

# THE Plain Truth

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A Magazine Of Christian Understanding

April - June 2020

Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ P.05

Submission P.15

The God Of Hope P.18

Change P.21

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# Sin, Righteousness, Judgement

Scripture talks about sin, righteousness and judgement: "...when he [Advocate, Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."<sup>1</sup>

Many misinterpret this scripture - they think God is sending the Holy Spirit to convict them of their sin, their lack of righteousness, and God's judgment on them for the sins they had committed in this life! This is not what it says.

Here is the correct interpretation!

## About sin

The first Adam (representing humanity) brought sin into the world. The last Adam Jesus (also representing humanity) undid Adam's work. He assumed our sin (became sin for us) and destroyed it on the cross. He didn't just cover our sin but removed it altogether, forever.

So God doesn't remember your sins anymore! Here are some scriptures to convince you:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."<sup>2</sup>

"I am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."<sup>3</sup>

"I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."<sup>4</sup>

"Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."<sup>5</sup>

Jesus has completely purged your sins once and for all, so don't focus on them!

## About righteousness

Jesus not only destroyed our sin, but also gave us his righteousness. He assumed our sinful nature, beat (transformed) it to his holy nature by blood, sweat and tears, and gave it to us as a gift. That is how we become righteous. So our spirit man, our real us is righteous. Our flesh man may fail at times, but that's only temporary - it will pass away. (Note: We are a tripartite being with spirit [spirit man], soul and body [flesh man]).

So you are righteous in God's sight. Here are some scriptures to convince you:

"We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are."<sup>6</sup>

"...in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from



By  
Dr. P. Sellappan

- 1 John 16:8-10
- 2 Psalm 103:11-12
- 3 Isaiah 43:25
- 4 Jeremiah 31:34,
- Hebrews 8:12
- 5 Hebrews 10:17
- 6 Romans 3:22
- 7 1 Corinthians 1:30
- 8 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 9 2 Corinthians 3:18
- 10 Romans 5:1
- 11 Romans 3:24
- 12 Galatians 2:16
- 13 1 Corinthians 11:31
- 14 Galatians 4:5-7
- 15 Colossians 1:27

God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."<sup>7</sup>

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."<sup>8</sup>

Focus on your righteousness, your right standing with God. And as you do, you will gravitate towards that.<sup>9</sup>

## About judgement

All of us have sinned and hurt ourselves and others besides grieving God. Jesus took the consequences of our sin - our judgement, condemnation and curses on the cross. He was falsely accused and condemned to death. His body was beaten and broken beyond recognition. He was shamed, mocked, ridiculed, spat at, crowned with thorns. He suffered and endured excruciating pain as he was nailed to the cross. In short, he poured out his life for us. He took our judgement upon himself and justified us before God.

So you are not under any condemnation whatsoever. Here are some scriptures to convince you:

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>10</sup>

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."<sup>11</sup>

"A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus."<sup>12</sup>

"But if we would examine ourselves (realize what Christ has accomplished for us), we would not be judged by God in this way."<sup>13</sup>

Focus on your liberty and live freely without any fear of judgement.

## What Jesus did for us

Jesus has given you complete victory over everything that was against you, everything that separated you from God.

He removed your sin forever, took your judgement forever, and made you righteous forever. What a relief and blessing that is! More than that, God has adopted you as his own son (daughter) and made you co-heir with Christ over all things.<sup>14</sup> So you can reign with him. That's what he accomplished for you on the cross.

The risen Christ who redeemed your spirit man has now come to dwell inside you to redeem your flesh man. Let the "Christ in you" manifest his glorious life more fully in you, as you.<sup>15</sup> Let him manifest his love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, power, riches and wholeness in and through you as you. May you be a blessing wherever you go, whoever you meet.

# THE Plain Truth

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# What our readers say:

Dear Dr Sellappan. I'm reading your "tapping into quantum reality." I want to say thank you for this article. I have been reading a lot about quantum physics. Before this I have not come across anyone or any article relating scriptures to quantum physics. Thank you once again for your wonderful article. Warmest regards.

**Bruce Tai**

Good day. I appreciate your desire to share the Good News through these pages. God bless your remarkable effort in showing who God is and who we are in Christ Jesus. I have sent some money to your Plain Truth ministry.

**G. Sunderasehran**

God bless your Plain Truth Ministry which is certainly touching, transforming, healing and saving lives. To God be the Glory! I have enclosed a small donation towards your ministry in gratitude for the expansion/extension of His Kingdom here on earth, specifically in Malaysia.

**Mervin D'Silva**

Dear Editor, I read your article in the Plain Truth and wish to know the truth, may I? IF Jesus is God, then why must he cry out on the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Does it make sense to call Father, who is God, when Jesus himself is God? It does not make sense. IF Jesus is God, then we cannot have two personalities (Jesus and God), yet your article tells they are ONE! How could that be? Thank you.

**S. H. Huang**

Ed: Thank you for your questions. Here is a brief response to your questions. Jesus was quoting from Psalm 22. Jesus, as man (representing humanity), was echoing our fear, helplessness and feeling of abandonment. He was acting on our behalf, vicariously. Jesus always called God 'Father' (an intimate term) but in this case he called God 'God' (title). Why, because he was echoing our feeling of desperation (for example, at the death of our loved ones). Reading the whole Psalm tells us that God never abandoned Jesus (or us). Concerning your other question, yes, God is one, but there are three distinct Persons in the Godhead (Trinity). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct from each other (this distinction is what makes relationship possible). The Son became Jesus Christ, taking on human form. Christ is the Eternal God (who was one with the Father and the Holy Spirit) – one who has no beginning or end. Jesus is the humanity of Christ – one who has a beginning. Jesus represents us. As Jesus is, so are we in this world (1 John 4:17). Hope this answers your questions.

The recent emergence of the novel corona virus (Covid-19) has claimed many lives and sent shivers across the globe - locked cities, disrupted businesses (travel, manufacturing, import-export) and hurt economies. Does the bible say anything about this?

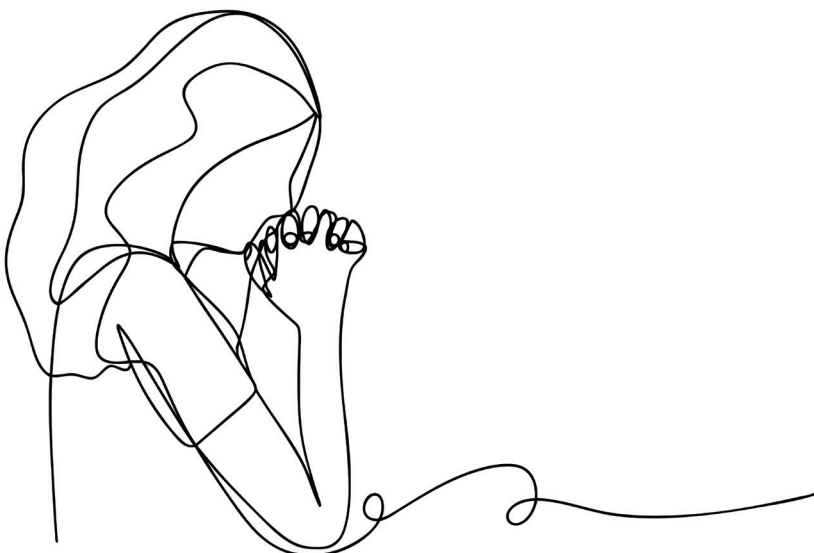
**Concerned Reader**

Ed: Thank you for your question. There is no specific scripture reference concerning Covid-19. It is a passing phenomenon like the others (SARS, MERS, etc.). While we exercise caution, we need not be overly fearful. On the Cross, Jesus Christ, has dealt with every virus, every sickness, every lack, fear, rejection, poverty, oppression, persecution, betrayal, judgement – he took everything that was against us. Jesus' life-giving 'virus' (Romans 8:2) has come and is spreading across the globe. This 'Christ in you' virus is already present in everyone's heart. The Holy Spirit has come to awaken us to this reality. When we respond to this awakening, our life will never be the same! Giving this virus a chance will help us manifest his glorious life that God intended for us.

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# Passion Of The Lord Jesus Christ

**A**s we celebrate Easter, let's rehearse the events of the Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

By  
Grace  
Communion  
International

## Jesus' warning<sup>1</sup>

They sang a hymn and went directly to Mount Olives. Then Jesus told them, "Before the night's over, you're going to fall to pieces because of what happens to me."

Peter broke in, "Even if everyone else falls to pieces on account of you, I won't."

"Don't be so sure," Jesus said. "This very night, before the rooster crows up the dawn, you will deny me three times."

Peter protested, "Even if I had to die with you, I would never deny you." All the others said the same thing.

## Gethsemane<sup>2</sup>

Then Jesus went with them to a garden called Gethsemane and told his disciples, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he plunged into an agonizing sorrow and said: "This sorrow is crushing my life out. Stay here and keep vigil with me."

Going a little ahead, he fell on his face, praying, "My Father, if there is any way, get me out of this. But please, not what I want. You, what do you want?"

When he came back to his disciples, he found them sound asleep. He then left them a second time, and then a third time, again praying: "My Father, if there is no other way than this, drinking this cup to the dregs, I'm ready. Do it your way."

When he came back the last time, he said, "My time is up, the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the hands of sinners. Get up! Let's get going! My betrayer is here."

## Arrested<sup>3</sup>

The words were barely out of his mouth when Judas showed up, and with him a gang from the high priests and religious leaders brandishing swords and clubs. He went straight to Jesus, greeted him, "How are you, Rabbi?" and kissed him.

Then they came on him—grabbed him and roughed him up. One of those with Jesus pulled his sword and, taking a swing at the Chief Priest's servant, cut off his ear.

Jesus said, "Put your sword back where it belongs. Don't you realize that I am able right now to call to my Father, and twelve companies—more, if I want them—of fighting angels would be here, battle-ready? But if I did that, how would the Scriptures come true that say this is the way it has to be?"

Then all the disciples left.

## Peter's Denial<sup>4</sup>

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. The other disciple was known to the Chief Priest, and so he went in with Jesus to the Chief Priest's courtyard. Peter had to stay outside. Then the other disciple went out, spoke to the doorkeeper, and got Peter in.

The young woman who was the doorkeeper said to Peter, "Aren't you one of this man's disciples?"

He said, "No, I'm not."

The servants and police had made a fire because of the cold and were huddled there warming themselves. Peter stood with them, trying to get warm. The others there said to him, "Aren't you one of his disciples?"

He denied it, "Not me."

One of the Chief Priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?"

Again, Peter denied it. Just then a rooster crowed.

## Beaten and condemned<sup>5</sup>

The men in charge of Jesus began poking fun at him, slapping him around. They put a blindfold on him and taunted, "Who hit you that time?"

When it was morning, the religious leaders of the people and the high priests and scholars all got together and brought him before their High Council. They said, "Are you the Messiah?"

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 26:30-35

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 26:36-46

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 26:47-56

<sup>4</sup> John 18:15-27

<sup>5</sup> Luke 22:63-71





He answered, "If I said yes, you wouldn't believe me. If I asked what you meant by your question, you wouldn't answer me. So here's what I have to say: From here on the Son of Man takes his place at God's right hand, the place of power."

They all said, "So you admit your claim to be the Son of God?"

"You're the ones who keep saying it," he said.

But they had made up their minds, "Why do we need any more evidence? We've all heard him as good as say it himself."

## Pilate<sup>6</sup>

They led Jesus to the Roman governor's palace. Pilate came out to them and spoke. "What charge do you bring against this man?"

They said, "If he hadn't been doing something evil, do you think we'd be here bothering you?"

Pilate said, "You take him. Judge him by your law."

The Jews said, "We're not allowed to kill anyone."

Pilate went back into the palace and called for Jesus. He said, "Are you the 'King of the Jews'?"

Jesus answered, "You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice."

Pilate said, "What is truth?"

Then he went back out to the Jews and told them, "I find nothing wrong in this man. It's your custom that I pardon one prisoner at Passover. Do you want me to pardon the 'King of the Jews'?"

## Herod<sup>7</sup>

But they were vehement. "He's stirring up unrest among the people with his teaching, disturbing the peace everywhere, starting in Galilee and now all through Judea. He's a dangerous man, endangering the peace."

When Pilate heard that, he asked, "So, he's a Galilean?" And he sent Jesus to Herod.

Herod was delighted when Jesus showed up. He had wanted for a long time to see him and hoped to see Jesus do something spectacular. He peppered him with questions. Jesus didn't answer—not one word. But the high priests and religion scholars were right there, saying their piece, strident and shrill in their accusations.

Mightily offended, Herod turned on Jesus. His soldiers joined in, taunting and jeering. Then they dressed him up in an elaborate king costume and sent him back to Pilate.

Pilate called in the high priests, rulers, and the others and said, "You brought this man to me as a disturber of the peace. I examined him in front of all of you and found there was nothing to your charge. And neither did Herod, for he has sent him back here with a clean bill of health. It's clear that he's done nothing wrong, let alone anything deserving death. I'm going to warn him to watch his step and let him go."

At that, the crowd went wild: "Kill him! Give us

Barabbas!" (Barabbas had been thrown in prison for starting a riot in the city and for murder.) Pilate still wanted to let Jesus go, and so spoke out again.

But they kept shouting back, "Crucify! Crucify him!"

## Crown of thorns<sup>8</sup>

So Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped. The soldiers, having braided a crown from thorns, set it on his head, threw a purple robe over him, and approached him with, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they greeted him with slaps in the face.

Pilate went back out again and said to them, "I present him to you, but I want you to know that I do not find him guilty of any crime." Just then Jesus came out wearing the thorn crown and purple robe.

When the high priests and police saw him, they shouted in a frenzy, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Pilate told them, "You take him. You crucify him. I find nothing wrong with him."

The Jews answered, "We have a law, and by that law he must die because he claimed to be the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this, he became even more scared. He went back into the palace and said to Jesus, "Where did you come from?"

Jesus gave no answer.

Pilate said, "You won't talk? Don't you know that I have the authority to pardon you, and the authority to—crucify you?"

Jesus said, "You haven't a shred of authority over me except what has been given you from heaven. That's why the one who betrayed me to you has committed a far greater fault."

Pilate caved into the crowd's demand and turned Jesus over to be crucified.

## Crucified on Calvary<sup>9</sup>

As they led him off, they made Simon, a man from Cyrene who happened to be coming in from the countryside, carry the cross behind Jesus. A huge crowd of people followed, along with women weeping and carrying on.

Two others, both criminals, were taken along with him for execution.

When they got to the place called Skull Hill, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left.

Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing."

Dividing up his clothes, they threw dice for them. The people stood there staring at Jesus, and the ringleaders made faces, taunting, "He saved others. Let's see him save himself! The Messiah of God—ha! The Chosen—ha!"

The soldiers also came up and poked fun at him, making a game of it. They toasted him with sour

<sup>6</sup> John 18:28-38

<sup>7</sup> Luke 23:5-21

<sup>8</sup> John 19:1-17

<sup>9</sup> Luke 23:26-37

wine: "So you're King of the Jews! Save yourself!"

### King of the Jews<sup>10</sup>

Pilate wrote a sign and had it placed on the cross. It read: Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews.

Many of the Jews read the sign because the place where Jesus was crucified was right next to the city. It was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The Jewish high priests objected. "Don't write," they said to Pilate, "'The King of the Jews.' Make it, 'This man said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"

### Two thieves<sup>11</sup>

One of the criminals hanging alongside cursed him: "Some Messiah you are! Save yourself! Save us!"

But the other one made him shut up: "Have you no fear of God? You're getting the same as him. We deserve this, but not him—he did nothing to deserve this."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter your kingdom."

He said, "Don't worry, I will. Today you will join me in paradise."

### Divided garments<sup>12</sup>

When they crucified him, the Roman soldiers took his clothes and divided them up four ways, to each soldier a fourth. But his robe was seamless, a single piece of weaving, so they said to each other, "Let's not tear it up. Let's throw dice to see who gets it." This confirmed the Scripture that said, "They divided up my clothes among them and threw dice for my coat."

While the soldiers were looking after themselves, Jesus' mother, his aunt, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood at the foot of the cross. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her. He said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that moment the disciple accepted her as his own mother.

### Jesus quotes the Psalm<sup>13</sup>

From noon to three, the whole earth was dark. Around mid-afternoon Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My

God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Some bystanders who heard him said, "He's calling for Elijah." One of them ran and got a sponge soaked in sour wine and lifted it on a stick so he could drink. The others joked, "Don't be in such a hurry. Let's see if Elijah comes and saves him."

### Into God's hands<sup>14</sup>

The Temple curtain split right down the middle. Jesus called loudly, "Father, I place my life in your hands!" Then he breathed his last.

When the captain there saw what happened, he honored God: "This man was innocent! A good man, and innocent!"

All who had come around as spectators to watch the show, when they saw what happened, were overcome with grief and headed home. Those who knew Jesus well, along with the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a respectful distance and kept vigil.

### It is finished<sup>15</sup>

Jesus, seeing that everything had been completed so that the Scripture record might also be complete, then said, "I'm thirsty."

A jug of sour wine was standing by. Someone put a sponge soaked with the wine on a javelin and lifted it to his mouth. After he took the wine, Jesus said, "It's done . . . complete." Bowing his head, he offered up his spirit.

Then the Jews, since it was the day of Sabbath preparation, and so the bodies wouldn't stay on

the crosses over the Sabbath (it was a high holy day that year), petitioned Pilate that their legs be broken to speed death, and the bodies taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man crucified with Jesus, and then the other. When they got to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. One of the soldiers stabbed him in the side with his spear. Blood and water gushed out.

The eyewitness to these things has presented an accurate report. He saw it himself and is telling the truth so that you, also, will believe.

These things that happened confirmed the Scripture, "Not a bone in his body was broken," and the other Scripture that reads, "They will stare at the one they pierced."



<sup>10</sup> John 19:19–22

<sup>11</sup> Luke 23:39–43

<sup>12</sup> John 19:23–27

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 27:45–48

<sup>14</sup> Luke 23:45b–48

<sup>15</sup> John 19:28–37

# Encountering the Resurrected Jesus

By  
Andre Rabe

The problem of interpretation is nothing new. It was as important to the first believers as it is today. The road to Emmaus is a brilliant piece of literature in which Luke gives us a profound insight into the art of interpreting scripture.

But I must begin this article with an acknowledgement. Luke 24 has been dear to me and I have taught from it countless times over the years. However, not too long ago I read a chapter from *The Forgiving Victim* by James Alison that has added such richness to my own understanding. So many of the thoughts in this article have been inspired or enriched by that chapter. Luke 24:13-35 reads:

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad.

Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart

to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table

with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

**Eyewitnesses without a clue**

So here we have two disciples, not inner circle Apostles, just regular disciples trying to make sense of the events of the last few days.

In the midst of their discussion, Jesus draws near. Oh I love it – can you see how Jesus involves himself with our conversation, no matter how off-beat or confused it might be. However, even as Jesus draws near, something happens to them: they are kept from recognizing him. This is important because later on we will see the exact inverse happening – again they will be passive recipients of something happening to them.

And so Jesus asks them what they are discussing.

"And they stood still, looking sad."





These two are eye-witnesses of the life and death of Jesus, yet they are downcast because they don't know how to interpret the events. There cannot be a more literal or plain understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus, than being actual witnesses ... yet here they are, visibly sad.

Interpretation changes everything. And Luke knows it because the Greek word he uses for sad, is the word *skuthrópoi*, which was not often used in the Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament). However, it was used in a story that had to do with interpretation.

Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation. And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad. So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?"

And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it."

So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (Genesis 40:5-8)

### Meta-Narrative

And there we have the same word *skuthrópoi*. It refers to having your eyes downcast, which is significant not only for describing the sadness, but also for describing very limited sight. So here we have two stories in which people are discussing things they don't know how to interpret. They have all the information ... but they don't know what it means. The two disciples witnessed all the events ... but they don't have a narrative that connects them all together into a meaningful story.

Luke is skilfully making the reader aware of the fact that this is a story about interpretation.

"Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him ..."

Only one disciple is named, and that is for a very good reason. Luke is structuring this conversation in a very specific way. We have Jesus, a disciple named Cleopas and an unnamed disciple ... an invitation to enter your own name and be drawn even deeper into this conversation.

So Cleopas starts recounting the events. His story, though, is full of disjointed events. There is no meta-narrative with which to connect these events, no context

in which to understand them and no trajectory to bring them to a conclusion. This is sadly the way many still read scripture. One day they are encouraged by a scripture describing God's loving kindness towards us, the next day they are deeply concerned about prophecies of an apocalypse. There is no connecting narrative that makes sense of both the violent and the kind passages. But in the midst of such confusion, Jesus enters the conversation "and beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

They do not realize it yet, but the central character of

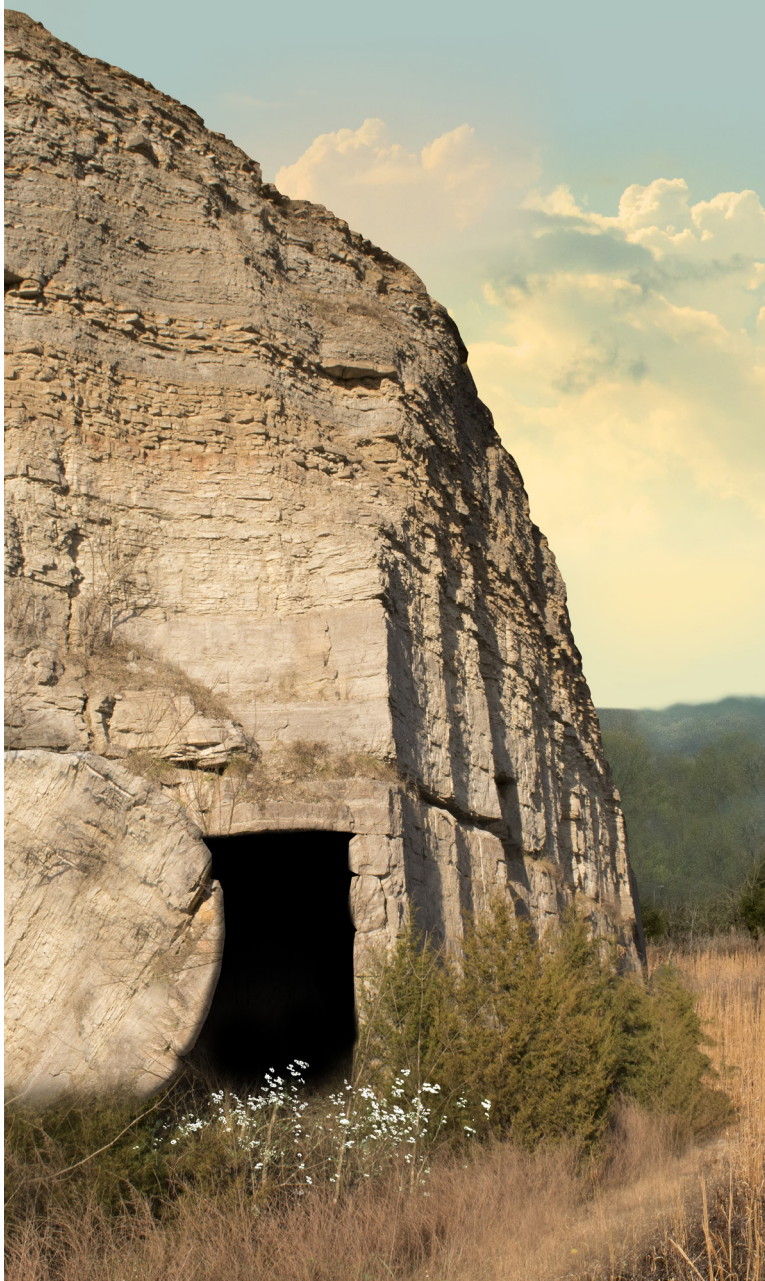
the whole plot is busy unfolding the meaning of the story to them. Something about his interpretation stirs them deeply. "So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going further, but they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us...'. They are starting to see the scriptures through someone else's eyes ... and the picture that emerges causes their hearts to burn. So they urge him to stay longer.

### Then it Happened

A disciple named Cleopas, an intriguing stranger and an unnamed disciple (insert your name) recline around a table. As he breaks the bread, something happens to them. "And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight." We sometimes read this as sequential events, but it is in fact one event. Similarly to the act in which they were prevented from recognizing Jesus, this is an act in which their eyes are opened, they recognize Jesus for who He is, and that is the moment in which He is no longer a physical presence apart from them ... but rather, He is so present that we should no longer search for him in another body but find him in our own... and in the body of believers.

Knowing the scriptures, even being eyewitnesses of the life and death of Jesus, did not lead them into a meaningful relationship with Jesus. But rather, it was an encounter with the living resurrected Jesus that lead them to interpret the scriptures anew. Again, we need to see the meaning of what Luke is communicating beyond a simple recollection of a historic event.

If your interpretation leads to an awareness of Christ within and to a burning heart, you are surely also on this road to Emmaus encountering the resurrected Jesus.







# Pentecost — For The Church Today

**W**e can read in Acts 2 what happened, but we cannot experience what Jesus' disciples felt after Jesus was resurrected. They had already seen more miracles than most people would ever believe. They had heard the message for three years and still did not understand it, and yet they continued to follow Jesus. His boldness, his confidence, his sense of destiny made him strangely attractive. But the crucifixion was a devastating blow. All their hopes were smashed. Their excitement turned to fear—they locked the doors and made plans to go home, back to the jobs they used to have. They probably felt shell-shocked, psychologically numbed.

Then Jesus showed up, and by many convincing proofs he showed himself to be alive. What a stunning turn of events! How could anyone cope with such a bewildering experience? Dead people don't live. They don't talk, don't eat, don't appear behind locked doors. What the disciples had seen and heard and touched defied all their previous understanding of reality. It was incomprehensible, disorienting, mystifying, electrifying, energizing, all at the same time.

Then a cloud lifted Jesus into the sky, and the disciples stared into the sky, probably speechless. Two angels told them that Jesus would come back.<sup>1</sup> So the disciples went back and, with spiritual conviction and a sense of purpose, they prayerfully sought a new apostle. They knew they had work to do and a mission to fulfill, and they knew they needed help in getting it done.

By  
Dr. Joseph  
Tkach

That was an understatement. What they needed was the Holy Spirit. For a God-sized job, they needed God. For decades of dedication, they needed more than adrenaline. They would have to face persecution from friends and strangers. They would have to look at old Scriptures in a new way. They would need divine authority, divine wisdom and divine direction. They needed power, a power that would give them new life for the long haul, power that would regenerate them, renew them, transform them. They needed the Holy Spirit.

## Pentecost—a Christian festival

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind.... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”

In the books of Moses, Pentecost was described as a harvest festival, coming near the end of the grain harvest. Pentecost was unique among the festivals in that leaven was used in the offering.<sup>2</sup> In Jewish tradition, Pentecost was also associated with the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.

Nothing in Torah or tradition would have prepared

<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:11

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 23:17



the disciples for the dramatic arrival of the Holy Spirit on this particular day. Nothing in the symbolism of leaven, for example, would have made the disciples expect the Holy Spirit to cause them to speak in other tongues. God was doing something new. This was not an attempt to upgrade or update the festival, or to change the symbols or to assign a new method of keeping the old festival. No, this was something completely new.

People heard them speaking in the languages of Parthia, Libya, Crete and other areas. Many began to ask, what was the meaning of this amazing miracle? Peter was inspired to explain the meaning, and his explanation had nothing to do with the old covenant festival. Rather, it fulfilled a prophecy of Joel about the last days.

We are living in the last days, he told his audience—and the significance of that is even more amazing than the miracle of tongues. In Jewish thinking, “the last days” were associated with Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and the kingdom of God. Peter was saying, in effect, that a new age had dawned.

Other New Testament writings fill in the details about this change in ages: the old covenant became obsolete, and the era of faith, truth, Spirit and grace replaced the era of the law of Moses.<sup>3</sup> Although faith, truth, grace and Spirit existed in the old era, the old was dominated by and characterized by law, in contrast to the new era, which is characterized by faith in Jesus Christ.

Pentecost is a powerful reminder of this for the church today. We do not observe it as an old covenant festival, nor as a required festival, but because it is part of church tradition—not only our denominational tradition, but the tradition of many churches.

We need to ask, as they did in the first century, “what does this mean?” We need to listen to Peter for the inspired meaning: We live in the last days, in the end times, in a new and different age. No longer do we look to a physical harvest, at an agricultural season in a small part of earth. No longer do we look to the law of Moses, or to the leavened loaves of the Temple rituals. Now, we look to the Spirit, whom God is pouring out on all flesh, on men and women, on slaves and free. God is calling all nations to faith and eternal life in his Son. “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

And in this new age, what do we do? We preach Christ, just as Peter did. The dramatic manifestations of the Spirit were not his focus—Peter spent most of his sermon on the identity of Jesus Christ. He may have quoted the words of Jesus: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”<sup>4</sup> We live in an age of good news—an announcement of the kingdom of God, which we enter through faith, through accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

How should we respond to the message? Peter answered the question in this way: “Repent”—turn toward God— “and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” We respond further by devoting ourselves “to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

## Points from Pentecost

The Christian church continues to commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In most traditions, Pentecost comes 50 days after Easter. The Christian festival looks back to the beginnings of the Christian church. Based on the events of Acts 2, we can learn several lessons in the festival:

- The necessity of the Holy Spirit. We cannot preach the gospel without the Holy Spirit living in us, empowering us for the work of God. Jesus told his disciples to preach to all nations—but first they had to wait in Jerusalem until they were “clothed with power from on high.”<sup>5</sup> The church needs power—we need enthusiasm (literally, God in us) for the work set before us.
- The diversity of the church. The gospel goes into all nations and is preached to all peoples. God’s work is no longer focused on one ethnic group. Since Jesus is the second Adam as well as the seed of Abraham, the promises are expanded into all humanity. The diverse languages of Pentecost are a picture of the worldwide scope of the work.
- We live in a new age, a new era. Peter called it the last days; we might also call it an age of grace and truth, or the church age, or the age of the Holy Spirit and the new covenant. There is an important difference in the way God is now working in the world.
- The message now focuses on Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, bringing salvation and forgiveness to those who believe. The sermons in Acts rehearse the basic truths again and again; the letters of Paul give further explanation for the theological significance of Jesus Christ, for it is only through him that we can enter the kingdom of God, and we do it by faith, and we enter it even in this life. We share in the life of the age to come because the Holy Spirit lives within us.
- The Holy Spirit unites all believers into one body, and the church grows through the message of Jesus Christ. The church is to be characterized not only by the gospel mission, but also by discipleship, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. We are not saved by doing these things, but the Spirit leads us into such expressions of our new life in Christ.

We live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit; it is God within us who brings the joy of salvation, perseverance in the face of persecution, and the love that transcends cultural differences within the church. Friends, fellow citizens of the kingdom of God, blessings to you as you celebrate the Pentecost of the new covenant, transformed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

This day is about the church as the community of the Spirit, not merely about the work of the Spirit in the hearts of individuals. Babel results in disconnectedness, in a confused individualism. The church implies reconnectedness, such as that set forth in Paul’s metaphor of the church as a body having many parts, each different but in need of the others.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:23;

John 1:17

<sup>4</sup> Mark 1:15

<sup>5</sup> Luke 24:49

# Jesus' life, death and ascension

**A**s we celebrate this year's Easter, let's rehearse briefly God's plan for us, and how Jesus came to execute it by his life, death, resurrection, ascension and return.



## God's plan for us

God created us for adoption as his children, so we might commune with him, participate in his creative activity and reign with him. This plan requires that we be conformed to his image and likeness – have his nature, mind and will, and be holy as he is. This is what he purposed for us from before creation, before the foundation of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Just bearing God's likeness alone will not make this happen. Given the freedom of choice, God anticipated we would disobey him, choose our own will over his will. We saw that in Adam (who represented humanity). To fulfil his purpose for us, God would send his Son to become one of us, give him freedom of choice, and put him in our fallen world. His Son [Jesus Christ] would come as the last Adam (also representing humanity), live a sinless life, on our behalf, as us, and qualify us for his kingdom. That has always been God's plan from the beginning of time. Jesus is not Plan B (after Adam's fall).

Jesus put on earth suit (flesh), lived a perfect and sinless life, on our behalf, as us. He was tempted like us in every way, but he chose to submit to God's will in every instance. By doing so, he qualified us for his kingdom. He made us



By  
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holy and righteous and conformed us to his image and likeness – in the spirit man. (Man is a tripartite being with spirit, soul and body.) Having successfully completed his mission, he ascended to his Father in heaven taking humanity with him.

While Jesus has made us holy and righteous in the spirit man, many of us don't fully experience his divine power in our flesh man – in our soul and body. To help us experience his fullness, Christ would return and dwell inside us, and from there, transform our flesh man to his image and likeness. That would be a process – it requires time. As we yield to the "Christ in us", we will manifest his nature more and more and grow from glory to glory. It is Christ in us doing; we simply yield to him. That is what the risen Christ is doing by his Spirit in his Church today.

## Jesus' life

Jesus lived like us in every way except that he didn't sin. He grew in wisdom and stature, in favour with God and man. He ate and drank like us, toiled like us, grew weary and tired like us. He experienced sorrow, frustration, rejection, opposition, persecution, ridicule and abuse. He experienced our ups and downs and thus fully identified with us.

He was also tempted like us - tempted with money, power, fame and all. The devil [our carnal nature] seduced him to give in to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Like Adam, he had to choose between God's will and his will. In the final hours, in the Garden of Gethsemane, his soul was greatly distressed and grieved as he faced his impending crucifixion on the cross. He cried out, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."<sup>2</sup> He totally submitted to God's will. He did this for us, as us. This suggests God's will will prevail over our will - ultimately.

Note: Sin, at its core, is choosing our will over God's will. That's what Adam did. He wanted to be like God [have his immortal life and wisdom] but without God. Adam chose to do his own will, but Jesus chose to do God's will. Thus, Jesus destroyed Adam's will on the cross. Henceforth, God's will will prevail.

## Jesus' death

After successfully completing his Father's mission to redeem humanity, he laid down his life voluntarily. Jesus assumed our sin (became sin for us) and destroyed it on the cross. He suffered the consequences of our sin and died our death. He took our sickness, poverty, doubts, fears, alienation, rejections, curses, judgement and death. He died in our place, as us. Thus, he destroyed sin and death forever. Sin and death therefore have no power over us, over our spirit man.

Besides destroying our sinful nature, he beat

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 1:3-14

<sup>2</sup> Luke 22:42



# h, resurrection, and return

(transformed) it to his holy nature. He assumed our sinful nature, transformed it to his holy nature by sweat, blood and tears, and gave us his righteousness as a gift. That makes us righteous. He is our righteousness.

## Jesus' resurrection and ascension

Jesus rose from the grave, ascended to heaven and sat at the right-hand of God - face to face with him. Christ was there before, but now he was returning to God as God-man. Thus, he took humanity with him.

Jesus rose and ascended and seated at the right-hand of God for us, as us. That's how we (our spirit man) can be face-to-face with God in the heavenly realm. Paul puts it this way, "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."<sup>3</sup>

Jesus rose with a glorified body - one that is not subject to space-time limitations. He appeared and disappeared at will. He passed through locked doors. He manifested to his disciples in different ways and in different settings over a period of 40 days. His disciples were now completely convinced that he was indeed the Saviour of mankind. They believed all that he told them before his death.

## Jesus' return

At his first coming, Jesus redeemed our spirit man (our real us) and conformed it to his image and likeness. It is a done deal. Our salvation is secure. Jesus said, "it is finished". So, our spirit man is holy, perfect and righteous. However, we don't fully experience his fullness in our flesh man.

Jesus told his disciples that he would return and make his home in them<sup>4</sup>. Accordingly, on the Day of Pentecost, he sent his Holy Spirit to dwell inside them. The Spirit would empower them not only to preach the gospel, but also transform and conform them to his image and likeness in the flesh man - in the soul and body.

Apostle Paul puts it this way: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit [spirit man], soul and body [flesh man] be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it."<sup>5</sup>

While our salvation is secure in Christ, he also wants us to manifest his glorious and power-filled life in and through us as us<sup>6</sup>. He wants us to experience his dynamic life here and now. He wants us to reign over every situation in our life. We can do this because of Christ's indwelling power inside us. As we yield to him, we will manifest his dynamic life in increasing measure. Remember, Jesus promised us that we would do even greater works than what he did.

Jesus was born king. He reigned over all things - he

imparted his Spirit to John the Baptist (while both were still in their mothers' wombs), he turned water into wine, multiplied bread and fish, calmed storms, walked on water, made fish to swim into Peter's fishing nets, ordered fish to pay his tax, healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, withered fig tree, discerned the hearts of men, slipped (disappeared) through those who tried to kill him, raised himself from the grave. Jesus reigned over all things.

God wants us to manifest his life - the 'Christ in us' life - here and now. He wants us to have dominion over all things. He wants us to reign on earth as kings and priests.<sup>7</sup> As kings, he wants us to reign over every situation in life. As priests, he wants us to preach the gospel, make disciples, and connect people to God - awaken them to the reality of Christ in them so they too would manifest his glorious and dynamic life.

We are God's children now. We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We are joint heirs with Christ because he dwells inside us by his Spirit. Ours is a joint life with him, not a separate, independent life. The whole creation is waiting and groaning for the revealing of the sons of God - that is, revealing of the indwelling Christ in us.<sup>8</sup> It is by participating in Christ's life, power, wisdom, goodness, faith, passion and creativity we will have dominion over all things. It is manifesting the Christ in us life. That's how we can have dominion over all things and fulfil God's purpose for us. May we all exhibit this life in ever increasing measure.



<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 2:6

<sup>4</sup> John 14:23

<sup>5</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

<sup>6</sup> Colossians 1:27

<sup>7</sup> Revelation 5:10

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:16-19

# Lessons From The Jubilee

If we were to look at the economies of the world today, two problems are apparent. In the Third World countries, absolute poverty is an ever-present reality while in developing and developed countries, income and wealth disparity between the rich and the rest of society is a growing dilemma. These twin socioeconomic evils will always be present in any capitalist society and there seems to be no solution to the issue. Or is there?

In the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament of the bible, God introduced the concept of the Jubilee year as a mean to overcome inter-generational poverty and the unequal distribution of income. In chapter 25 of Leviticus, it is stated that every 50th year in ancient Israel was to be announced as a jubilee year.

Three essential features characterize this year. First, liberty was proclaimed to all Israelites who were in bondage to any of their countrymen. The law provided that the price of slaves was to vary according to the proximity of the Jubilee Year. Second, there was to be a return of ancestral possessions to those who have been compelled to sell them because of poverty. This of course, excluded the possibility of selling a piece of land permanently. Provision was made that the price of real property was to vary according to the proximity of the Jubilee Year. The third feature of this year was that it was to be a year of rest for the land. (The New Compact Bible Dictionary, T. Alton Bryant, Zondervan Publishing House.)

The first characteristic of the Jubilee year which occurs every fifty years, was that all bonded servants will be set free, even for those whose debts had not been settled. Everyone starts fresh again, debt free. This will help to break up the cycle of poverty of generations so common in poorer nations. The second feature will ensure that properties and assets will be concentrated in the hands of the minority rich for no more than 50 years. At the jubilee, all houses and land revert back to the original families or owners. The wealth gap between the haves and the have nots will be automatically closed.

Sadly, there is no evidence that ancient Israel ever practiced the Jubilee. Nevertheless, the concept of the Jubilee reveals some important lessons God wants to teach us.

## God is the creator and owner of all things

By fixing the time period for owning other peoples' properties and human labor, God is telling Israel that he is the Creator of all that the Israelites possessed.<sup>1</sup> He is also the owner of all that is found on this earth as scripture tells us in Psalm 50:10,11.<sup>2</sup> Even our children belong to God.<sup>3</sup> The Jubilee year is to reinforce to the Israelites that since God is the one who made all things, they belong to him, God therefore has the right to give and to take away when the time comes.<sup>4</sup> In a sense, the Jubilee concept is

By  
Wong Teck  
Kong

## Material things has no permanence

The second lesson from the Jubilee, which is closely related to the first, is that material possessions, whether cash, investments or even real estates have no permanency in God's scheme of things. By restoring the lands and houses back to the original owners every half century, God is telling the nation that they cannot depend on assets to save them or have a good life. One can only enjoy one's riches for fifty years. In making ownership of excessive properties temporary, God is encouraging his people to look to him ultimately for meeting their needs and wants.

## Human welfare takes precedence over economic interests

In ancient Israel, if a man owes another a sum of money and could not repay the debt, then he and sometimes even his family may have to be servants to the creditor to pay off the debts. However, they are not be treated as slaves. When the year of Jubilee arrives, they are to be set free, regardless whether the debt has been paid or not.<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes the creditor will lose because the debt has not been settled in full. But God allowed it to happen. God wants the Israelites to realize that financial interests must not take priority over the well-being of another person. The welfare of a human being cannot be less important than the monetary loss incurred. The value of a person cannot be equated to money terms. If only the world would remember this lesson, so much heartache and heartache can be avoided.

## A much better Jubilee is coming

The Jubilee year is a shadow of a real Jubilee. When Christ is revealed in us more fully, there will be complete restoration of all things, not just economic but spiritual restoration as well. There will be real freedom for all, more than just freedom from debts. The ancient Israelites were supposed to look forward to the Jubilee with anticipation, joy and celebrations. Similarly, Christians everywhere longs to see the Great Jubilee. God introduced the Jubilee year to point to the Jews that true restoration and freedom can ultimately be found only in Jesus Christ.

The Jubilee year, like the rest of the Mosaic law, is no longer applicable to us today. However, if we were to study the reasons and the lessons behind it, our lives would be so much the better for it.

<sup>1</sup> John 1:3

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 82:8

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 127:3

<sup>4</sup> Job 1:21b

<sup>5</sup> Leviticus 25:39-41





# Submission

**T**he reason why many are still troubled, still seeking, still making little forward progress is because they have not yet come to the end of themselves. We are still giving some of the orders, and we are still interfering with God's working within us (A. W. Tozer 1897–1963)

Submission - not a word that sits easily in our psyche. The dictionary describes it thus: 'yielding, or readiness to yield: a willingness to yield or surrender to somebody, or the act of doing so; demanding nothing less than total submission to authority'. Although we may find that unpopular and uncompromising our Christian faith demands it of us. As Aiden Tozer wrote, we are still giving the orders, planning much of our life in an attitude of self-sufficiency, interfering with God's design, and assuredly paying the penalty.

The tendency is strong to say, "God won't be so stern as to expect me to give up that!" but he will; "He won't expect me to walk in the light so that I have nothing to hide," but He will; "He won't expect me to draw on his grace for everything," but He will. The Bible offers many examples of characters who have submitted to God when pressures suggested otherwise: Noah, Moses, Jonah, probably all the disciples and followers of Jesus, even Jesus himself. Eliphaz told Job to "Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you."<sup>1</sup> They have all allowed God to work in their lives without interference although not necessarily without protest or argument.

Submission is a word that suggests surrender or defeat, a failure, but if you don't surrender to Christ you surrender to chaos. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said that the greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender. Yet society suggests, even demands, that we should be self-sufficient, and our young people have self-sufficiency and independence thrust upon them by the education system.

By  
Ron Clarke

Is the demand for independence and the need to submit to God a dilemma, a situation in which we must choose one or the other? I don't think so. As Christians, we should submit our plans to God each day. I have always done that, faithfully. In recent weeks and months, it has been my lot to talk to God about health issues. I have been reassured. God allows us our independence, we have the choice. But in making that choice God will have influenced our thinking and if we are wise, we will allow God to work in us.

George Matheson was a Scottish minister born in Glasgow in 1842 and virtually blind by the time he completed his arts degree there in 1862. Matheson surmounted almost impossible obstacles to become a minister. He had a rare gift of language that had both artistic and spiritual appeal. Fellow ministers confessed to having been almost afraid to read Matheson's sermons because of their freshness, originality, and arresting power of expression. He wrote the hymn "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go" written out of what Matheson called the most severe mental suffering. It was finished in five minutes, dictated to him he said by some inward voice. He was a man in total submission to God, submission expressed so inspiringly when he wrote:

"Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free;  
Force me to render up my sword, and I shall conqueror be.  
I sink in life's alarms when by myself I stand;  
Imprison me within thine arms, and strong shall be my hand."

<sup>1</sup> Job 22:21

# Why Fear, And Why Not?

By  
Tesa Mandias

It is easy to become fearful over so many things. Lately the Covid-19 virus has been highlighted on the news and multimedia. But I do not want to be swayed into fear, neither do I want to be distracted by other worldly cares. Even though they are the realities of life, and we need to use wisdom, they do not represent the Truth. So, I say, "No" to fear, "I arrest you and take you captive to the obedience of Christ!"

Because we can only think one thought at a time, it would be better to choose positive thoughts. The bible says it this way: "... whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things".<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of an oppressive situation you can choose to stay focused on Jesus centred thoughts, with an overrunning cup of spirit filled thinking and joyful emotions flowing out of you. While the world is in a battle for our attention, you can say; "Lord, you direct my will, have your way in me".

You can verbalise your thoughts. In the book of Proverbs 18:21, it is written: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit". I took that verse very seriously and often practise saying out loud, confessions of faith: "The joy of the Lord is my strength", and "Jesus You are my joy, my salvation", or "I trust You Jesus, I place my trust in You". While doing this I noticed time and time again that bad moods or evil forebodings left me, and my soul started to line up with the truth spoken. You just have to come to the point of willingness to speak, to yield, or sometimes you just have to be reminded to do so. You can bring your circumstances to the truth of the Word of God, because whether you are aware or not, you are in a spiritual battle.

Jesus said: "... in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."<sup>2</sup> There is a need to face things head on, I do not believe in a spring clean that shoves things under the carpet. Fear, rebellion, bitterness, self-pity, everything that could take your attention away from righteousness, peace and joy, needs to be brought to His light and let go. By sitting at His feet long enough, and allowing the Holy Spirit to minister to you, with a

willingness to bear some soul discomfort, you will discover that He is so willing to show you the way to overcome. Emotional pain and tormenting thoughts are no match for Jesus. Look at them, pray, worship, do what He tells you, and see them go.<sup>3</sup>

Let fear propel you to pray, pray about all things, pray for protection, you can appropriate the Word and make it personal by reading it out loud and placing your own name in the verses, so why not do it as often as required, pray it over your family and loved ones. It is easy to take what has been given for granted, but if you appropriate His word in faith, fear will have no place in your heart. God promises to be with us in all our situations.<sup>4</sup>

Because Jesus is the living Word<sup>5</sup> and His love casts out fear,<sup>6</sup> you can overcome things in a practical manner with Him. What you need is an ever-bigger revelation of who He truly is; you need more of His light to reach the corners of your soul. The pressure from the outside world's fears and anxieties, need to be pressed back by the Holy Spirit in you. Pressing in and holding ground is key, trust that Jesus is who He says: good, faithful, not condemning, always willing to give solutions and comfort, the list is endless. You may ask the Holy Spirit for help to reveal the true Lord Jesus to you.

Praise Him out loud, so that your soul hears and lines up with the truth spoken which has the power to set you free. Instruct your soul to be still, to trust Him. So that you may heed and discern His voice and purpose in your heart to obey

Him, with that burning responsive love He imparts, and with a deep conviction, and courage to follow Him at His word, by the working of His Holy Spirit in you. You are sealed and set apart for the heavenly Groom. Only He can fill the heart-shaped void in your soul, and when He so willingly does, the grip of fear will lose its power in His presence and His everlasting love for you. Amen.

Praise  
perfect love  
Casts Out  
fear

<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:8-9

<sup>2</sup> John 16:33

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 91:1-16

<sup>5</sup> John 1:1-14

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 4: 18

# Praise & Worship

Where You lead me, I will follow...When You call me, I will hear...

These lyrics, 'where He leads me' was one of my favourite contemporary Christian songs in the nighties, spoke volumes to me. I don't think I fully understood or grasped the full meaning of it then. After so many years, I'm beginning to realize and experience the true significance of these words and how it still holds true for me and guides me in my walk with Christ.

Worship songs and their lyrics are making such a profound impact on us of late. They literally speak to us, refresh and uplift our beaten souls, especially when we are bone weary and dead tired, not in the mood to do anything, let alone pray or read the Bible. However, our music loving God, the greatest Master Composer for all eternity, has provided this delightful avenue to reach out to us, inspiring a new generation of gifted songwriters and composers in recent times, through this stream of "living water" to refresh, awaken and energise us once again.

And to have God provide that exact song at that exact moment, with the exact words speaking right into that exact situation and circumstance that we are facing, is so awesome, beyond words! These songs with inspired words from the scriptures reassure us that our caring and loving God is always keeping a close lookout for us, He works in so many ways we cannot see. So often, we simply whisper in awe and wonder, "how did you know, Lord?!" It is just so heart-warming to know that He never forsakes or leaves us without comfort.

We are also reminded by scriptures that "when you turn your worries into worship, God will turn your battles into blessings":

After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising Him for His holy splendor. This is what they sang: "Give thanks to the Lord; His faithful love endures forever!" At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Have you seen leaves "clapping" when strong winds blow? What a happy sight to behold. It is as if they are rejoicing and praising God, too!

"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."<sup>2</sup>

By  
Anna Teo

Wow, nature knows, acknowledges, responds to and praises the Creator, just like us, His beautiful and beloved created beings!

Praise is defined as : "an expression of approval, commendation, or admiration. Praise is the invitation of God's arrival."

Praise and worship prepares us to receive and respond to what God has in store for us. And we are created to worship God:

1. It's so enjoyable to come before You with uncontainable praises spilling from our hearts! How we love to sing our praises over and over to You, to the matchless God, high and exalted over all!
2. At each and every sunrise we will be thanking You for Your kindness and Your love. As the sun sets and all through the night, we will keep proclaiming, "You are so faithful!"
3. Melodies of praise will fill the air as every musical instrument, joined with every heart, overflows with worship.
4. No wonder I'm so glad; I can't keep it in! Lord, I'm shouting with glee over all You've done, for all You've done for me!
5. What mighty miracles and Your power at work, just to name a few. Depths of purpose and layers of meaning saturate everything You do.<sup>3</sup>

Dr Caroline Leaf, author of *Worship in the Brain* explains: "When we sing in worship together, all our hearts beat as one."

So, let's make it a point to keep singing and praising our Lord God Almighty, the One who's truly deserving and worthy to be praised, all the days of our lives; just like in the throne room of heaven today:

"Then I looked, and I heard the voices of myriads of angels in circles around the throne, as well as the voices of the living creatures and the elders—myriads and myriads! (ten thousands of ten thousands, and thousands of thousands.). And as I watched, all of them were singing with thunderous voices: Worthy is Christ the Lamb who was slaughtered to receive great power and might, wealth and wisdom, and honor, glory, and praise! Then every living being joined the angelic choir. Every creature in heaven and on earth, under the earth, in the sea, and everything in them, were worshipping with one voice, saying: Praise, honor, glory, and dominion be to God-Enthroned and to Christ the Lamb forever and ever!"<sup>4</sup>

Amen and Amen!!

- 1 2 Chronicles 20:21-22
- 2 Isaiah 55:12
- 3 Psalm 92:1-5
- 4 Revelation 5:11-13



# The God of Hope

Some years ago, the world was shocked and saddened by the passing of the very popular American actor and comedian Robin Williams. He enjoyed an extraordinary rise to fame in the mid-1970's playing an alien in a sitcom. He soon established a career in both stand-up comedy and feature film acting. Critics have lauded Williams as one of the funniest comedians ever. Sadly, Williams committed suicide in 2014. He had become depressed and eventually took his own life. More recently I read a news article of a sixteen year old school boy committing suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of his room. He too had been severely depressed having endured constant bullying and put downs. There is the real danger that many depressed people are unable to cope with life unless they seek help. A common factor among those who are depressed is their lack of hope. Discouraged people and those who are apathetic about life also lack hope. Are you among those who feel a sense of hopelessness in your life? Is life meaningless to you? Do you feel like giving up?

Perhaps you have tried therapy from professionals or even tried to be involved more enthusiastically in religion. Yet deep down a sense of worthlessness remains often cleverly hidden by external smiles and outward joyful expressions. You are not alone and certainly there is a way out of your predicament. Have you noticed how many people in the most desperate situations in life caused by the inhumane behaviour of others just keep going, always looking for a brighter future? Countless refugees in squalid and filthy refugee camps hold on to hope that they will be free of their torturous conditions one day. Yes, hope keeps them going even in unimaginable conditions. What is hope and what has it got to do with us?

Hope is defined as a feeling that what is needed can be had or that events will turn out for the best. It is also described as the desire of something together with the expectation of obtaining it. In neither of these descriptions is any time frame mentioned. Therefore no time limits are attached to hope. Hope exists permanently in our lives if we choose to accept it. Hope is not something we conjure up just to remain relevant. Hope is something presented to us and the one who presents it is Almighty God. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"<sup>1</sup> Paul describes God as the God of hope. But how does God provide that hope to humanity?

It is through Jesus Christ that hope abounds to every human being. Jesus is the living embodiment of hope and hope in and through Christ is for everyone. The New Living Translation (NLT) of the gospel of Matthew mentions that the name of Jesus will be the hope of all the world.<sup>2</sup> Through Jesus the love of God is poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who becomes a part of our lives.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the key to living a hope filled



By  
Devaraj Ramoo



life, defeating every form of depression is in the person of Jesus Christ. If you are suffering depression, hopelessness, frustration and are on the verge of giving up, then let me tell you the very presence of Christ will change your life forever. You just need to meet him.

How would you describe your present situation? Have you made wrong choices in your life and wish things were different? Have you repeatedly failed, perhaps suffering bad relationships and cannot change the situation that you are in? Do you feel trapped in circumstances and cannot find a way out? Are you thinking of suicide as an option? Don't! A personal encounter with Jesus Christ will radically change your life. Jesus when he walked the earth broke all the established social barriers set up by society. He reached the unreachable. Culture and social barriers are all dismantled. He will bring 'living waters' into your life. This is what He says, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light".<sup>4</sup> Those are the words of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. They are directed to you and me and to all humanity.

How would He know about me? You may ask. Well, Jesus was the Word who existed with God and who is also God. All things were created through Him.<sup>5</sup> Believe me; He knows everything about you, even the burdens of your heart. In the account of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman in the Gospel of John, Jesus was able to tell the personal details of the Samaritan woman who had married five times and was now living with a man who wasn't her husband.<sup>6</sup> Yet her lifestyle which would be considered immoral in society did not stop Him from talking to her. Her encounter with Jesus changed her. This once discouraged and ostracized woman sprang up and forgot all her troubles. She had met the hope of her life personally and this hope would never fade away.

The next question that you may ask is, "How can we have a relationship with Jesus who died on the cross more than two thousand years ago?" The answer to that is the resurrection. Jesus did die on the cross, yet after his burial he rose from the dead bodily as the resurrected Christ who is the saviour of all mankind. Many ridicule and mock this account of Christ's resurrection as recorded in the gospels. Yet eye witness accounts reveal that Jesus did rise from the dead and he appeared to hundreds. Detailed eyewitness accounts reveal this astonishing fact.<sup>7</sup> He is now at the right hand of the Father, ready to intervene in your life and bring the true hope that you desire. As the resurrected Christ, He is actively present in the lives of all who seek Him, including you!

Therefore Jesus is your inheritance, your true hope in life. His very presence will bring hope to the most depressed individual. He is just a prayer away. Ask Him and He will come, ever willing to bring the comfort you need for your soul. He is the God of hope.

- <sup>1</sup> Romans 15:13
- <sup>2</sup> Matthew 12:21
- <sup>3</sup> Romans 5:5
- <sup>4</sup> Matthew 11:28-30
- <sup>5</sup> John 1:1-3
- <sup>6</sup> John 4:16-18
- <sup>7</sup> Acts 10:39-40

# You Are Transformed As You Behold Jesus

**B**ut we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of The Lord.<sup>1</sup>

As believers we have a tendency to judge ourselves and others for falling short. The world too, expects exemplary behaviour from Christians. The truth is that true transformation does not happen by our trying to do good and be good. It happens when we start beholding Jesus, looking at Him, fixing our gaze on Him and yielding to Him.

No amount of will power or mental strength can cause us to change ourselves or save ourselves from sin, sickness, and consuming emotions like fear and anger, depression, bondages and destructive habits that ruin our lives and the lives of those we love. Neither can we try to be kind, patient, good, gracious and compassionate by our own will power.

But when we turn to behold Jesus, His love and His wonderful finished work, His Spirit does the work of transforming us to become like Him. His Spirit supernaturally strengthens us, lifts us from fear and depression, and sets us free from destructive bondages. He lifts us into a place of His joy and peace regardless of the circumstances we may be in. When we submit to Him, His Spirit changes us to become compassionate, patient, kind and forgiving.



By  
Helen Teo

Therefore, keep encouraging one another to behold Jesus. Keep pointing to Him and not to our sins, shortcomings and failures. We can't save or transform ourselves. But as we behold Jesus, the Spirit does the work of transforming us to be like Him, infused with His love, joy and peace.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord Jesus for Your sacrifice and for the gift of the Holy Spirit. I submit to Your areas of weaknesses – help me to see You in these weak areas, to see Your strength, Your love, Your beauty, Your peace that I might be transformed to become more and more like You in every way. Amen.

Adapted from Day 60 of the book **ALIVE IN CHRIST A DEVOTIONAL** by Helen Teo Walton. The book is available on Amazon, The Book Depository, Kinokuniya and major online bookstores.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18



# Godly Rulership

By  
Paul Hailey

In 1987 I was part of a church group visiting the country of Jordan. The most memorable time of our trip occurred when we toured a facility for orphaned and handicapped children. A gracious lady welcomed us, offered refreshments and showed us around the building. She never introduced herself, but when asked if she spent much time there, she commented that she did, keeping records, working with the children, cooking, washing and doing other chores. After we left we learned who she was--Her Royal Highness Princess Majda. She and others in the royal family were loved by the people of Jordan for their remarkable example of service.

Much of the world thinks "rulership" means being exalted, sitting in a finely furnished office, being honored with a title and given authority to "take charge" and tell others what to do. True enough, some level of authority is necessary at times to punish evil doers as the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 13:3, but that is not the norm of Godly rulership. Even Jesus' disciples had a wrong concept of proper rulership. When they had been arguing among themselves about which one of them was "the greatest," Jesus explained, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."<sup>1</sup>

It took his disciples a while for the servant mentality to sink into their minds. A little while later, two of them asked Jesus if they could sit next to him when he ruled over his coming kingdom. Jesus rebuked them saying, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whosoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus lived what he preached. Let's consider his example and how it contrasted with the expectations of the Jewish people of his time.

## Jewish Expectations of The Messiah

The Jews of Jesus day expected the prophesied Messiah to be a mighty leader who would deliver the Jews from Roman occupation, similar to Moses who delivered Israel out of Egyptian captivity. In fact, "Jesus" in Hebrew means "to rescue or deliver." Instead, Jesus came as the gentle Lamb of God, serving, healing, and teaching.<sup>3</sup> Jesus' disciples didn't understand why he didn't use his miracle-working power to free Israel from oppressive Roman rule. Even after his death and resurrection they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to Jewish expectations of the Messiah, Jesus did not seek status, but lived humbly as a carpenter. When he started his ministry he offered forgiveness instead of seeking vengeance on wrongdoers. He didn't associate with the "upper class", but with tax collectors, and others who were considered "sinners." He even submitted to harsh Roman law by being crucified as a criminal, even forgiving those who were murdering him.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, in contrast to all the Jewish people expected the

Messiah to do, he started history's greatest movement, one that in time will change the entire world. Micah predicted a time yet to come, "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains, it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."<sup>6</sup>

Before that however, when Jesus comes (revealed in us) as a conquering king, he will end all violence and warfare.<sup>7</sup> But this too will be an act of service that will lead to Jesus ushering the fullness of His kingdom on earth, a kingdom of peace and abundance, with no evil, pain or sorrow.

The gentle Lamb of God will bring peace and truth to the world, not through exercising forceful rulership, but through serving, teaching, and offering forgiveness just as he did during his ministry. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."<sup>8</sup>

## He is Our Example

It may be difficult for us to think of rulership as Jesus lived it. Our tendency is to "take charge", to be in control, to make things happen. Instead, our efforts should be in serving others, and if we are given authority on our jobs or in church, we should use it to serve others. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross!"<sup>9</sup>



- 1 Mark 9:35
- 2 Mark 10:42-45
- 3 John 1:29
- 4 Acts 1:6
- 5 Luke 23:34
- 6 Micah 4:1, 2
- 7 Revelation 11:18
- 8 Hebrews 13:8
- 9 Philippians 2:5-8



# Change

Change is inevitable. Some welcome it, most are scared of it, many avoid it. But the Bible demands it: "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ..."<sup>1</sup> If we are to grow in Christ, that requires us to be constantly changing, being moulded by HIS LOVE, to be like him, to care for others like he did.

By  
Shanti Nirale

big changes! My husband and I were fearful of so many things and apprehensive to go back after seventeen long years living outside of India.

But, through all the changes we experienced, we were now prepared for this big one! We knew we could face it with God's help.

## Why we don't like change?

We fear it will upset our comfortable lives. What if we don't get it right? To change means to show the world we were probably wrong. That hurts our pride and ego. What will people say about me? Then, there is the fear of the unknown. All of these tend to make us not to like and to resist change.

My husband and I experienced the pang of change through our personal experience. We were moved several times during our overseas employment. It was hard shifting from one country to another. With each move there was the challenge of finding a church to worship in. We were made to go through different types of churches, meet people from various cultures. We witnessed contrasting forms of church worship services and evangelism done in various countries. At every point we were thrown out of our comfort zone. We were always uncomfortable at the beginning of every change. It naturally made us to question as to why we were going through this and how would this help us?

Interestingly, it was beneficial to witness the variety of ways people worship in different churches. We saw how diversely communion was observed. There were a few churches where speaking of tongues was a regular practice, something that we were not accustomed too. In some, members promptly told us that we are sitting in their chairs!

We began to learn that each of us are created and gifted uniquely. In all the change one thing became very clear: wherever we were our anchor finally was Jesus Christ, nothing else. So, we tried our best to accept the change and adapt to the situation, instead of fighting and resisting it.

Finally, the time came when our last project in Kenya got over. We prayed for God's guidance as to what we would do next. It became clear to us that we were being directed to go back to India. This would be another one of those

## Accepting change as Christians

A vital lesson we learned is to accept change and maintain the right attitude to make it helpful for us. As Christians we are faced with change constantly. Though it may be uncomfortable, it is necessary that we slowly change day by day to become more like HIM in our personal walk with God and corporately as a church. We must cope and learn and manage change effectively so God could mould us. We must show God's love and be a witness to the Good News of the gospel. This may require us to change our ways and see things differently. This will help us to put ourselves in the shoes of others so that we can minister

to them more effectively.

In his book *THE IMPACT OF ATTITUDE*, Chuck Swindoll said, "We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude."

Yes, every change brings a set of challenges, but if we have the right attitude and are united and rooted in God's love, we will prevail through HIS LOVE, GRACE AND MERCY. His grace will carry us through every situation. The formula is: be rooted in His love.

We are called to have a positive attitude. "Nothing paralyzes our lives like the attitude that things can never change. We need to remind ourselves that God can and does change things. Outlook determines outcome. If we see only problems, we will be defeated; but if we see possibilities in the problems, we can have victory." (Warren Wiersbe, Bible Commentary).

Let's henceforth see things as God sees. Let's change as God leads us to. Let's come out of our comfort zones. God will see us through the changes and prepare us for HIS kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:15

# Doing God's Will

**H**ave you ever struggled trying to determine God's will for your life? Have you ever feared that your decisions would lead you out of God's will? Have you ever struggled trying to figure out how to determine God's will? Have you ever felt guilty about the decisions that seemed to take you outside God's will? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are not alone. It is not uncommon for such feelings of fear and anxiety to arise among those who seek to discover and then do God's will for them. But we need not be anxious; we need not fear. Let us be instructed by Jesus' words and example.

## Jesus' example

Jesus, who always obediently followed God's will, was rarely anxious or fearful in doing so. Even when following the will of God meant stepping into trying circumstances, Jesus obeyed.

The author of Hebrews put it this way:

When Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.'"

First, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.<sup>1</sup>

Here the author of Hebrews takes poetic license in having Jesus speak to us about God's will. Quoting Psalm 40:6-8, he puts David's words in Jesus' mouth, letting us know that the incarnate Son of God has come to do the Father's will.

## Jesus is the Father's will

Through the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, who took on flesh (incarnation), we see the Father's will of bringing all his children back to a right relationship with him—a goal accomplished once for all in and through Jesus. Jesus is the superior sacrifice that sanctifies us. It is through Jesus' sacrifice that God's will for us is finally accomplished. We have been made holy (sanctified) in Jesus. When Jesus came to do the Father's will, he becomes God's will for us.

That being the case, when we wonder what God's will is for our lives, we need look no further than Jesus. He is God's perfect will for us all. God is not looking for us to perform some perfect physical sacrifice that will earn us a spiritual standing with him. Nor is God looking for some spiritual sacrifice that has nothing to do with our physical

By  
Grace  
Communion  
International

existence. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is the spiritual sacrifice offered in a physical body. It's in Jesus that God's will of being in holy communion with his people has been fully realized—once and for all time.

## Coming to know Jesus

Coming to know Jesus is coming to know God's will. Out of this knowing flows our doing. To do God's will is to participate in what Jesus is doing. Our journey with Jesus is not one in which we are trying to figure out our every next move under a cloud of fear. We rest in knowing him and in following him. Jesus leads us to know him, and his Father through him, and that is doing God's will.

Another way to speak of doing God's will is to speak of embracing and so receiving what God is doing, rather than offering our works as a sacrifice to appease him. God's will is a work in Jesus that is to be received, not a work from us to be achieved. The apostle Paul put it this way:

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Notice that, in this case, doing God's will is not about discerning and then moving into a particular circumstance. Rather it's about being thankful in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, and then receiving God's work within that circumstance. God is not sitting back waiting for us to find our way forward. He has sent his Son to bring us forward into our future home in relationship with his Father.

## An analogy

Maybe an analogy will be helpful here: Have you ever had to navigate your way while driving in a storm? It's hard enough seeing the road in front of you and the cars around you, let alone the road signs that need to be read to keep from getting lost. Maybe you were driving and trying to read a map at the same time. While doing so, you feared crashing into an unexpected obstacle in the road. Even with modern-day GPS devices, this would be an anxiety-causing experience: What if we make a wrong turn? Will we ever find our way back? How long will we have to hear the rather obnoxious voice of our GPS saying, "Recalculating! Recalculating!" Does this sound like your experience in trying to find God's will for your life? If so, there's little room for rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Now imagine you are in the same car, in the same storm, but you are not driving. Jesus is. Your job is to ride in the passenger seat, trust the driver, enjoying the ride, despite the storm. He knows the route and knows a thing or two about storms. Even when you don't see the road ahead clearly, you can relax because you trust the driver—so you keep your eyes on him, enjoying your conversation

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:5-10  
<sup>2</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

People have enough people pushing them down, pointing out their faults. Why don't you be the one to push them up, see the best in them, and help them get free?

**Joel Osteen**

If you're broken-hearted today, God has good news that says, "weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning".

**Matthew Hagee**

If a man cannot be a Christian in the place he is, he cannot be a Christian anywhere.

**Henry Ward Beecher**

If you are a Christian, you are not a citizen of this world trying to get to heaven; you are a citizen of heaven making your way through this world.

**Vance Havner**

God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.

**Augustine**

The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even heard but must be felt with the heart.

**Helen Keller**

We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.

**Chuck Swindoll**

You are the only Bible some unbelievers will ever read.

**John MacArthur**

God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies.

**Hudson Taylor**

Your potential is the sum of all the possibilities God has for your life.

**Charles Stanley**

Money will never give you eternal life. Fame will never give you eternal life. Only Jesus Christ will give you eternal life.

**Matthew Hagee**

Don't be dependent on man, because they change like the wind. Depend on the Lord and know that He is faithful to keep His Word.

**Joel Osteen**

*Continued from page 22*

with him; resting in him, knowing you are right where you are meant to be.

Though not perfect, this analogy illustrates the difference between trying to find God's will for your life and receiving Jesus as God's will for your life. Hopefully it helps us understand what God has done for us and what he is up to in sending his Son Jesus as the gift of knowing and being in relationship with him and his Father.

### Why did God give Israel the sacrificial system?

The author of Hebrews goes on to tell us that it was never God's intent that we should figure out our way home to him:

"Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law.<sup>3</sup>

Does it seem like a contradiction for God to give the Law of Moses with its sacrifices to Israel, then say that he does not desire sacrifice and offerings? But there is no contradiction—what we are learning is that these sacrifices were not God's ultimate purpose—not his final goal. They were given as a temporary form of worship until the reality in Jesus Christ was revealed. God took this approach as an act of love, in order to bring his people Israel to a fuller understanding of who he is.

God is an accommodating God. He entered the pagan culture of Israel's time and joined himself to them where they were. Though God did not want a relationship with them built on rules and regulations, he used the sacrificial system to help Israel feel comfortable journeying with him until Jesus would come. Thus, even the sacrificial system was God's grace to Israel. The people of Israel

did not need to approach the altar of sacrifice fearing that their sacrifices were not good enough. God, who provided the sacrifice, told them exactly what to bring and when.

The sacrificial system God gave Israel was very detailed. The people were not left guessing what God required of them. Thus, the Israelites could relax and come to know this God as the gracious God that he is. They did not have to anxiously wonder if they were outside God's will. As they then followed God's directives, they were gently led in the direction of where the sacrificial system was designed to take them—toward Jesus. However, as we know, they did not follow, though this disobedience was also part of God's plan to take them to Jesus where they find forgiveness and reconciliation.

### Jesus is God's will for us

May we let go of any anxiousness or fearfulness concerning God's will for us. Yes, we should strive to both understand and do God's will, but we do so in faith, with hope and love, knowing that Jesus, who is God's will, is in the driver's seat and has us, by the Spirit, in his loving, superintending care. We can let go of the steering wheel—it's in good hands—the hands of God's perfect, complete and final sacrifice given on our behalf. As we journey with him, we come to know the Father's will—his grace and peace to us in the person of his incarnate Son.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 10:8



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