wickedness in high places. These are ranks among the evil spirits that control the behaviors of those people against us. They are the real enemies. James 5:8 described our adversary, the devil is as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Be reminded the next time it seems like the enemy is putting all the pressure on you, discouraging and intimidating you, just as Rev. Lee Stone-King once said, the devil is fighting the hardest what he fears the most. You're a big threat to him. He's afraid of the potential, what God can do through you, so he belittles you so you won't realize what you can do for the Lord. He's like that big, rude kid, bullying children around but is secretly afraid of worms.

There's also another spirit we all need to fight against today. We will quote this as referred from a preaching by Rev. Wayne Huntley in *Because of the Times 2014* entitled, *The Last Giant Before Canaan*. Deuteronomy 3:11 says, For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnants of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits was the length thereof, and

four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man. Og was the remaining giant to be defeated of the Israelites on their way to the promise land. The last giant before Canaan was Og, and his bed, approximately 18 feet long and 9 feet wide. That's the same spirit we also need to defeat today, the spirit of Og and his king-sized bed, — the spirit of slumber and laziness. Young men, be sure to kill that giant.

### III. Know what you are fighting for about

Mark 3:27 says, No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. (We will tackle about the first part of this passage and then the next part later.) This is exactly the scenario. This is the picture of Advancing His Kingdom. It will be like entering into the strong man's house and spoiling his goods. That's what it is all about. The strong man here is the enemy. In advancing the kingdom, we are advancing it to a foreign territory owned by some strong guy. We are moving forward and conquering the enemy's territories. Advancing the kingdom is like entering into the enemy's house and fighting for the goods. That's what it is all about the goods. That is what we are fighting the devil over. By the way, those goods seemed too important. What are those goods really?

Those goods are not properties, nor blessings. It is souls. In advancing the kingdom, be aware that we are fighting the devil over souls. Souls of people the Lord Jesus died at the cross for. Souls that the devil won't give up too easily. It is his prized goods. It is his precious possessions. Don't expect the devil to just give those souls to us, we need to fight for them. Can you blame the devil if he won't give up souls easily? He's worked for souls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (a better soul winner than most of us Christians). That's all he has been

working for. The devil is not trying to defeat or overpower God. He tried once and he failed, so he knows he is no match! His business here on Earth is to claim people's souls, to bring them with him to hell someday. So it's not like we will just show up in his territory, and he will give the souls, his precious goods to us. Expect that he's gonna put up a fight. Advancing His Kingdom is a war for souls.

There are two aspects where you need to fight for souls. First, is you have to fight for your own soul. It's a constant battle. The Apostle said in Philippians 2:12, to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Be not too occupied by winning others to Christ and you yourself is already a backslider in heart. It is a constant battle within you. Spirit against flesh. Godliness vs. lust. A constant battle of Holiness. A constant battle for your devotion and prayer life. We must first make sure that we win our own battles first. Then we fight for others. Jude 23 says we need to save others with fear, pulling them out of the fire. We need to pull them out from the fire of hell. One version of that verse says, we need to snatch them out of the fire. Sadly, most of the people we know are heading toward the fire of hell. So we must fight for these souls. Advance the kingdom. Snatch them out of the house of the strong man.

#### IV. Know the weapons of this warfare

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says, For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Of course we need weapons for battling. These spiritual weapons according to Apostle Paul are able to pull down enemy strongholds, able to subdue high thinking and self-exaltations, and captivate minds into obeying the Lord. Interested? Just what are these weapons?

These are the weapons that we can use to bind the strong man so that we can spoil his goods. There's no way we can get the goods without first binding the strong man with these weapons.

A. The Word of God. The devil tempted the Lord in the wilderness. It just took three rounds to knock him out. What did the Lord himself use against him? The Word of God. Claim God's promises in His Word. Heaven and earth shall pass away but His Word shall not pass away (Matthew 24:35). He upholds all things by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3). The worlds were framed by His Word (Hebrews 11:3). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation of those who believe (Romans 1:16). Nothing else is firmer and surer than the Word.

B. The name of Jesus it is the only name given under heaven whereby which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). It is the name which is above every name, to which all knees would bow, of things in heaven, and on earth and underneath (Philippians 2:10). It is a strong tower where righteous can run to, to be saved (Proverbs 18:10). It was the same weapon David used to stand against Goliath (1 Samuel 17:45). By this name we shall cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpent, and lay hands on the sick (Mark 16:17-18). Devils are subject to this name (Luke 10:17).

C. The Holy Ghost it is the power from above to witness (Acts 1:8) It is our comforter and will teach us all things (John 14:26) It will give us boldness and will teach us what to say (Luke 12:11-12)

D. Prayer and Fasting There is power in prayer and fasting. This is mainly how we will bind the strong man. Some demons can't be cast out without prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21). The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16).

E. The Whole armour of God this is our protection against the weapons of the enemy. The belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the preparation to share the gospel, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:13-17).

Wow. The Lord won't let you fight unprepared. We are well protected and well-armored!

How about the weapons of the enemy? Well, the Bible says something like fiery darts of the wicked, wiles of the devil, snares of the devil, Satan's devices, and the like, but there's also one scripture that summarizes all about the weapons of the enemy. Isaiah 54:17.

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall arise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

The weapons of the enemy may hurt us at times. It may make us stumble, discouraged and weakened. But whatever that is, in the end, it will not be able to defeat us. It's not gonna make him win the war. No weapon of the enemy shall prosper against thee. That's the Lord who promised. He's no liar.

V. Most Importantly, Know Who You Are Fighting With!

If God be for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Matthew 28:20

A challenge to the young Pentecostals Let s advance the Kingdom. Fight for souls.

Jeremiah 1:7-8, But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. The Lord set thee over the nations and kingdoms to, root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. (Jeremiah 1:10)

It's time for the young generation to actively participate in advancing the kingdom.

Engage in the war. We are God's infantry battalion.

We might be battling against the strong man, but we know greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 6

## On Eternal Unconditional Security

The doctrine of eternal unconditional security is derived from one of the tenets of Calvinistic teaching on soteriology, called the 5 points of Calvinism, with the acrostic TULIP; Total Depravity of Man, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints.

The last point in these 5 will be the focus of this article, that is regarding the Perseverance of the Saints because this is where the belief “Once saved, always saved” came from. (Regarding the other 4, I might discuss it on future articles.)

The tenet Perseverance of the Saints says that the saints or the elects, since predestined, or chosen beforehand individually without any basis of the preference, but purely because of the will of God (the second point, Unconditional Election), to be saved, will be saved no matter what. Meaning those who have been predestined will never lose his/her salvation. The verse used to support this point is Philippians 1:6;

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Now, does this tenet harmonize with the entirety of the Bible?

This belief is called Eternal Unconditional Security of one's salvation. Eternal because according to the 2nd point of TULIP, the election of the individuals who will be saved, and the individuals who will be damned to hell, was already decided by God from the foundation of the world, and thus, the elect will be kept saved until eternity comes. Unconditional not only because the election was unconditional, or not based upon any conditions, or deeds, or requisites the elect has done; but also because even the keeping of the salvation of the saints is also not conditioned on them, but on God – He is the one who does the keeping, making the eternal life forever secured. As the passage in Philippians 1:6 indicates, a Calvinist or Reformed Theologian would say, God, who begun the work in the believer, will accomplish it, or complete it, until the coming of Christ. This would necessitate that no matter what the elect would do, at the end, he will still be saved, and salvation will not be lost, not because of what he does or does not, but because of God who keeps him.

Now, can one really not lose his salvation?

First, if no one will lose his salvation once saved, we must ask this question: Why were the epistles written? We know that the epistles (Romans up to Jude, or we may even include Revelation because it is a letter to the 7 churches) were written to the saints, the elect, and not to the unbelievers. They were written to instruct the saints, now that they were already saved, now that they were already part of the body of Christ, the church; on how to conduct their lives

here on earth while waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. If no one really loses salvation, why would it be necessary to teach anyone how to live properly? Why would the Holy Spirit inspire the apostles to write these epistles and instruct the saints?

A Calvinist may say, this is so, so that the Christians may live a life, or that ye may walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory (1Thessalonians 3:12). But why would it be necessary when God himself keeps the salvation, and we have no participation in it? And why would it be necessary for the saints to live a holy life before the unbelievers, if no matter what happens, those who were predestined to be damned would never come to the Lord? The epistles were written that the faithful may remain faithful to the Lord. Some of them were written, just like the Book of Jude, so that ye should contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jude 3) For instance, the Letter to the Galatians was written by Paul since the Galatians, “having begin in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh.” (Galatians 3:3). The Letter to the Colossians was written so that, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.” (Colossians 1:23). If salvation is secured eternally and unconditionally, why would the Colossians be moved away from the hope of the gospel? And why is there a need for the Apostle Paul to warn them?

Why would the apostle Peter warn the Christians to, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour?” If

there is no possibility for the elect to be lost, why did the apostle warn them about being devoured by the devil?

Let's also look at these passages in the Bible:

Matthew 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved

This chapter is all about the coming Great Tribulation, and when this time comes, who will be saved? Those who shall endure to the end. Meaning there will be many, who will not endure to the end, and they will not be able to keep their salvation. Here we can find a condition for a believer to keep his salvation, it is not eternally and unconditionally secured. The devout reformed may say, if they will not endure to the end, they were not elected in the first place. But that would put his argument in a circle. Will someone endure to the end because he is saved (or elected), or will he be saved because he endured to the end? If someone will take the verse and the Word of the Lord as it is without any preconceived tenet, the honest and correct answer would be the latter.

Matthew 25:1-12 The Parable of 10 Virgins

Here we can find the Lord telling the disciples a parable about a wedding, and we know that 5 of the virgins, or maidens, as what the Greek word parthenos means were foolish; because they did not bring oil for their lamps, they were excluded from the wedding when the door was shut closed while they bought oil. Now, one would argue that these virgins do not represent the church but the Israelites, and that would be a different topic and we would not discuss it here, for the case remains true: whether church or the ethnic Israel,

the foolish virgins here lost their salvation, for being foolish. Now there seemed nothing wrong with their calling, they were called just like the other 5 wise maidens. What's wrong is their conduct in waiting for the bridegroom – they did not prepare properly. In fact, that is the context of the parable, in continuation of the Olivet discourse in Matthew 24, that is, preparing for the coming of the Lord. They did not prepare so they lost their part in the wedding.

#### Luke 15:11-32 The Parable of the Prodigal Son

This well-known parable is about a son who was already in his Father's house, but because of wanderlust, went to a far country, spent all his inheritance in riotous living, only to become basically a beggar, feeding on husks that swine eat. He decided to go back to his father's house, and was restored. Reading the whole chapter, we would know that this parable is about the Pharisees and the scribes murmuring because the Lord Jesus Christ received publicans and sinners to hear him and to eat with them (Luke 15:1-2). So clearly, the Father in the parable is God, the older brother is the scribes and Pharisees, and the prodigal son represents the sinners. Now, would it possible for the prodigal son to not come back to his father's house? Yes, if he did not realize his sin, he would not go back to his father. Verse 18, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." If he did not decide to go back to his father, he would have died in that far country, and he would have been lost forever. When he was lost, he was actually rendered dead by his father, verse 32, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." He would have remained dead if he did not come back. What does this tell us? Someone

who is lost can be lost forever, if he decides not to come back to God and repent. If he does not repent, is he a son? Yes, but a son forever lost.

John 10:27-29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Now this is a passage used to defend the tenet of perseverance of the saints. The subscriber to this belief would say that according to this passage, especially verse 29, the Lord give unto them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither any man be able to pluck them out of the hands of the Lord, and in verse 30, the hands of the Father (how is that so? Because verse 30, the Father and the Son is one, this could be another topic). Now, let us examine the passage. The context is about the sheep of the Lord, whom he knows, and follows Him. To them he gives eternal life. They shall never perish, as long as they hear His voice and they follow the Lord. Those who would not follow the voice of the Lord will perish of course! One could not say that a person who doesn't follow the Lord will not perish no matter what. We must continue to become sheep, we must continue to hear the shepherd's voice and we must continue to follow him to the end. As long as we do that, we shall never perish.

Now pertaining to the phrase neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand, we must note that to pluck, is the Greek word *harpazo*, the same word from which the term rapture came from, and it means to snatch away, to take away

by force. This plucking out, or snatching away is an outside force. Once we are in the hands of the Lord, no outside force could take us out from his hands, just as Romans 8:38-39 said, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It says other creature. No outside force nor outside creature can pluck us out, can take us by force away from the Lord's love, inside his hands. But what if just like the prodigal son, we wander away from the Father's house? Did the father force him not to go? Nor did he force him to go back? No He did not. We see here God's power and gentleness. His love is too powerful that not any outside force will be able to pluck us out of it, not any power of the devil can pluck us out by force, but if we will go out by ourselves, God is too gentle that He does not force you to remain. Not that we are more powerful than God, but because He is gentle and good. And His gentleness allows for us to exercise our will. Can we go out on our own volition from God's loving hand if we decide to? Yes, if we decide to. We can prove that many times in the Bible.

Adam and Eve were already inside the garden, in perfect communion with God Himself, but when they chose to disobey God's command, they also chose to be cast out from Him. The devil cannot take them by force out of the garden. The devil deceived Eve, then consequently making Adam sin also, then by their own choice of disobedience, they have been cast out. We can also find that many times in the history of the nation Israel. Were they elect people? Yes. Were they chosen nation? Yes, very much so, but we see, their being chosen and peculiar treasure of God has the condition of

remaining faithful to the Lord. Exodus 19:5-6, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. “ And we know many times the Israelites were unfaithful to the Lord, so they have been punished and cast out of their nation. Yes, God remains faithful to His covenant, that one day He will turn back to the nation Israel His salvation. But those who have not been faithful along the line of history has been cast out. We can site examples like Achan, Saul and other evil kings of Israel and Judah, including many Israelites who worshipped Baal and other idols. Their sins and disobedience, which they did willfully and consciously earned the rightful consequence of being cast out of the covenant. The same thing with the church. The church was predestined to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Ephesians 1:5, us there pertains to the church as a whole), but if we as individual believers would wander away and not be faithful to the end, we will be cast out and will not be a part of this great plan the church was predestined to.

We see, God wants his people to love and serve Him, but there is no true love when there is no choice, or if done against the will. He will not let anyone or anything take us away from Him, but if we choose to disobey Him, we will lose this security and protection of His mighty hands. We can also find the Lord saying to Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-38, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth

her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” He would like to gather the people of Jerusalem under His wings, but they would not, they do not want to, therefore, the Lord let them in their desolation.

Romans 11:17-22 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Here Paul alludes the Gentile church as wild olive branches that were grafted in to the olive tree, because some branches have been cut off. This means Israel as the chosen nation have rejected the Messiah, and because of this, many have been cut off from the promises. We see here them being the elect people of God did not guarantee their salvation. But rather on the individual choice and obedience. Then we are warned here by Paul that if the Lord did not spare the natural branches to be cut off, how much more the grafted wild branches? We must be therefore careful and not boast, for we can also be cut off; there is no unconditional and eternal guarantee here! The admonition to take heed is directed by Paul to everyone, and even reminded them of the severity of

God to those who fell, but goodness toward us, if we continue in his goodness, otherwise we shalt be also cut off.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

This is another verse that opposes eternal unconditional security, as the passage says, ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you. The phrase keep in memory is the Greek katecho which means to hold fast, or to retain, to stay, seize and withhold. We see here a condition for the continuous keeping of one's salvation, as indicated by the word if.

2 Corinthians 1:10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

Although the context may tell us that the Apostle Paul pertained to the perils they experienced in Asia (verse 8), this alludes to the tenses of God's salvation, as the word redemption also has past, present and future indicatives.

Delivered us, this is in the past tense, those who have been born again has been saved from the effect of sin: this is justification. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17.

And doth deliver pertains to present salvation. He

delivered us from the sins of the past, and now He still delivers us from the sins in the present time until His coming: this is sanctification. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Will yet deliver us, pertains to future salvation: This is glorification or redemption of the body. As in Ephesians 1:14, “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” In Romans 8:23, , “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

We see here that salvation is a continuous process, we need to live it and keep it, as it did not stop on the day we received the Lord. Of course, this keeping of the salvation does not rely on our own power to keep it, but we rely fully on the power of God to keep us

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into his grace of Christ unto another gospel.

As above mentioned, Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, since they were being persuaded to perform the Jewish rituals and rely on them for salvation. So the Apostle wrote to them rebuking them that they have been removed from the Lord Jesus Christ. How have they been removed from the Lord, if salvation is truly eternally and unconditionally secured? It is because by their own decision, they followed

these Judaizers instead of placing their trust and obeying Christ. If it had been possible for the Galatians, it would be possible for anyone to be removed from the Lord, if we will not take heed to the right doctrine.

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Here we are told that we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Note, we do not work for our salvation, for it is God who worked it out for us, by His grace and love, He planned and fulfilled it, He paid the price for it, by His precious blood. So we don't work so to receive it, but rather, now that we received it, we need to work it out. The word work out is the Greek *katergazomai* means to work fully, to perform. Meaning the salvation we received we need to continuously keep it, until our salvation be complete, the redemption of the purchased possession as stated by Ephesians 1:14, and Romans 8:23.

So this verse says we need to perform it, accomplish it, to keep it, to work it out, even with so much care and attention, as with fear and trembling, making it the most important thing in our lives. Does not it contradict Philippians 1:6, where it says God will be the one to perform it until the day of Christ? Who does the performing of the good work which God begun in us, will it be God or us?

The answer is both. It is a partnership. We don't rely on our own strength to do it, for it is the power of God that enables us to do it, nevertheless, we must perform it. He gives

the strength, even the desire to do it, but we must work it out ourselves. This is confirmed by the next verse, Philippians 2:13, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” While it is true we need to work it out, it is God who worketh in – He gives the power to do it.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

This is another verse that opposes “once saved always saved”. The Colossians were warned by the Apostle regarding philosophy and vain deceit, tradition of men and the rudiments of the world. False teaching was rampant along the region, since pagan philosophers have joined the church those times, and brought their beliefs to the Christian faith, and seducing many Christians to their false teachings. The word he used here spoil means to rob, to take away by force, to plunder, just as a victorious army can plunder the possessions of the losing side. So these false teachings can spoil the Christians, rob them of their reward, just as in Colossians 2:18, “Let no man beguile you of your reward”. Here beguile means to disqualify someone by an umpire or judge, as in the games in their times. This indicates these false teachings the apostle was warning them against, can disqualify them of their reward, by seducing them away from the salvation through the gospel of Christ. If salvation is something that cannot be lost, this warning would not be necessary.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Here we find what will happen before the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, there will come a falling away first and the antichrist will be revealed. The term falling away means apostasy from the faith, or deflecting or forsaking truth. Who would be these people that would fall away or apostatize? These are believers or Christians that would be offended, deceived and whose love would wax cold because iniquity would abound and persecution would come (Matthew 24:10-12). How would they be offended if they were not sincere Christians? Why is the need for them to be deceived if they did not know the truth in the first place? How would their love wax cold if it was not aflame with fervor before? These are true believers who would not endure unto the end, and thus lose their salvation.

1 Timothy 1:19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

Here Timothy was told by the apostle Paul to hold the faith, be steady, stand firm on it, be not moved by anything, and also good conscience. And that there are others, like Hymenaeus and Alexander(verse 20), who put away these things and their faith have made shipwreck. Their faith was destroyed.

1 Timothy 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Here we see the great responsibility of a pastor or teacher of the Word, in that salvation is guaranteed for him

and they that listen to him, if, he will take heed to himself and to the doctrine. We need to continue in the right doctrine, therefore continuing in the right lifestyle, for us to be continuously saved.

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Here we are told to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life. We need to seize the eternal life, hold fast to it. Make sure we will not be spoiled or beguiled of this reward. Why the need to lay hold on it, if it is something that is eternally secured no matter what?

Hebrews 6:4-6 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Here is a clear picture of a believer that falls away or apostatize from the faith. It is very much possible to happen, and so a believer's salvation is not eternally secured unconditionally. We have to endure and remain faithful to the end. No one can argue that those who were described here are true believers, because:

1. They were once enlightened. They were no longer in the darkness. They were translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Lord, from darkness unto his

marvelous light.

2. They have tasted the heavenly gift – that is the gift of the word of God, and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3)

3. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost – they have been fully born again. They have been saved. They have been once sealed by the Spirit, they have been made partakers of his righteousness and holiness, even the very Spirit of Christ.

No doubt these are real Christians, but take note, the word if they shall fall away, as it denotes probability, and not impossibility. The choice to fall away is always there for every believer, and this we must not do, not that we cannot do, but that we must by the help of the Lord, we endeavor not to do. This is a solemn and serious warning, along with Hebrews 10:26,29, “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”

Revelation 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Here we can find that the overcomer (pertaining to the church of Sardis, but by application, to every believer), the

Lord promised He will not blot out his name out of the book of life. We know that in the book of life is written the name of those who will be saved. But here we see that it is possible for our name to be blotted out from the book of life, and we must overcome for our name to not be blotted out. Because if the overcomer's name will not be blotted out, what would happen to those who would not overcome? The opposite would be the consequence: Those who would not overcome, their name would be blotted out from the book of life. We can also find somewhat of an allusion to this in the time of Moses, in Exodus 32:32-33, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. "

This is a long list of passages that stands in opposition to this tenet of Perseverance of the Saints, but it is surely not exhaustive. The point is that it is not in accordance to the whole doctrine of Scriptures. This doctrine is also dangerous, as this teaching simply removes the responsibility of a godly life off from the believer. And in a way, also removes the responsibility of sin off from the sinner's guilt, as if they just acted out their nature, and there is no guilt in that, much more than an animal acting out their wild instincts. Because for example, for a believer, why would I ever need to live in Godly fear and a life that is worthy of the gospel, why would I deprive myself from the pleasures of this world, if in any case, I will remain saved? This encourages believers to be neglectful and not serious of their spiritual lives, to compromise in the world, because anyway, 'I will still go to heaven since I am an elect'. The result is generations of believers with pale spirituality and a false hope of eternal life despite it. We would be lukewarm at the most, and we know that is not enough as the Lord will

spew us out.

This is a very popular tenet to subscribe to, as it is comforting and convenient. Convenient Christianity makes people comfortable, making them believe that halfhearted service is fine. This theology does not require full commitment to the Lord, but demands full commitment from Him. This invites for licentious living among the believers, all the while removing Godly fear and hatred for sin.

Dear readers, we need to be careful about this teaching, we must fully adhere to the Scriptures, and must not take it lightly. We must shun sin and remain faithful in serving the Lord, and just as the Apostle Peter said,

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:” 2 Peter 1:10

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

## 7



## Music and Its Spiritual Influence

## Origin of Music

No historian can trace the origin of music for sure, for it existed even before recorded history. That means man knew music even before he could write. Some theorize that it may have been copied by man from recurring natural sounds. Music is present in every tribe and locations of the world, as if it had been an innate part of man and his culture. The Bible tells us who invented musical instruments in Genesis 4:21, “And his brother’s name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.” Jubal was the son of

Lamech, grandson to Cain. His other brothers were; Jabal, the father of tent-dwelling cattle owners, and Tubalcain, the first iron and brass smith expert. Jubal was the inventor, as what the word father denotes, of harp, or categorically, all stringed instruments; and organ, all wind instruments. This would be about 6,000 years ago (Though the oldest “musical instrument” found is claimed to be 50,000 to 60,000 years old, a flute made of bear femur or thigh bone, believed to be made by “Neanderthals”. A subscriber of Gap Theory would categorize these as Pre-Adamites, and that would be a different topic).

That a more primitive form of music before Jubal existed, was probable, but the Bible was silent as to what it would be like. But in latter books of the Old Testament, we will find a more ancient history of music, and it is not of human origins;

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

Ezekiel 28:13

Although literally addressed to the King of Tyre, it has allusion to a spiritual being who predated Jubal, and even Adam. This is an allusion to the anointed cherub, to the Lucifer of Isaiah 14:12. Before iniquity was found in him, he was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty (verse 12). But his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and corrupted his wisdom by the reason of his brightness (verse 17), therefore he was brought down to the ground. He was spoken to have had the

workmanship of tabrets (something like a tambourine) and pipes. These are musical instruments, and therefore making history of music predating Adam, and even revealed music to be of heavenly/spiritual world origin. Also, we can find an allusion to him in Isaiah,

Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

Isaiah 14:11

Viols or nebel in Hebrew is a 12 stringed instrument, and some translations like ESV used the word harp. This was directed to the king of Babylon but also alluding to Lucifer, in his fall. We can note that in his fallen state, what his viols produced was not music, but noise. His proud heart made his music into something unpleasant to God's ear. So here we could find that Lucifer was a musician in heaven as we would have called it today. If it was true for Lucifer, then we could say that there are also other musician angels in heaven, as we could also find there are trumpets in heaven (Revelation 8:13, Revelation 9:14). To suppose that these instruments originated from man, then imitated by the heavens would be unthinkable; it must be the other way around, just as the tabernacle of Moses was likened from a heavenly pattern (Exodus 25:9), the true tabernacle in heaven (Hebrews 8:2). Music has its origin from heaven, and even the pagans in their myths and legends believed that music is the gift of the gods passed on to man.

Purpose of Music

Now, if music originated in heaven, for what purpose

do they use it there? There must only be one primary purpose of music in heaven, and that must be in worship of God. All these instruments and music in heaven are used to glorify and worship the King and Lord of its hosts.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: Colossians 1:16

So, all these angelic beings, as denoted by the terms thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, which are ranks among the spiritual beings, were all created by the Lord, and were all created for Him. So even music, the purpose of its creation and existence in heaven is to glorify the Almighty God. Just like in this passage,

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Job 38:7

The morning stars and sons of God here are the angels, these terms refer to angelic beings, just as the term heavenly hosts(See Genesis 6:2, Isaiah 14:12-13, 1 Kings 22:19). When God laid the foundation of the earth in creation, the angels sang and shouted for joy. They sang in praise and adoration of God in His wonderful works of creation.

Therefore, the primary purpose of music is worship, the worship of God. It may have been passed on or discovered by man, but not invented by him. So the primary purpose of music is worship, as it is somewhat a language, not of the brain, but of the soul, an expression of deep feelings and emotions. It is as if man discovered that the producing of

sounds, and arranging them consciously and aesthetically, can be used as a higher, yet deeper way of expressing what he feels, either with or without the aid of words. Since man has this innate concept of God, a Creator, or a higher Being than him, music has ever since been used to communicate to the unseen yet very real Source of all life.

Also, we can find in the Bible that there is joy among the angels of God in heaven, when a sinner repented, so music is also used in heaven to celebrate when sinners return to God, in the parables of lost sheep and lost coin;

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Luke 15:7

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke 15:10

These verses only say there is joy in the presence of angels of God, how do we know that there is music involved in these? We can find it on the next parable, the parable of the prodigal son, as we know it is a parallel parable to the two; when the prodigal son repented and returned, the Father received him, and was glad and started a feast;

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. Luke 15:25

#### Other Purposes of Music

As time went by, music had been a part of different

aspects of human life like celebrations, sorrows, wars and entertainment. Music is then used in celebrations of feasts, whether religious or civil. See the following examples:

Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. Leviticus 25:9

And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. 1 Samuel 18:6

So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 2 Samuel 6:15

And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. 1 Chronicles 15:16

Music was also used to warn people of coming dangers like war.

If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Ezekiel 33:3

Music is also used in civil celebrations such as

marriages, and even played a great part in preservation of history through songs and oral traditions. This is true in Israel and even in other nations of the world, as words become easier to remember accompanied with music.

### Spiritual Significance

While music has been of old, used, and was significant in Man's social and civic life, it also has been used to connect to the spiritual world. We can establish its spiritual significance in the following Biblical passages:

But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. 2 Kings 3:15

Here we find the Prophet Elisha, when he was summoned in the presence of 3 kings: Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Jehoram, king of Israel, and the king of Edom. Before he gave them word from the Lord, he first called for a minstrel, or a harpist as other translations used, a musician, to play. It seemed here music has a great part in preparing the spirit of the prophet to operate in the gift of prophecy; Music can set an atmosphere conducive for the prophecy, or somehow used by the prophet to ease and calm his mind, for his prophetic utterance.

Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was: 1 Chronicles 25:1

Here is another example of music being used in spiritual sense, as the above mentioned people were appointed to prophesy with musical instruments. This means accompanying their songs with prayers, therefore ministering to God and the people. This signifies the spiritual importance of music as it can be used to utter inspired words. We know that there are many songs in the book of Psalms that are prophetic, meaning God used composers to utter things in the spirit, prophecies concerning future events.

Another example of the importance of music is among the school of prophets; it seemed playing music unto God had been a part of their prophetic rituals. They regarded music to have spiritual significance:

After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: 1 Samuel 10:5

Also, when King Saul was disturbed and possessed by evil spirit, the anointed music by young David refreshed him, making the evil spirit to depart from him. Anointed music has its effect in the spiritual world, chasing away evil spirits. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him. 1 Samuel 16:23.

Music has this power that if used under the anointing of the Spirit of God, can rebuke evil spirits from people's lives.

We could also read the power of prayers accompanied by singing;

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. Acts 16:25-26

Paul and Silas praying and singing produced a great earthquake that shook the prisons' foundation, making its doors wide open, and every shackles loosed. Prayers and music can be a powerful combination to loose spiritual bondages and release people under prisons of sin in their lives!

#### Negative Spiritual Impact of Worldly Music

But just as it can be used for good, music can also be used by the enemy to have spiritual influence over our lives. We must be careful as to what we listen to, because not being cautious as to what music we consume, may lead even a sincere Christian into compromising and sin.

#### Music and Idolatry

In the times of captivity in Babylon, we can read about using music as a signal to force people to worship the golden image the king set up:

That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that

Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: Daniel 3:5

Just as praise and worship songs can lead the people to worship God, music can also be used by the devil to usher people to idolatry. Remember the primary purpose of music is worship, the only question is to whom the music pertains it to. We can find this to be true in the so called music industry nowadays. Rhythm and lyric wise, many of the songs people consume as offered by this industry, promote sex, violence, drugs, illicit relationships, sensuality, rebellion against authority and even mockery of God. This they do either implied or explicitly. Many such songs that enter the ears and hearts of people today lead them to the worship of things, experiences, people and, directly or indirectly, the god of this world, the devil. He was once a musician in heaven, mind us, so this tool he can expertly utilize to lead men to idolatrous living and other sins.

Songs that adore and worship men, fame and wealth are very common in our times, and singing them would lead us to idolatry, which is a sure step to falling into deeper sins, as stated in Romans 1:25, Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Music and the Soul

We cannot deny the power of music to affect our soul, as it is not just sound waves that enters the ears. Psychologist John Sloboda (1999) in his study proved that music is not just sound, but people consume it in the context of emotional experience. It means we enjoy music not because of its physical sensation to the ears, but rather because of the

emotions we feel consequent to listening to it. So we must be careful of what we listen to, and be sensitive as to what spirit the music carries. As above stated, music has spiritual origin, it is not to be used or consumed carelessly, as it affects the soul of the listener.

Have you ever felt depressed after listening to a song? Distressed or lonely? Angered? Feeling rebellious to your parents? All these emotions can be passed on by the music we listen to. The spirit by which the composer made the rhythm and lyrics is being carried into the end consumer. We must practice discernment, and try every spirit if it is of God. That's why we as Christians are discouraged by our pastors from listening and singing worldly music.

What struggles we might have lately could be the result of what we have been listening to (and watching). If we are struggling on prayer, listening and studying the Word of God, struggles with our flesh and mind, anger, hatred, negativity, wanting to be secluded from the fellowship of other Christians, disobedience to parents and other authorities, and many others – we might want to check our playlists, our MP3's, the songs that we usually listen to. It has tremendous effect on us, and might as well delete songs of worldly influence and refrain from listening them. (I'm not saying it will solve all our struggles, but that would be a good start, or maybe something we might have been missing). Just as the Apostle said, we must not let the world squeeze our mind into its own mold:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:2

It's Not Just About the Lyrics

“Well, Pastor, the lyrics does not say anything about sex, violence or rebellion, I think there's nothing wrong listening to this song.” We can say this to justify ourselves listening and singing to songs from the devil controlled music industry of today, and we can find ourselves slowly, but surely, falling to the trap of the enemy. Before we know it, it will lead us back to the same music we are warned about. The Bible says, A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Galatians 5:9. If we are not careful and we go about consuming these music, a little here and a little there, it will stain our purity of mind and spirit. Besides, we all already have a good share of these music even we do not want or intend to: we can hear it on malls, on jeepneys, when we go outside, these songs have been playing on the air everywhere; and to deliberately listen to them privately would just amplify its negative effect on our spirit.

Another thing that we should note is that, it is not only the lyrics that carries the spirit or negative messages to our souls. A study by Psychologist 1 Leonid Perlovsky (2010) says that the two components of songs, namely, the melody and lyrics, influence 2 different parts of the brain; songs do not influence the brain as a whole, but separately, by the lyrics and rhythm. This means that it is not just the lyrics that matter, but also the melody. The lyrics can be neutral, or even categorized as good, but the rhythm may be a different story. Another study by 2 Ali and Peynircio (2006) proved that melodies were even more dominant than the lyrics in eliciting emotions. So we may be listening to a song that has neutral or even good

lyrics, but carries a negative spirit through the melody. We can note that ancient paganism and spiritism rituals involved only ritual sounds or music, and no lyrics. Different pagan rituals summon spirits with percussions and wind musical instruments without much words. So the lyrics should not be the sole basis of our discretion towards or against songs, but also the rhythm.

For example, rock and roll was born in spirit of rebellion and sensuality characterized by the 1940's to 1950's. It was usually associated with drugs, sex and rebellion, expressed by rock artists who usually are men having long hair, which the Bible clearly rejects in 1 Corinthians 11:14. This was the spirit Rock and Roll born into, and the same spirit can be transferred to the listener, eventually, even having the feeling of the need to imitate the image and lifestyle of these rock artists. We often find consumers of Rock and Roll music after quite some time adopt the apparel and image of their favorite artists. As they say, imitation is the highest level of praise one person can give another. Also, another category under this, Rock Metal, or Heavy Metal, which focuses on and characterized more by heavy sound distortion over lyrics, is also associated with Satanism and the occult. One cannot argue that this doesn't affect the listener spiritually, just because it doesn't have much words in it.

We must therefore be careful as there are also music today categorized as Christian Rock and Roll, or Christian Hiphop. They have "Christian" lyrics, but carried through rhythm that are clearly associated with worldly influences. It clearly signifies the enemy's strategy of using music to penetrate into our lives. If the devil, as clearly stated in the Bible and church history, deceived people by propagating false

doctrines and teachings, would it not be possible for him to deceive Christians through music too? Yes, he would definitely do so, and the children of God must be discerning and wise as to what music we sing to and listen to. For instance, what if for example, a person used to have a sinful lifestyle influenced by these worldly music in the past, then was converted into Christ. What would he feel if he hears the church singing the same music genre he used to enjoy in his sinful past, but now, with “Christian” lyrics? Even with Christian wordings, he would associate the rhythm, and the musical style to his past life, and will be brought to remembrance the life he used to have. Many of us who have not experienced such lives in the past may not have the same memories and association, but we can still determine the same if we will be using our discerning of spirits(1 John 4:1).

### Music and Doctrine

Regarding doctrines, we must also be aware that false doctrine could also be taught through singing. See for instance this passage by the Apostle Paul to the Colossians,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Colossians 3:16

We must note that the Colossian church that time was endangered by false teachers and doctrines, such as pagan philosophies and Judaizers, that were rampant in the region; and that was the main reason Paul wrote to them. The Apostle warned them to “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after

the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Colossians 2:8. And so as part of his recommendation to combat false teachings, he told them to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom, meaning to be established in the doctrine of Christ. And one way they can do it is by, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. So from this passage, we see that psalms, hymns and spiritual songs can be used in the purpose of teaching and admonishing one another in the word of Christ. While the main purpose of music in the church is for worshipping God, it can also be used to teach doctrine. Therefore, we must make sure that the songs we sing in the church speaks and teaches right doctrine!

I could personally attest that much of the doctrines that stuck to me when I was a child, were those that were taught to us through songs. Songs about the Oneness of God, the Rapture, the Blood of Jesus, the Love of God, the Power of the Name of Jesus, and many more. Our songs teach doctrine and we would say, they stuck to our hearts and minds most of the time, more than the Pastor’s teaching. We could barely remember what our pastor taught last Sunday, but could vividly remember the lineup of songs we sang in Praise and Worship.

Then we should say, just as Paul instructed the Colossians, that we better make good use of our music in teaching and admonishing the saints in the right doctrine. And if we will not be careful, and sensitive, there can be some songs with false doctrines that might penetrate our theology, and cause confusion among the saints. The church must be careful in checking the doctrine, teaching and attitude towards God and his people, that songs impart to the

worshippers, as these are proven to be more effective teachers of doctrine, as the rhythm makes the words much easier to be remembered, recalled and enforced to the listeners.

Quoting 3 Albert Barnes' commentary on the same passage on Colossians, "Dr. Johnson said that if he were allowed to make the ballads of a nation, he cared not who made the laws. It is true in a more important sense that he who is permitted to make the hymns of a church, need care little who preaches, or who makes the creed." The musicians and composers have such a great impact and influence in the theology of the church, and we could sense this danger of false doctrines being implanted to the minds of the members, if we will not be careful, as we could observe a heightened interest to Christian music among the congregation, compared to the teaching of the Word. While Praise and Worship is the main reason of us coming to church on Sundays, we must not disregard Sunday School Classes, where we are grounded in doctrine, making our foundation in the Word of God strong and established, That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; Ephesians 4:14. We must be careful, not any "Christian" songs will do. Not all "Christian" songs are doctrinally correct, therefore we must scrutinize and pray in choosing the songs we sing. There are some "inspirational songs" that are injected with New Age doctrine, teachings on evolution, hyper-grace, polytheism, universalism, pantheism, and many more. In the end, the Word of God is still the measuring stick as to how we judge doctrine and not the emotional exuberance any song may bring to our feelings.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, and as we already have sited, music has a tremendous effect on our spirituality and walk in the Lord. We must not regard it as unimportant, nor be deceived into believing that compromising in this aspect is not harmful to our souls. We must make use of music in its purest and main purpose, and that is to express our praise, thankfulness and worship unto the Lord. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. James 5:13. We must ask the guidance of the Holy Ghost in everything, the music we listen to included. We must use music for the glory of the Lord, for the edification of the saints and maintaining good fellowship and spirit among the believers.

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Ephesians 5:19

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

## References:

- 1 Perlovsky, L. (2010). Musical emotions: Functions, origins, evolution.
- 2 Ali, S. O., & Pernicio (2006). Songs and emotions: Are lyrics and melodies equal partners? *Psychology of Music*, 34
- 3 Barnes, Albert. Barnes' Bible Commentary

## 8



## I Know My Redeemer Liveth

Job 19:25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

Probably written by Job himself, this is the most ancient of the books, written contemporarily with Abraham. This means, Job was not from Israel, and was not a Jew, but it is certain he knew and worshipped the One True God, so it was

not only Abraham who knew the One true God by that time, as we have Job and also Melchizedek, who was a High Priest of the Most High; though we don't particularly know what happened to Job's descendants, if they continued in Job's faith.

Job's afflictions were written, all his livelihood and family gone, despised by his wife and persecuted by his friends. We can read in Chapter 19 Job's lament. And within these cries for mercy that Job uttered, divine inspiration came out of his mouth, as he spoke in faith,

Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

2 Main points of discussion here;

1. The Redeemer /goel/(verse 25). As ancient times as of were Job's, the concept of a redeemer, has been a universal truth. The concept of a redeemer can also be found in other ancient civilizations and societies. We can find the idea institutionalized by the Law of Moses in Leviticus 25:25, about the nearest kinsman who has the right and responsibility to redeem, to buy back the properties that a man might have sold because of poverty. Also the Torah mentions of the Avenger (Numbers 35:12, Deuteronomy 19:6, 19:12) and this is also the right of the nearest kinsman. That is the right to

execute vengeance upon the person who had killed another. This is widely accepted norm in the ancient times, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. This is the eastern rule of kinsman. That is why in the time of Moses, they established cities of refuge for people who have killed a person accidentally, so the case can be tried fairly, and protect the man slayer from the avenger of blood.

So here Job is saying that his goel, his redeemer, the one who will vindicate him, and right all the things that have been done wrong to him, He lives. This is an ancient expression, old texts translates this as My Redeemer is the One Who Lives, an ancient depiction of the Living God.

Job was saying here God will vindicate him. He will do it. This is a clear indication of his trust in the Lord. His kinsfolk and family won't do it, they won't be his goel or redeemer, but he knows God will pick up his cause and bring back his honor.

Deuteronomy 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

Psalms 94:1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Acts 3:20-21 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Also this indicates Job and the Old Testament saints all have future hope, faith to the coming redeemer. The fulfillment of the first prophecy in Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman, who will come to crush the head of the serpent.

Job was not just referring to God in heaven pleading his cause, but in divine inspiration, he uttered that the Redeemer, will one day come to the earth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. This is a divine utterance of the coming Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel and the whole world, that was sold under sin.

The Redeemer or goel needs to be a kinsman, so God was manifest in the flesh, to have all the legal rights to become a kinsman-redeemer:

Hebrews 2:14-17 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

God was manifest in the flesh, he partook of the nature of the flesh, to be our kinsman. He took the seed of Abraham. So when we believed in the Lord, and obeyed his gospel, he already redeemed our souls from sin and its effect, which is death. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The believer becomes redeemed! The soul has been redeemed of sin, but we are still waiting for the redemption of the body, as our mortal bodies are still subject to corruption, until the full redemption of our bodies, in the Lord's second coming.

Romans 8:22-23 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Ephesians 1:13-14 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time was

come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Titus 2:13-14 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

So Job here expressed his strong belief, that although none of his family, or friends would be willing to side with him, no one was willing to redeem all the lost he had, and to take away the shame he was upon, God, the One Who Liveth, the Living God, is his Redeemer, his goel. Just as David, who said, When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. Psalms 27:10 Job knows God will pick him, vindicate him, and restore him, just as a proper redeemer would to his kinsman. He would even exact vengeance to the enemy that caused all this. That his Redeemer, God himself, would one day stand upon the earth, God Himself would come to execute the redemption and destroy the enemy. Under divine inspiration, Job uttered such great truths about the coming redemption and incarnation!

2. Job's belief in the resurrection (Verses 26-27). He is the One who Liveth, He is a Living God, therefore, He is God of the Living and not of the dead. In Matthew 22:32, this is what the Lord Jesus said to the Sadducee who tried to question Him regarding the resurrection(as the Sadducees do not believe in the afterlife, and the spiritual world). I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. He said that

he who doesn't believe in the resurrection err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God.(verse 29).

Job believed in the bodily resurrection. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: At this point of hopelessness in his life, it was as if Job already accepted he might be dying, but he stated in faith, that even after he decomposes as a corpse, in his flesh, he will see God. Meaning here Job attested to the belief of a bodily resurrection. This is a proof of the then existing belief of being raised from the dead. Abraham also had the same belief, as revealed in the book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham when he offered Isaac in obedience to God's command, believed that God can raise him up from the dead. Though Abraham's belief is an immediate resurrection, as he knows Isaac is the promised heir, and God will make a nation out of him through Isaac, so even if he offered him, God will raise Isaac from the dead, to fulfill his promise to Abraham. In here we can see Abraham's great faith, that is trust in the promise of God, that He will fulfill it, this same faith made him to be called the Father of faith.

Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. Here Job declared his belief of a future resurrection,

wherein he would still be him – he being resurrected in his same consciousness, as I shall see for myself, mine eyes, and not of another. Here is also expressed his faith of finally seeing God face to face, as no man shall see God and live, as in Exodus 33:20, And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. That is true, but in our resurrected state, we will be able to see Him face to face;

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

The belief in the resurrection from the dead is an important part of the Christian doctrine. It is one of the basic doctrines of Christ as stated in the book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Being principle, all Christians should have a solid belief on the resurrection of the dead, as in the other principles as faith, repentance, baptisms, laying on of hands and eternal judgment. The belief in the resurrection is crucial to one's faith, as also argued by Paul on his letter to the Corinthians of whom some did not believe in the resurrection. We can find a whole chapter dedicated by Paul on this topic in 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:13-17 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Not believing in the resurrection of the dead is equivalent to not believing that Christ rose from the dead; and not believing that Christ rose from the dead is not believing to the gospel at all, and makes the Apostles liars and false witnesses. Them believing then becomes vain, it has no virtue, it has no substance, it becomes empty. That is how crucial the belief in the resurrection is.

1Corinthians 15:18-19 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

This doesn't just jeopardize their faith, but even their future hope is shattered. If there is no resurrection of the dead, they who were martyred for Christ have died in vain. They have perished forever. And that makes Christians the most miserable of all men. Having suffered great persecutions in this life then, having no future hope of a life to come. This was Paul's argument against those who did not believe in the resurrection. That is how crucial it is in our theology. We as Christians have this hope of a future glorification in the coming of our Lord. Those who have their hope in Christ only in this world will be lured into many temptations and may even suppose that gain is godliness (1 Timothy 6:5).

1 Corinthians 15:30-32 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

Paul further argued, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then why would they let their lives be jeopardized continuously? Because of the preaching of the gospel, the Apostles exposed their lives in dangers of death, and why do it if there is no resurrection? Would it not be wiser then to save and preserve your life instead, if you only have one life, that is your life here on earth, in this body? Why would I fight the beasts in Ephesus, Paul said, maybe pertaining to the people there who tried to kill him because of the gospel; what advantage, what benefit would it be to do that if the dead rise not? Is not it better then to eat and drink, just live with all the pleasures the world can offer because tomorrow we die and that's the end of it? What then was the joy that was set before Christ, because of which he endured the cross and despised the shame?(Hebrews 12:2)

1Corinthians 15:50-55 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death

is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Here Paul explained the greatness of the coming resurrection and glorification of the saints. As our corruptible flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God, for the coming kingdom is perfect, and incorruptible, the inhabitants thereof should also have incorruptible bodies. The dead in Christ shall raise first (also see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and those who are still alive and remaineth shall be changed in a twinkling of an eye: the corruptible body will be changed to incorruptible, glorified body. Bodily death, which is the last enemy to destroy (1 Corinthians 15:26), will be swallowed up in victory – just as new life springs forth from the seed that just died and was buried, so the eternal life springs forth from the flesh that was dead.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Paul then, exhorted them to continue in serving God, for everything is not in vain. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). Labouring and even dying for Christ is never in vain, for there is resurrection of the dead.

This great truth, a principle doctrine, was expressed by Job in the middle of his greatest trial. This great truth must be something God has placed in Job's heart, and in the midst of all that happened to him, he chose to declare and to hold on to this great truth. This could also be what held Job together, as this gave him hope for a future restoration and

vindication.

This belief of the Redeemer and resurrection was foretold by the ancient Job; in his despair and crying out for God, he uttered this strong belief, that he even wanted these words of him be written in a book, better yet, be etched in a stone. Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! Job 19:23-24. He doesn't just hope for it to be true; it wasn't just a desperate hope or wishful thinking he had because of his great despair. He did not say, I hope, or I wish, or I think – he said, I KNOW My Redeemer Liveth! He wanted all creation to know that on his darkest moments, he had this great unmoving trust. He might not understand the reasons, but still, his great trust in God made him to have not just belief or hope, but something more substantial – knowledge, as for he declared, I know. In his grieved condition, he expressed such great truths, making him a great example for us; that is to have faith in the Lord, in His goodness and justice; and that this great God is forever alive, therefore we can all put our trust in Him. Just as the good old song says,

And because He lives,  
I can face tomorrow.  
Because he lives,  
All fear is gone.  
And because I KNOW, I KNOW  
He holds the future.  
And life is worth a living  
Just Because He lives.

All Quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 9

## The God of The Bible (versus other gods)

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. 1 Corinthians 8: 5-6

Estimates are, there are 24 Million – 12 Billion gods worshipped by man since his existence. There are gods that the Taoists worship, the gods of the Greek mythology, gods of the Norse mythology, the pantheons of Hindu religion, and some people also worship their ancestors. Out of all these gods, how do we know that the God of the Bible whom we worship, is the real one? How do we compare Him with these other gods? Since I have been raised in a country that considers itself a Christian nation, I did not think about it before, but what if you were born and raised in a country with different religion, how would the God of the Bible appeal to you? Would you find Him superior over other gods? Would you find Him great, and greatly to be praised: and is to be feared above all gods. (Psalms 96:4)?

In the Judeo-Christian perspective, we know that there is no other God, For all the gods of the nations are idols:

but the LORD made the heavens. Psalms 96:5. Idols meaning vain or of no value, /eliyl/ in Hebrew, for these false gods are devils and evil spirits who deceived and claimed the worship of men:

They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Deuteronomy 2:17

And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood Psalms 106:36-38

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.1 Corinthians 10:20

These devils deceived the nations and posed themselves as gods, but for the sake of comparison, and to prove that the God of the Bible, who was called Jehovah, or Yahweh in the Old Testament, and revealed Himself in the flesh as Jesus Christ in the New Testament, is a greater God, is the True God, let us try to compare Him with other gods other people serve and worship.

Our God is Omnipotent

Why the God of the Bible is the true God? One good reason is because He is omnipotent. It means He is all powerful, He has got all the power. If somebody is to offer his

worship to a certain being, or acknowledge that being as his god, he better make sure that god he serves is powerful enough.

Most pagan idols are not all powerful. See for example the gods of the Greek mythology. Their primary god Zeus is the god of lightning. According to their belief, Zeus controls the lightning with his spear. Although considered the king of gods in Olympia, and probably the most powerful among them all in their mythology, Zeus is not all-powerful. He doesn't have control over the sea, for example, for his brother, Poseidon, is the god that has power over the seas. Aeolus is the king of the winds. Ares is their warrior god. Athena is their goddess of wisdom. Demeter the goddess of crops. Apollo the god of the sun. The list could go on and on, but we see the point. They have many gods sharing powers, and not one God who has all the powers.

That makes our God greater! Why would you choose to worship a god who has limits with his power? The same is true with the gods of other mythologies, and even the pantheons of gods the Canaanites worship, like Baal and Ashteroth. Not like the gods of the Greeks and many pagan nations, our God, the God of the Bible, Jehovah of Old, and Jesus Christ of the New Testament, He has all the power!

Which in his times he shall shew who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; 1 Timothy 6:15

Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD,

and thou art exalted as head above all. 1 Chronicles 29:11

Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: Jeremiah 32:17

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. Isaiah 40:28

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Matthew 28:18

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Revelation 1:8

He just doesn't control the sky, the weather, the seas, the wind, and the nature as a whole, He controls and owns everything. Also unlike the Hindus, where they have Brahma as the creator, Vishnu as the preserver, and Shiva as the destroyer; Our God did not need any help in the creation, as In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth Genesis 1:1 . He is also the one preserving it as he upholdeth all things by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3). And in His second coming, He will also be the one to melt the elements in prevent heat (2 Peter 3:10-12), to make way for the new heavens and new earth. He is God alone! He is all powerful!

That's why in whatever needs we may have, we just call on one God, no need to call different gods for healing, another one for blessing, another one for safety on the seas,

a different god for asking wisdom. No, He is the Great I Am, He is the Provider, the Healer, the God our Peace, He is our victory, our Salvation, our All in All. Praise God!

What would happen to us if the god who is in charge of us and the entire cosmos is a limited god just like Zeus? He won't be capable enough to manage everything, that's why we praise the Lord, for the One who is in charge is the True God, the Omnipotent God: And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Revelation 19:6

Oh what a mighty God we serve!

Our God is Omniscient (All-Knowing)

The pagan gods according to their own myths and stories are often deceived by men. In Greek mythology, Zeus and other gods were often challenged and tricked. In the story of Prometheus, he tricked Zeus, and later on, he even stole fire from Zeus for the benefit of mankind. This means this "god" clearly is not omniscient, as he can be fooled by man! Also, Demeter has to ask Apollo before knowing Persephone was abducted by Hades.

In Norse mythology, their primary god Odin, traded one of his eyes, to drink from the well of wisdom to gain knowledge. The devas or gods of Hinduism, got instructions from Buddha to attain liberation from suffering. Canaanite priests and priestesses of Baal know their god's weakness.

These other gods are not wise and all knowing. On the other

hand, Our God, is great and unsearchable in His wisdom! No man can possibly trick God for He knows all things.

O Lord thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Psalms 139:1-2

I know it is of a truth: but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Job 9:2-4

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Isaiah 46:10

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Timothy 1:17

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. Jude 1:25

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Romans 11:33

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. Isaiah 40:28

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? Matthew 9:4

How would one be able to trust his god, if the god whom he chose to serve does not know all things? How would you be able to put all confidence to someone whom you know could be mistaken or fooled? But not with our God! Our God is wise, He just doesn't know what is ahead, He even declares the end from the beginning! He is in control, and His wisdom is perfect and unsearchable, and it is just reasonable that we put all our trust and confidence to this God, because He could never be mistaken! He knows what He is doing, and trusting in Him makes our lives established like a tree. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. Jeremiah 17:7-8. It's better to trust the Lord and lean not unto our own understanding Proverbs 3:5, for his plans are perfect. He is the God Who knows what He is doing, so trust Him no matter what the circumstance is. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Jeremiah 29:11 We also cannot hide anything from Him, as he knows our hearts, even more than we do:

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:10

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our

heart, and knoweth all things. 1 John 3:20

Our God is Omnipresent

Pagan idols are territorial gods, there is of the sky, another of the sea, god of the field, god of the underworld. Zeus is the sky god, Poseidon is the god of the seas, Hades is the god of the underworld. They have their meeting place in Mt. Olympus. Greeks also observe territorial patronization of their gods, as they choose which god they worship in their cities. Baal seemed to only occupy Canaan and Mesopotamia. Also they have territorial Baals, like Baal-Peor and Baal-Zephon; these Baals only occupy Peor and Zephon, accordingly.

These gods of the pagans seemed like political authorities with limited areas of jurisdictions (see Ephesians 6:12). Once out of the place of their jurisdiction, they lose their power. How would these gods be able to save his worshipper, if he has geographical limits? What if a person goes to other places of the globe, then how would his “god” help him?

Not with our God! While they have spaces they operate in, the God of the Bible owns everything.

The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Psalms 24:1

Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? Isaiah 66:1

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the

heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? 1 Kings 8:27

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. Psalms 139:7-8

There is an account in the Bible where the Syrians assumed that the God of Israel is just like their gods, which are territorial and limited. After defeat, they suggested to the king of Syria, Ben-hadad, to change the location of the next battle to ensure victory:

And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. 1 Kings 20:23

They thought Jehovah was only God in the mountainous lands of Israel, and that He is no longer powerful to help Israel if battle be fought in the plains! God proved them wrong in the next battle:

And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 1 Kings 20:28

So, they battled, this time in the plains, and not in the hills, and the result was the same! Israel still won because God

helped them. God showed the Syrians that He is unlike their gods who have territories and limitations of jurisdiction – He is God everywhere! He is God of the hills, He is God of the plains, He is God even in the valleys of the shadow of death Psalms 23:4. He is God of the seas, He is God of the skies, He is Lord of the heavens, he is God who created and owns the earth and all that dwells therein! He is everywhere present, and there is no location and situation in life we may have, that is out of His reach. He can help us wherever and whatever situation we may have. There is no dead spot on earth where we cannot reach Him in prayer! He can help us, and He can also bless us everywhere, as long as we remain obedient to Him. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Deuteronomy 28:2-3.

Our God is God of everything and everywhere, and not just of a limited space!

Our God is Self-Existent

Other ancient cultures saw their gods as needy beings who competed for their worship and devotions. They fight over the worship of man, as if they needed them for their power and survival. Other pagan deities has the need to recover and replenish their powers, when depleted. Their gods are dependent to other beings for the maintenance of their power and existence. In Hinduism, their gods needed the Amrita, an elixir that will provide them immortality and great power. The ambrosia in Greek mythology is what their gods drink, to heal and banish death.

God means the Self-existent One, and this does not properly describe the gods of the pagans. The God of the Bible, who was God, even before time immemorial, His power does not deplete, nor is dependent to any external factor, or thing. He is God by Himself.

Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. Acts 17:24

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. Colossians 1:16

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Isaiah 40:28-29

We see, our God does not take anything for His own need or survival, actually, he is the One who gives us life and strength! His power doesn't deplete. We don't have to worry about our God having the need to recharge of His power to help us, for His power is unlimited and doesn't go empty.

Our God is Good

Pagan deities are cruel, lustful, deceitful, violent and competitive. We can site many pagan gods who are immoral

and selfish. Zeus many times, for example, cheated on his wife, Hera. Zeus' father, Cronus, ate most of his children, fearing a prophecy that one of them would overthrow him. Hades, or Pluto as he was called by the Romans, abducted Persephone to be his bride. Athena turned a woman named Arachne into a spider for losing a battle with her. The Chinese god Gong Gong is very cruel and irritable, always waging wars. Tezcatlipoca, an Aztec deity, would demand war prisoners to be sacrificed yearly, by having their hearts ripped out.

In contrast, our God is a good God, a gracious and merciful God. He is also ever true to His word and doesn't lie.

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Mark 10:18

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Psalms 103:8

His goodness and love even led Him to manifest in the flesh, and die on the cross for the salvation of His people:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Since He is a good God, His Word also teaches us to be good even to those who are not good to us:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that

hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; Matthew 5:44

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:19-21

This is certainly not exhaustive, as there are many other attributes that our God has, that is greater, far greater compared to the gods the pagans worship; nevertheless, the point is established – Only our God, the God of the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ has all the perfect attributes befitting to the title God. He has all the power, all the wisdom and knowledge, He has no limitations as to His territory, He is God alone, from beginning to the end, the Everlasting God, the Almighty, the Prince of Peace. He is all we ever need, and serving and worshipping Him is the great purpose of our lives. God has proven Himself to the nations to be the Only One.

Have we heard a blind man prayed for in the name of Allah, and his eyes opened? Have you heard of anybody healed in the name of Buddha? Did any dead rise again to life in the name of Zoroaster? Did Mohammed raise from the dead, and is alive forevermore? Have you heard a man possessed by demons delivered in the mention of the name of Shiva? Have you heard of a God who made Himself into a man, only to die and save people who are sinners, people who are rebels and enemies of Him? To make them reconciled to Himself, and give them the gift of eternal life, by paying their sins, and shedding blood for their redemption?

No, for our God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ stands alone, He is God alone, and no one can be compared to Him. His love is too great. His mercy and grace is unheard of in other religions. His power and authority sits far above all powers of this world and of the one to come. His name is above all names, and at the name of Jesus, every knee would bow, of things in heaven, and of things on earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue would confess, that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11). And yes, that include even the knees and tongues of Zeus, and his troops in Olympus.

I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Isaiah 45:23

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: Isaiah 45:5

To whom then will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? Isaiah 46:5

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 10



## Can There Any Good Thing Come Out of Nazareth?

Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. John 1:45-46

Have you ever been judged by anyone because of the place you grew up in? The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was questioned as to being the Messiah, because he came from

the insignificant place, Nazareth.

Here we find in John 1 the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and him calling His disciples to follow Him, after He was baptized by John the Baptist. Two disciples of John heard him saying Jesus is the Lamb of God, and one of these was Andrew, who told it to his brother Simon.(John 1:40-42)

The following day, Jesus called Philip.

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. John 1:43-44

Then it was Philip who told his friend Nathanael about Jesus of Nazareth, as being the promised King and Saviour of Israel, and this, Nathanael could not just believe.

Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. John 1:45-46

First we must take note that the Jews by this time had this great Messianic hope. They have been waiting for the promised Saviour, especially in this time when they were under the Roman empire, and their pride of being the chosen people of God being trodden upon. They were under a puppet king, and were forced to pay taxes to a heathen leader, the Roman emperor. All Hebrew people had this anticipation of

the Christ, and was a popular topic in the synagogues. If twitter had been available that time, it would always be on the most #trending topics.

Since the beginning pages of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Scriptures, there had already been an allusion to Him. In Genesis 3:15, He was prophesied as the Seed of the Woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

He was also spoken of by Moses as the Prophet,

Deuteronomy 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

He was promised to David by God through the prophet Nathan,

2 Samuel 7:12-13 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

He was also spoken of by the prophets like Ezekiel,

Ezekiel 37:22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither

shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

So if we were on Nathanael's shoes, a Jew who is very particularly anticipating the coming of the Promised Deliverer, and your friend comes to you saying, He whom all the nation and the ages waits for has come, you would really want to make sure if He really is the One. And who is this person whom Philip was saying to be the Messiah?

He was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. Maybe in Nathanael's mind, Is Philip really sure? First, the name Jesus, or Yeshua, which is another form for Joshua or Hosea, was a common name at the time. It did not sound appealing to him. There may be many of the same name in that time, and to distinguish who this Jesus was, Philip specified that He was from Nazareth, and to be more specific, He was the Son of Joseph.

And that is the thing that made Nathanael to question Philip's claim, by asking, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Why Nazareth of all places? Nazareth was a small town in Galilee, and it was an insignificant town at the time. Why would the Messiah come from Nazareth?

As a traditional Hebrew, one would really question the Christ coming from Nazareth. This was also the dilemma of the people of Jerusalem some time after these events;

John 7:40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David

was?

The Messiah, as foretold by Scriptures would not be born in Nazareth, but in Bethlehem, the same place where David the King was born. We can find it in Micah 5:2,

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

So Nathanael questioning Jesus by the place He was from has some basis on it, for the Messiah should have been from Bethlehem in Judah and not the insignificant Nazareth. This could have been taught to them by Rabbis in their synagogues. The Messiah would fulfill all the prophecies and that would be the sign for the people of Israel that their redemption has come. They were all looking for these, as anyone could claim He is the Christ if there would be no distinguishing marks as to what the Saviour would be like. So Nathanael was expecting the Christ would be from Bethlehem and not Nazareth.

The truth is, he just didn't know the back story, because Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem in Judah! Both Mary and Joseph, although residing in Nazareth, was originally from Bethlehem, and when Jesus was to be born, Augustus Caesar, the Roman emperor, decreed that all people be taxed, in each one's own city. They went to Bethlehem to comply, and that was where Jesus was born in a manger, in fulfillment of the prophecies that the Christ would come from Bethlehem Ephratah. (See Luke 2:1-6)

But Herod's attempt to kill the new born King of the

Jews made Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus to flee to Egypt, by instruction of God through an angel until Herod's death (Matthew 2:13-15). And when Herod died, they went back to Israel, but in fear of the successor being Archelaus, Herod's son, they did not go back to Bethlehem in Judah, but rather they turned aside to other parts of Galilee, by God's instruction through a dream (Matthew 2:22).

Matthew 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

So Jesus being from Bethlehem of Judah, as prophesied regarding the Saviour, grew and lived most of His human life in Nazareth, and was called a Nazarene (dweller of Nazareth), fulfilling the prophets. Now, where in the Scriptures was the Messiah foretold to become a Nazarene?

The general explanation would be in Isaiah.

Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

The Messiah here was called the Branch, /netzer/ in Hebrew, which was also the root word or etymology of Nazareth. Also, there seemed to have had proverbial despising and contempt of Nazareth in those times, being an insignificant place. It has no historical value to the Jews, and also held no particular importance in their Scriptures. So the Messiah being foretold as a Nazarene also meant that He would live a humble life, and that He would be despised and rejected by people.

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

So Nathanael was like, “Jesus Who? Son of Joseph, from Nazareth?” This was so, because the Jews expected the Messiah to be coming in glory to finally relieve them from the oppression of the Romans. They expected Him to be a royalty, from the royal lineage of King David, and not a son of a nobody from Nazareth. Well, little did Nathanael know, that the Lord Jesus really was of royal lineage.

Although living in the humble place of Nazareth, both Mary and Joseph (Jesus’ foster father) were from the house of David. We can find Joseph’s lineage being traced from David in Matthew 1:1-16, while on the maternal side, also from the family of David, in Luke 3:23-38. The Jews expected their Saviour to be a Royalty coming in glory to deliver them and conquer the oppressors as a Mighty King, but who came to them, was a Royalty indeed, a King indeed, but presented Himself as a humble carpenter from Nazareth, and this most did not expect and accept.

John 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

So although Nathanael’s prejudice might have some bases, we must say that there’s really more to the person than the place and family one came from. Many people tend to judge a person’s worth by the place they live in, among other things such as their past, educational attainment, and possessions. That’s why there are many people who assume

fake cyber identities on Social Media nowadays, posing to be living in nice subdivisions, in a nice house with nice cars and possessions, although not true, to present themselves as persons who they are not, to impress people no one knows who. Many are even ashamed of their own family and neighborhood, in fear of judgment from their peers.

Man having lost his sense of worth because of sin and alienation from God, tend to find his value from external things such as material possessions, achievements, credentials, and even gets pride and prestige even from the community he is from. Being desperate in trying to retrieve lost sense of importance, we sometimes resort to such things, all the while, turning away from God, of whom we can really find our true worth from. So when a person happened to come from a depressed community, or situation, or family, it usually becomes a cause of intimidation, fear and shame, therefore losing sight of his/her own value which derives from God and not on these external factors. These become hindrances for people to fulfill God's plan and stand up to their full potential.

We must remember, not with God! He uses the rejected and despised to meet the strong! We could cite many examples such as Gideon and his 300, David vs. Goliath, among others.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

God in His great wisdom, chose to manifest in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth. He could have been Jesus of Jerusalem, and the scribes would have revered Him. Or He could have chosen to become Jesus of Bethlehem, and that would have been more appealing to the Jews for being the town of David. Or He could have been Jesus of Rome, and the heathens could have been terrified in hearing His name. Or why did He not chose to be Jesus of Athens? The Greeks would have been impressed. But no, He chose to become Jesus Christ of Nazareth, to be despised, humble and insignificant, that the glory would not be derived from the place where He grew up in, but that He be known because of the power of God manifest in His works, that a Pharisee would confess, no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (John 3:2)

The Lord showed His power doesn't depend on the place He was from, for the truth is, He was God incarnate, and His going forth was from everlasting. God does not share His glory unto another, and He does not need to associate His name with a great renowned place, for His name is already great by Itself! He does not need to indicate He was from Harvard, nor did He need to write Jesus Christ, PhD to convince the people they needed to listen to Him. Rather, what the Lord chose to be the suffix to His name Jesus is the insignificant town of Nazareth. So everywhere, Jesus became known as Jesus of Nazareth. Even after His death and resurrection, this was the same name the Apostles used to heal the lame man in the temple, among many others.

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

Even now, we use it often, in our prayers and preaching, we call the Lord, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. How far did the insignificant town go, since Nathanael asked this question, if ever a good thing will come out of it!

Also, our own prejudice could make us hesitate to step in faith. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? (Psalms 78:19) Many times we are Nathanael, asking and doubting the Lord in our lives. God, is this really possible? Can you really use someone like me? Can a great thing come out of this? Would this really work? Some of us do not have the need of somebody else to doubt us, and criticize us, and cast prejudice and despising upon us, because we are the big doubters of ourselves. We always have a hundred reasons why things won't work. While some of them are legitimate concerns, most of them are just our own fears and prejudices. How many times have you missed an opportunity because of doubt?

We must not let the past, and even our current situation, our Nazareth to hinder us, and cripple our faith in the Lord's power to work things out for us. The family and community we have been born into, are some of the things we did not choose, so we should accept it, and even if in case we have been born in a not-so-good circumstances, (so they call it) it should be the "despite of" of our determination, and not become a "because of" of our stagnation and demotivation. If you grew up in a depressed community, so what? Even Jesus was born in a manger, was attempted to be murdered, grew up as an immigrant in Egypt as a child, then stayed in Nazareth, a not so significant place in the time. All these, while He was the destined King, not to mention, the Son of God, Himself.

Can a good thing come out of insignificant places? Is it possible that wonderful things can happen out of the despised and the rejected? Can great ends spring out from humble beginnings? The Lord taking Nazareth with Him as His surname seems to convey to us a message, that there is no telling what God can do even with things and people that are broken and not preferred. Prejudice and despising must not hinder a person in allowing God to move in his/her life. The fear of rejection most of the time paralyzes great potentials and gifts God has placed upon lives. This must not be, as the precious plans and the future that God intends for us would be laid to waste if we cower down in intimidation.

It's a good thing Nathanael had a good friend in Philip. When Nathanael started questioning this Jesus of Nazareth whom Philip claimed to be the Messiah, he did not argue with him. He did not debate with him on points on prophecy. What he gave was a simple invitation, Come and see. I know, Nathanael, you have some questions and good points at that, but instead of arguing and theorizing, why don't you just meet Him in person, why don't you just let Him speak to you directly, why don't you just allow yourself to flow and see for yourself what He can do. Instead of just contemplating 100 reasons why He cannot be the Messiah, why don't you just approach Him and see for yourself why He must be the One. Some people have many bad things to say about the Lord, His will, His Words, His church, without experiencing firsthand. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Psalms 34:8

That is the same invitation to everyone. If you haven't experienced His goodness, His plan, His Word, His presence,

his salvation, Come and see. If you haven't realized your future in the Lord, trust Him, come and see. If you think nothing good will ever happen in your life, and it has been ruined, and broken, He can fix it, no, rather, He will make all things new, just come and see. If you feel like everything in your life seemed insignificant just like Nazareth, and nothing good nor right is going on, come to Jesus, and you will see. If you will just let Jesus speak to you, just like Nathanael, you would see the heaven open in your life (John 1:51), and you will see God is able to make good things come out of your Nazareth.

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 11



## Divine Healing

Exodus 15:26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.

After the Israelites walked through the parted Red Sea and the Lord drowning the Egyptian armies that pursued them, they walked through the wilderness for three days without water. (Exodus 15:22) This is a big problem for a multitude of millions, we can imagine. Finally they reached

Mara, (not the original name of the place, but was called so because of the bitterness of water found there, as what the word Mara means) but the water there was bitter and they could not drink it.

So the Israelites did what they always do whenever a difficulty arose. A few days ago, they were singing praises and thanksgiving unto the Lord for the parting of the Red Sea and their victory over the Egyptians, but now, they began murmuring against Moses (v 24).

And Moses also did what he always do, whenever troubles arise, and that is to call unto God for help:

Exodus 15:25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

Just around the corner was the solution to their problem, and the Lord just needed to show it to Moses. The tree that would make the bitter waters sweet, was already there, even before they arrived at Mara. The solution to their problems had already been prepared by God long before they even had the problem! With the trial, God provides the solution, or a way of escape that we may bear it:

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but 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.

The tree that they casted to the waters absorbed the bitterness of the water and released sweetness to it. That tree is symbolic, a typology of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ took all our sins upon Himself, the guilt, the shame, the punishment which is death, all the bitterness and poison of sin. He even took upon Him the curse of the land because of sin, the thorns and thistles that the earth was cursed with in Genesis 3:18: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;" was crowned to the Lord's head in Calvary.

And through the cross, He released unto us all sweetness; redemption, salvation, joy, peace and His own righteousness.

Colossians 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

And not only salvation and righteousness, He also released healing on our diseases of the body. That was why the very next verse (v 26), after the waters were made sweet in Mara, the Lord uttered His promise to be our Great Physician, He proclaimed He is Jehovah-Rapha, or the LORD that heals His people. On the cross of Calvary was not only salvation for our souls, but also healing for our bodies!

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the

chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Praise the Lord for His promise of healing! As long as we remain obedient and faithful to Him, He promised He will not put to us the diseases and plagues He put over the Egyptians, and if ever we will be sick, He is our Healer, our Great Physician.

This belief that we have in Divine Healing is crucial to the Christian faith. As much as we believe in the salvation of our soul through the cross, we should also have this solid unshakeable assurance on the promise of healing of the body. We can find that laying on of hands, which is done for the purpose of imparting spiritual gifts such as healing, receiving the Holy Ghost or ordaining someone into the ministry, is one of the foundational or basic doctrines of Christ, as stated in Hebrews 6:1-2.

That means as much as we believe and practice faith, repentance, baptisms, belief in resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment, we must also believe and practice laying on of hands, one purpose of which is for praying for the sick.

Healing is also one of the 9 spiritual gifts the Lord has given to the church, as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:9: To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

The church is imparted with such power and gift, and we need to use it for the edification of the body of Christ. We must exercise our faith over sickness, and ask for God's divine healing.

Now regarding God's method of healing, we can find such varieties in the Bible. But we can generally categorize them to these four:

1. Immediate healing
2. Gradual healing
3. Healing by obedience
4. Healing through common medication

1. Immediate healing. We can find many examples of this in the Bible, and this is the most recognizable kind, to be attributed to divine healing. For example,

Matthew 8:2-3 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

The moment the Lord touched and uttered the words, the leper was healed immediately.

We can find many such examples in the ministry of our Lord, just like in the case of blind Bartimaeus;

Mark 10:52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

We can also find that in the ministry of the Apostles, such as with Peter and John with the lame man in Gate Beautiful;

Acts 3:6-7 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

And yes, it still happens today! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever! We can site many testimonies of how a person was healed immediately when prayed over. We just need to have faith, and exercise it. Lay hands on the sick and pray for healing in Jesus name, and He can heal a person immediately, if He wills it, and we have enough faith to believe it.

2. Gradual healing. There are times divine healing is not immediate, but rather gradual, or by recovery. We can find examples of this, such as with the son of a noble man in Galilee, who was at the point of death. He went to Jesus to ask Him to heal His son, and the Lord confirmed unto him that his son will live. When he believed in His words, he went back to his house, and his servants met him along the way, and confirmed his son was healed;

John 4:52 Then enquired he of them the hour when

he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

Here we see that when the Lord Jesus spoke as to the well being of the noble's son, the child began to amend, and the fever left him. The child's healing was gradual, and the beginning of which was the word of the Lord, and the father believing Him. We know that fever is just a symptom, and not the sickness itself, but he began to amend, to recover, he began to be healed of the deadly disease, when the Lord declared he will be fine.

Another example is the blind man in Bethsaida, in Mark 8. The Lord Jesus touched him the first time, and asked what he saw. The blind man said,

Mark 8:24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

The first touch of the Lord was the beginning of the recovery of his sight; from total blindness and darkness, he now began to see, but not yet full and clear, as he could only perceive men as though walking trees. The movements and images were somehow visible, but the full details, such as color, texture, the faces, were not yet in clear resolution. It seemed adjustment on the eye lens was needed to be done, to correct the focus and absorption of light, so the Lord touched him a second time;

Mark 8:25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

So there are times healing doesn't come immediately, but takes time, and even a second touch of the Lord. It is not a matter of God's lack of ability to heal immediately, but rather a matter of faith. Would we take the Lord for His word, that He heals, if we won't see it happening immediately? We just have to believe as what the Lord promised in His word;

Mark 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Sometimes we doubt God when we don't see healing happening immediately. But if God chooses to heal a person gradually, would it not be divine healing? Maybe we just don't know, but when we pray, and lay hands on someone, God begins to repair inside that person's body the damaged organ. And yet we doubt sometimes, just because we don't see it. We just have to have faith, that He will do it, in the manner and time He wants to do it.

Have you prayed over someone and it seemed nothing happened? Happened to me many times, but remember He also heals by recovery, as some healing requires time, and our faith should be unwavering while waiting.

3. Healing by obedience. Sometimes, divine healing requires obedience first, in the part of the sick person. The healing won't come in such cases, until the person obeys first what the Lord wants him/her to do. We can site here Naaman's case in 1 Kings 5.

Naaman was a general of Syria, who was a leper. As demanded by the Syrian king to the Israel king, Naaman went

to the prophet Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. He brought with him rewards for the prophet in his chariots, for his healing. To his dismay, the prophet had the audacity to not speak with the high ranking official, but rather sent a messenger to relay his instructions as to his healing;

2 Kings 5:10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

So instead of immediate healing, he was given, a command, an instruction, that he must do, to be healed. The general was angry, as he expected the prophet to just call the name of the Lord, wave his hands, and voila!- he would be healed of the leprosy. He expected some sort of immediate, magic-like performance from the prophet. But to his dismay, he was commanded to wash seven times in Jordan river. He doesn't even want to do it in Jordan, for there are better rivers in his own city in Damascus, like Rivers Abana and Pharpar.

He was ready to walk away in anger, but he was convinced by his servants to obey the prophet;

2 Kings 5:13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

The servants were like saying, to obey the instructions is easy! As a sick person, he would be willing to do harder tasks, just to be healed, especially leprosy is such a dreadful disease to have in the ancient times. Why would it be hard for him to wash in the river?

So he obeyed and dipped himself in the water seven times, and he was healed, his flesh restored to as that of a baby's.

So Naaman's healing happened when he obeyed the prophet's instruction. If he did not obey it, he would not be healed.

Another example is that of the ten lepers in Luke 17;

Luke 17:12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

Here the ten lepers who asked for the Lord to heal them was instructed by the Lord to go and show themselves to the priest. As they obeyed, they were healed, though we know only one came back to thank the Lord Jesus.

So there are times we pray for a person, and the person doesn't heal. Sometimes this is because God wants the person to do something first, to obey first, before healing is granted. There are some instances that a person receives complete healing or deliverance upon being baptized in Jesus name. There are some instances that the Lord wants a person to repent first of a certain sin, or to give up a certain vice, before He heals the person.

Usually, in such instances, the Lord gives instructions

through the man of God, such as pastors. Just like in the case of Naaman, it would be good for the person to listen and obey the instruction given through the man of God, because healing will not happen unless he/she obeys.

4. Healing through common medications. In Isaiah chapter 38, the king of Judah, Hezekiah, was sick unto death. He had a boil, or a tumor or a kind of ulceration, that was deadly. The prophet Isaiah was instructed by God to deliver the king the sad news;

Isaiah 38:1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

What a sad news! It would be hard to hear this from a doctor, but imagine how devastating it was to hear it from the prophet of God! Because of this, Hezekiah prayed unto God and he cried;

Isaiah 38:3 And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

And God heard Hezekiah's prayer! He told Isaiah to go back to Hezekiah His message of healing;

Isaiah 38:5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

Praise the Lord! He hears our prayers, and sees our tears! Fifteen years will be added to the king's life, and as a sign, the shadow in the sun dial, which was their instrument of telling time in the ancient days, will be turned back by 10 degrees. This has effects in the positioning of the earth and the sun, and will cause certain adjustments in the accounting of days and years, but the Lord did it to prove He is true to His words!

So the healing was declared and confirmed by God, but see what the prophet Isaiah did;

Isaiah 38:21 For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.

So here we can see that although the healing has been confirmed, still, the prophet instructed to put a lump of figs as a plaster upon Hezekiah's boil. Dried figs in those times is a common medication for boils. So here, God in His divine healing also used a medium, to heal. God may use common medications of the time to heal or recover a person's health.

So in our times, God may use common medications and the medical people to heal. Doctors can be used by God to heal and help us recover from sickness. We also know that Luke the Evangelist, was a physician, and there was no indication in the New Testament, that upon being converted, that he renounced his profession. Though he became missionary with Paul, he was still regarded by Paul as a medical person;

Colossians 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

So as Christians, we don't reject medical science and natural medications in healing the sick. We believe that they can be instruments of God for His divine healing. So if needed, we go to doctors and hospitals for medication, we just need to be careful to not place our complete dependence on doctors and medicines. If needed to, we take them, but not before praying first, and asking God that He would use them for our recovery. If the Lord did not declare Hezekiah would be healed, no matter how much dried figs they would put upon his boils, he would not heal; but since God already declared healing, they utilized common medication to usher the recovery.

We must see doctors and common medications of the times as God's instruments for healing, but not solely put our hope in them, as if replacing God as our Ultimate Healer. He is still our healer, and they are just His instruments. See what King Asa did which led to his death because of a disease in his feet;

2 Chronicles 16:12 And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.

In conclusion, we must have this strong belief on God's power and faithfulness to His Word. He is our Jehovah Rapha, we pray to Him, that he would heal us, in any of these four ways. Now, are there times when God doesn't heal a person? Certainly. Maybe we all know a person or two, who

died of a sickness, although we prayed for them. If God does not heal the person, then that is His will. That is the Lord being sovereign and in control of everything even our lives. That is the Lord, acting upon His plan, which is always perfect and good. In His unsearchable wisdom, He decides and does what He wants to do, but in the end, we must trust He is good, and what He allows to happen is for the best, and they will all work together for the good of those who love Him. It has nothing to do with His ability to heal, or the truthfulness of His promise. He is still our Healer.

Let this be our faith, even in these times of global health crisis. No matter what kind of new strains of viruses would show up, the name of Jesus is still more powerful than any sickness and disease. If God wills us to be healed, no matter what the odds, you will be healed. He is still God and in control, so we put our trust in Him, and pray for His divine healing.

Jeremiah 17:14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 12

## TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS ENTERING THE UNIVERSITY: BE PREPARED SPIRITUALLY

It is one of the most exciting parts of being a young person – going to college. Unlike high school, where you were still considered a child, in college you would be treated as an adult. You are about to experience a little more freedom and a little taste of being independent. And in pursuit of a future career, you are about to enter a jungle of a place, where you are about to learn crucial skills and knowledge, specialization even, that would be shaping your future profession or vocation.

You have been preparing all your life so far, for this moment. You have been taught reading and arithmetic, so that you would be able to have the foundation skills to further specialize in your chosen field. Every essay your high school teachers compelled you to do was your preparation for your thesis writing. Your additions and subtractions were to hone you for calculus and college algebra. Your basic document processing before, was to get you used to computer programming. These are all to initiate you to a further seeking of knowledge, which you will need to learn, to dispose yourself as a future functioning member of the “real world”.

And as you have been preparing all these times for higher education, so you must also be preparing yourself spiritually, because the university is a place where many Christian young people lose their faith.

I've heard such stories of young people who are devoted to the Lord and the church, but after entering the university, renounced their faith, and some even became professed atheists. Some entered an active young believer, but were gone from the church the whole time they studied. Such a tragedy, and I pray that they were able to come back to Christ, but hence we must beware of such dangers, because many Christians enter this arena spiritually unprepared.

What happened? Well, there may be an ocean of complex circumstances that happened, but we can say that spiritual preparation before entering this stage would help a Christian entering college to remain being a Christian, and come out of it, still as a Christian.

There are two aspects as to where a young Christian needs to prepare for in entering college:

Prepare for more exposure to the world and its temptations.

Given the more freedom, and entering transition from adolescence to adulthood, you will become more exposed to more temptations and sins. Peer pressure would be stronger than ever. You will even have the money to go out with your friends. There will be a heightened desire to try things of the world, like alcoholism, sex and drugs. Wrong relationships and influences may take you away from prayer, reading the Bible, and even church services. College students are busy, and

therefore may use these excuses to skip youth services, music practices, and even Sunday services. With new friends of your age and probably of same interests, you may want to cling to them more than your church youth groups. It's not that it is wrong to have friends in college, but they may influence you away from God. Being in such a diverse group of young people in the school, there will always be that desire to belong. This may drive you to talk like them, dress like them, listen to the same music, and do the same activities.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Communication here does not mean speaking with somebody as the normal modern use of the word means.

Communication here means companionship. We must not let evil companionships corrupt our good manners, and spirituality. This does not mean that you are not supposed to interact with people in college, but rather, be spiritually guarded. Be soaked in the presence of God in prayers, strengthen your devotion and stand in the Word of God; that worldliness would not influence you, but rather, you become the influencer, by your godly college life, bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you enter college with a sloppy prayer life, inconsistent devotions, chances are you will be overwhelmed by the tasks in school then you might seek comfort from the wrong places or persons. People usually get intoxicated by stressful research papers and report presentations, that they resort to sins or worldly things for pleasure, as some sort of reward. This would be a downward slope in your spiritual life.

Because sin or any worldly activities never satisfy, it would make you coming back for more and more, making such habits addictive. Prayer and Bible reading would be neglected, and prolonged disconnection from the other church fellows would gradually make a feeling of awkwardness and alienation. “The church folks cannot understand me”, “I can’t relate to them anymore”, “The church became boring”, and all those stuff begin to surface in your thoughts.

Young people, if there ever is a time to stick closer to God, it is now! Prepare yourself spiritually, as you enter college, because you are about to enter a fierce spiritual warfare! The enemy is after your faith, your relationship with God. He is after your fellowship with the fellow believers. The enemy would like to attract you away. He could not take you away from the hands of the Lord (John 10:28-29), so he seduces you to go out on your own! Stay connected to your church and fellow young believers. Attend and support church activities and programs, and never miss Sunday services just because of your tropa or barkada.

The enemy and the world would throw at you these temptations and offer you fake feeling of freedom and happiness, as there is pleasure in sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25), but stand your ground, and wear the whole armour of God! (Ephesians 6:13) Do not let anyone influence you, but rather strive to be a true Christian, and influence them instead.

Prepare for exposure to false ideologies and attacks to the Christian faith

For the honor students, the dean’s listers, and the

overly open-minded; there is also a danger. Prepare yourself as you enter the university, not just with your study methods and advanced readings (these are good to do, do them!), but also prepare yourself, your spiritual mind, make your doctrinal foundation and Christian worldview in-tact.

The universities is one of the most favorite places of people to plant seeds of crooked ideologies. Since these young students are eager to learn, pliable and could be easily manipulated and gullible, universities nowadays have become the “greenhouse” for the seedlings of atheism, materialism, agnosticism, post-modernism and communism, to name a few. We’ve heard of students being recruited by the day to join rebel and leftist groups. Mesmerism, brainwashing, indoctrination are subtly being done in classrooms and hallways of the state colleges and universities. And you as a young Christian should be spiritually and doctrinally prepared to guard yourself from such.

Some of you have been taught since you don’t even remember when, in the Sunday School. You’ve been taught about God, that He created all things, that the whole duty of man is to fear Him, and to keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). You’ve been taught it is right to pray, to read the Bible everyday. You’ve been taught there were only Adam and Eve, and not Adam, Eve and Steve. You’ve been preached to by the Pastor, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge (Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10).

The purpose of these teachings all about God and the Bible, is to be your foundation. It is the Truth, the underlying singular truth of all truths. There is no knowledge that is greater than it. There is no ideology no matter how compelling

and emotionally striking that supersedes the principles you learned in your Bible studies, and imparted by the Holy Ghost. There is no new scientific discovery or technological advancements, that could override it. Before you go further to learning new things, and “advanced” learning, be firm first with your foundation, the Word of God.

Proverbs 21:30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

There is no true wisdom or understanding or learning, no matter how advanced, or well presented, or eloquently spoken, that would contradict the truth about God. No matter how great a lecture may be, if it teaches man came from monkey, and that the whole universe created itself, you should be running away from it (if possible). Genesis 1:1 remains the truth: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

No matter who PhD professor that will try to convince you why atheism is right, and that religion is just the people making stories to overcome their own fear of death, and that Jesus is a hoax, do not let it alter your foundation and belief. You know God exists, and that Jesus is real, as He is alive in you! Be strong in your faith!

Not because Nietzsche declared “God is dead”, you will no longer believe in the Almighty Living God you worshipped and prayed to since you’re little. (Though one must analyze what Nietzsche really meant when he said it). Don’t even confuse people by posting it on Facebook, for it does not make you look cool.

Not just because you stumbled upon Freud and

psychoanalysis, it would make you frown on your pastor's advice that prayer and Bible reading is best for maintaining good mental health. Prayer worked, you know that! It worked for you before did not it? The truth of the matter is, scientists knows very little about what's going on in the human head, and are still not sure as to the what, how and why of "consciousness".

Not just because you started reading Marx, you will begin questioning the fairness and equality of God. Not just because some History major casted a doubt on you, you will begin not believing the inspiration and authenticity of the Bible.

Young Christian as you enter College, you better prepare! There will be "smart" people out there questioning your faith, what you believe and why you believe them. People will try to deconstruct your belief system, and make you doubt all you know as truth. If you have a shaky foundation in the Word of God, you might be deceived.

Did not the silver-tongued serpent beguile Eve, by asking, Yea, hath God said? (Genesis 3:1). The same serpent, is out in the world today, beguiling the simple ones, casting doubt on everything God said in His Word! You better be firm and sure in your foundation.

We live in such a time where people deconstruct everything, people giving their own meanings to everything as they decided to, playing gods to themselves, defining good and evil, by their own likings and taste. Postmodern philosophy creeping in, teaching people to have their own truths, to question and challenge the Absolute, to live and think in open defiance to God, and even have the audacity to

call it a “higher knowledge”.

People may even argue with you that gender is a social construct, but do not forget you’ve read that in your Bible, male and female created he them (Genesis 1:27), so gender is not socially constructed, but rather God designated. Not just because you are in a higher education institution, what they say there has more truth than what your pastor taught.

You have any question regarding your faith? The Bible? Reach out to your pastor, ask him, let him teach and guide you. God has placed him in your life to guide you in your faith, so you better make sure by studying and praying that your Christian basics are strong, with the guide and teachings of the man of God in your life.

You are not supposed to go to college to replace what you learned in the church. Your Christian worldview should be like your lens, through which you see everything around you, and whatever new knowledge you may acquire in your secular study, must be secondary to what you learned from His Word. Increase and acquire all necessary knowledge or skills you might need, but regarding things touching your belief in God, His Word, the Christian doctrines and life principles you have, do not let anything shake them off and take their place.

Conclusion

Young people need to be educated, to be able to fulfill God’s purpose in their lives, and education does not always necessarily equate to schooling. But if you happen to be given the opportunity to pursue formal education, consider yourself blessed, and you must do your best with the opportunity given to you. But having said that, the pursuit of knowledge is not bad, as long as it is not at the expense of going against God’s

Word. That was what Adam and Eve did in the garden didn't they? They chose knowledge over obedience to God. They desired knowledge more than their relationship with the Creator. And we know they proved to have done foolishly, for it is never right neither wise to disobey God.

College students, we pray you the best in your endeavors, just don't forget, no pleasure or success is worth more than your holy relationship with our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. As you enter this period of your life, you need to prepare yourself and draw all the more to the Lord, and He will even help you through this, and become an overcomer.

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

# 13

## Read that Ye May Understand

Ephesians 3:3-5 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Reading is an important life skill. No matter what field we decide to be in, this is a crucial skill we all need to acquire. That's why one of the tasks the government try to accomplish is to make sure that its constituents have access to quality education, just as mandated by the Philippine Constitution, Article 14, Section 1;

“The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.”

According to [data.worldbank.org](http://data.worldbank.org), Philippines' adult (15 years and above) literacy rate is at 98.18% in 2015, meaning out of about 60 Million adults in the Philippines in 2015, more than 59 millions know how to read. That is actually high. Majority of the Filipinos know how to read. It seems we

are able to grasp the truth that education is important, and that our government is somehow successful in battling illiteracy. But with the explosion of the internet, people who have regular reading habit become less and less. The problem is not of illiteracy, but rather aliteracy, which is the quality or state of being able to read but uninterested in doing so. <sup>1</sup> This is a sad condition, which is much more the case for regular Bible reading.

We post verses on social media, we may even talk or teach about it, but how many really read the Scriptures regularly? A survey<sup>2</sup> of the National Book Development Board in 2018 boasts that 72% of those surveyed said that the Bible is their most read book in the past year (Wow!). But the question is, how regular are those readings? The same survey says only 17% read daily. 49% read once a week, 22% read once a month. The survey did not reveal how much time was spent, or how many verses were read during Bible reading, but clearly, it shows we only have a few who read the Bible regularly.

Bible aliteracy is common in our times, even inside the church. With many distractions the internet offers us, people become uninterested in picking up their Bible and to actually read it. That is sad specially when we understand that Bible reading was the main reason public education was advocated, during the times of the Protestant Reformation. So majority of the people now know how to read, because free education was made available to all, and Scripture reading was one of the main reasons it was advocated.

Before Reformation in Europe, education was only available to the rich and the clergy. Though some form of

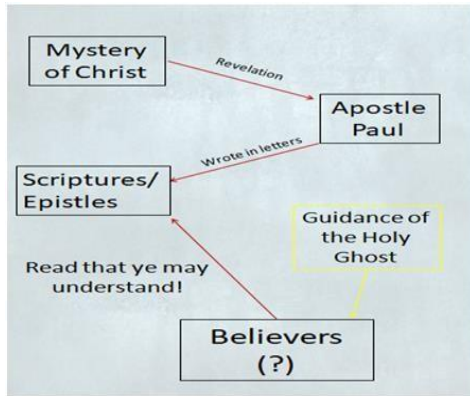
education may have been available to the poor, it was not really appealing to many, because, what use would someone have for reading, when he is just to do manual labors? Most young men instead of reading would rather spend time preparing to enter the military, because they would have a better chance at improving their lives by elevating through the ranks. Poor women would also have no need to learn to read, because they would only be doing household chores. But when the Reformers began translating the Scriptures, from Latin, the scholarly lingua franca, to common languages known to the masses, people then had a strong reason to learn how to read. When Scriptures were made available and legal for public reading, as advocated by the Reformation, the people became eager to read the Bible for themselves, which was made illegal by the Roman Catholic Church in prior times. The Protestant tenet *Sola Scriptura*, meaning the Scriptures alone is the sole infallible authority on Christian doctrine, would require that every believer read the Bible for themselves, instead of having only the clergy to read and interpret (also misinterpret) the Scriptures for them. Thus the need for public education, since the people, whoever they were in the society, then had this reason to learn reading; even women needed to learn to read, because everybody needs and wants to read the Scriptures themselves.

Being uninterested in reading the Bible while we know how to read (because of public education, for most of us), is really a tragedy, if we realize that it was Scripture reading that gave precedent to free education for everyone. Even prestigious universities, such as Harvard and Yale were patterned after the Geneva University established by John Calvin, and the like – universities built by Reformers who held reading the Scriptures as a universal task. But now with the

widespread of education, this fundamental truth and principle is being neglected.

In our key verses, Ephesians 3:3-5, we can see the process by which the knowledge about the Mystery of Christ can be transferred to us believers. Mystery, /mysterion/ in Greek, means something that was hidden or unknown in the past. This mystery of Christ was explained by the apostle in verse 6, and that is the truth that the Gentiles are fellowheirs, and are of the same body, and are partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel. By the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we Gentiles became partakers of the promise of God, the promise of salvation, which in times past, the Jews, thought that privilege was exclusive to them. How did Paul learn this mystery? He said in verse 3, it was revealed to him by the Lord. And what did he do to communicate this truth? He wrote about it in his letters (I wrote afore in few words). Now, how would the Ephesians, and consequently, all the believers would understand this knowledge? In verse 4, he said whereby (through the letters/epistles he wrote), when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ. It is by reading these letters the Apostle wrote, that we would be able to understand this mystery, and many other fundamental truths in the Scriptures.

To better understand, here is an illustration:



The Mystery of Christ and all truths from the Scriptures came to the writers through revelation or inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21), they wrote them in letters, just as Apostle Paul, and the believers would understand these truths by reading them, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost

For instance, how did Martin Luther come to understand the doctrine of justification by faith? It was by reading it from the Scriptures. How can we have a deeper understanding about the doctrines we came to believe in? By reading and studying them in the Scriptures. When people before were Bible illiterate, when the Scripture was only available in a language that they cannot read nor understand, they only believed what the priests told them. They believed in purgatory, indulgences, worshipped idols, prayed to saints, because there was no way to counter check if these are real Biblical teachings because they could not read the Bible for themselves. They were not able to do what the noble Bereans did in Acts 17;

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness

of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

They did not just accept what was taught to them, but also searched the Scriptures, they verified by reading and studying the Scriptures themselves, to make sure what was being taught is correct. This would be missing in a “listening” and “watching” society, that does not read: the people would be prone to deception. We need to develop a habit of Bible reading, do not just listen to preachers in You Tube without reading your Bible, that’s why we are supposed to have our own copy of the Bible.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites:

And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Here the Lord through Moses instructed Israel that even their future kings must have a copy of the law (the Torah, or Pentateuch), they are supposed to have it copied from the original. This is the job of scribes, to make sure accurate and exact copies of the law be produced for the king and the

people. What is the king supposed to do with the book? He shall read therein all the days of his life, to learn to fear God, to keep all the words, and to do them. Fear of God is supposed to be learned from reading the Scriptures daily. Lack of fear of God in our society can be attributed to Bible aliteracy, even among some of our leaders. It would also keep the heart from being lifted up above, and turning aside from the very commandments of God.

Even the most powerful man of the land was commanded to have his own copy of the Word of God and read it! It is supposed to be the foundation of his governance and leadership. The Scriptures is an important foundation on which the Western society was grounded on, and the gradual decline that we are seeing in the past century is because of the turning away of man from the Scriptures and its principles.

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

This is the only verse in the King James Version of the Bible where the word success was used, and nowhere else. And good success is a result of meditating the Word of God day and night, and doing what is written in it. Meditating here is not just thinking about something, but rather uttering with our mouths, and we could do that by reading. We will be able to observe to do according to all written therein, if we meditate the Word day and night. By regularly reading the Word, we are being constantly reminded to obey the commandments and statutes written in it.

Isaiah 34:16 Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

Seek here is the Hebrew /darash/, meaning to inquire diligently. We need to read the Bible with the intent of understanding, and if there is a piece of literature that ever requires its reader his full attention and focus, it is the Scriptures. It is a full of treasures of divine wisdom, and in it are the principles and foundation of life itself. Seeking out the book of the Lord requires hard work and prayer. It is supposed to be a part of our very life itself, and not just another book. It is not a book of quotes that we would see from time to time, to get something to post on Facebook, we need to face the book everyday and study it, letting its principles mold us, change us, and make us.

Have Ye Not Read?

In the New Testament, the Gospel books (Matthew to John) recorded 10 times Jesus saying, “Have ye not read?” (Matthew 12:3; Matthew 12:5; Matthew 19:4; Matthew 21:16; Matthew 21:42; Matthew 22:31; Mark 2:25; Mark 12:10; Mark 12:26; Luke 6:3;) He said this to religious men of those times, those who claimed themselves, to be Israel’s religious authorities. It seems Jesus was showing them their understanding of the Scriptures were not perfect, their dead reading failed to make them see the entirety of its fulfillment right before their very eyes, the Promised Messiah Himself showing them how these principles apply to real life. The same thing we need now in reading the Scriptures, we need the

Spirit of Christ to help us understand how the Bible is to be applied in our lives. The Bible is to be read prayerfully, because it is the guidance of the Holy Spirit that would enable us to understand what we read.

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Here we have Jesus telling the Jews to search the Scriptures. The original word for search is /ereunao/, meaning to investigate. The Lord was saying to them that the same Scriptures that they diligently study, because in them they believe and know they have eternal life, as the Jews have high regards to the written Scriptures, and yet if they would investigate it thoroughly and honestly, is also the same Scriptures that would testify and prove He is the Messiah. Alfred Barnes in his commentary said, "The word translated search here means to search diligently, or search anxiously. It was applied to miners, who search for precious metals – who look anxiously for the bed of the ore with an intensity or anxiety proportionate to their sense of the value of the metal. It is applied by Homer to a lioness robbed of her whelps, and who searches the plain to trace out the footsteps of the man who has robbed her. It was applied by him to dogs tracing their game by searching them out by the scent of the foot."<sup>3</sup>

So the Lord was saying to them, commanding them, to search, to investigate, to trace the Scriptures, since they regard It as the source of eternal life; and that is true, and they will find that the same Scriptures testify of Jesus being the Saviour and God, the very source of Life. Yet they do not come to him, to have life (v 40).

We see, this is what reading must be, a thorough and careful examination and comprehension of the Bible, with the intention of discovering the Truth It holds, and having your life changed and molded by Its principles. We should have that in mind, when reading the Bible.

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 1Timothy 4:13

The Apostle instructed the young minister, Timothy, that reading must be a part of his personal discipline. The passage means to give oneself to reading, to devote, to turn the mind to, to be addicted to (Thayer) it. Many would comment that this reading involves both public and private reading of the Scriptures. But either way, the instruction is clear – Timothy is supposed to devote his time, allot time, not just sparingly, or during free hours, but rather, designate a certain period of time to reading, and taking the context, it is a part of his being an example to the believers (v12).

Have we been allotting time to reading the Bible?

Consider These:

- The King James Version Bible has 783,137 words  
Average reading speed for an adult is at 200-300 words per minute, but for better comprehension, since we are talking about reading the Bible, let us put it at 150 wpm (functional reading).
- $783,137 \text{ Words} / 150 \text{ words per minute} = 5,221$  minutes or around 87 hours are needed to finish reading the Bible

- Filipinos is at top in worldwide Social Media usage (according to We Are Social and Hootsuite's Digital 2020 report)<sup>4</sup>, at around 4 hours a day (3 hours and 53 minutes to be exact) = 85,045 minutes or 1417 hours or 59 whole days in a year (16% of our entire year were spent scrolling, liking, posting and viewing other people's lives)
- If only we would give half of the time we spend in social media to Bible reading, we would be able to read the entire Bible, 8 times in a year.
- Or, only if, we spend at least 15 minutes a day in reading our Bible, we would be able to read it once in a year! Meaning either we are not consistent in following a reading plan, or, we cannot even give 15 minutes of our 24 hours, to spend reading the most important message of our lives.

We sometimes become sad when nobody chats us, when we don't receive any messages on our inbox; while all these times, the Bible was sitting there, full of great and wonderful promises and messages, and we don't even care reading them. Read God's message! We need to allot our time, to give ourselves to reading God's word, and not just the words of our fellow men.

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

While faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word

of God (Romans 10:17), we also need to read, that we may understand. Understanding would make our faith go deeper and more established. In this verse we see that we must read, hear(listen to) and keep(obey) the words written in the Book. Many people died just so we could have the Bible in our hands today. We must regard reading as a crucial part of our faith, since we are the people of the Book.

God chose the Written Word to communicate with His people because it is the Word on which everything was framed on, Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.(Hebrews 11:3) We must not let the world to turn us away from the Word, because It is the very source of life and the structure on which the entire cosmos was hinged on. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

All quoted Scriptures are from the King James Version.

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