

THE Plain Truth

MCI (P) 132/05/2013

A Magazine Of Christian Understanding

Apr-Jun 2014

A death in Jerusalem

p.5

Does God have a clue?

p.15

A living hope

p.19

THE PLAIN TRUTH

ISSN 1675-3100



9 771675 310008

PP 12578/03/2013 (032108)

Where was God?

That's the question many ask when they go through a tragedy—whether it's a plane crash, a tsunami, a typhoon, an earthquake, a financial crisis, a broken relationship, or death of a loved one.

Yes, where is God in our tragedies? It's a valid question that demands an honest answer.

Unfortunately, no answer seems to satisfy everyone—even if it comes from a priest, prophet or God.

This article may not fully answer your question, but we hope it provides comfort, hope, encouragement and strength as you face various trials.

What we see

When a tragedy strikes us, we are overwhelmed, we are devastated. We break down, we grieve, we cry. The pain is real and heart-wrenching. We are confused and angry. We ask God, "Why me? What did I do to deserve this? Why are you punishing me?"

We evaluate God's goodness based on what we experience and project this on to his disposition towards us. If things go well, we say, "God is good. He loves me. I am OK." If things don't go well, we say, "God is punishing me. He doesn't care. He doesn't love me." Or we may beat ourselves saying, "I have sinned. I have not been spiritual. I have neglected God."

Feeling alienated and estranged, we tell ourselves, "Since God is not helping me I have to rely on myself. I have to fend for myself." This takes us even further from God and makes us more miserable.

While we don't want to minimize the pain, grief and sorrow that a tragedy brings, God nevertheless asks us to see the bigger context—to see things as he sees, to believe what he believes. He wants us to see beyond the physical and the temporal. He asks us to focus on the spiritual and the permanent. He asks us to consider and reflect who we are and why we are here. He asks us to come to grips with our humanity—where we began and where we are heading. That can only come by God's revelation.

Here is what God tells us. He tells us that we are his children and we belong to him. He tells us that he created us for fellowship—to participate in his life. He tells us that he loves us dearly and unconditionally. He tells us that through his son Jesus Christ he has wiped away all our sin, shame, guilt and failure and

by
**Dr. P.
Sellappan**

therefore we are under no condemnation or judgment whatsoever. He declares us holy, righteous and blameless. He asks us to wake up to this reality or truth. He asks us to see what he sees, believe what he believes about us. That's faith—agreeing with him. Until we embrace this truth, no answer will ever satisfy us and we will only prolong our sorrow.

What God sees

God's perspective is not always our perspective. He sees the spiritual, we see the physical; he sees the permanent, we see the temporal; he sees the invisible, we see the visible. That's why we don't always agree with him.

So where is God in our tragedies—in the plane crash, in the typhoon, in our financial woes, in our fears, doubts and confusion, in our broken relationship, in our sickness?"

God's answer may not satisfy everyone. We may even dismiss it as preposterous—ludicrous. But let's hear what he tells us. He tells us that he is with us from beginning to end—from cradle to grave, every moment of our life. Indeed, he tells us that he was with us before we were born and will be with us beyond our grave.

That means he is in complete solidarity with us—he fully identifies with us. He understands our innermost thoughts,

feelings and groaning. That's why he came as Emmanuel or God with us. He is for us, with us, in us, as us. Jesus is the proof. He came as a human being and attached himself to us such that we will never be alone. He will always be 'flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone'. That's how strongly he has bonded with us. That's how strong his love is for us.

Nothing—not even death—can separate us from the love of God. Through Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension, God has reconciled all people to himself. He destroyed everything that stood between him and us. He conquered sin, death and the devil. He wiped away our shame, our guilt and our failures and made us holy and blameless. He adopted us as his beloved children and given us a place in the very heart and life of the Triune God.

That's his assurance to us. May you experience his comfort, strength and peace. □



THE Plain Truth

A Magazine Of Christian Understanding



20



19



16



17



12

Issue No. 1	Volume No. 13
April-June 2014	PP 12578/03/2013 (032108)
Editor	Dr. P. Sellappan
Managing Editor	Low Mong Chai
Co-ordinator	Susan Low
Editorial & Advisory Committee	Ben David
	Devaraj Ramoo
	Stefanie Tai
	Tan Ten Lee
	Wong Mein Kong
	Wong Teck Kong
Editorial Adviser	John Halford
Design	Richard Low
Design Adviser	John D. Stettaford

Malaysia

Office Address:
No.98, Jalan Zapin 3A/KU5,
Mutiaru Point (off Jalan Meru),
Bandar Bukit Raja, Batu Belah,
41050 Klang

Website: www.gci-malaysia.org
Email: ptasiamy@gmail.com

Postal Address:
P. O. Box 2043,
Pusat Bisnes Bukit Raja,
Pos Malaysia Bhd.,
40800 Shah Alam.

Singapore

Jurong Point Post Office, P.O. Box 054, Singapore 916402

The Plain Truth is published five times a year as funds allow, and is sponsored by Grace Communion International (formerly known as Worldwide Church of God Malaysia), which is a member of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia. It follows a non-denominational editorial policy and provides a message of practical help, hope and encouragement from a Christian perspective.
- For Non-Muslims Only -

DONATIONS: Although we do not put any subscription price for THE PLAIN TRUTH, we gratefully welcome donations from readers who support our desire to bring spiritual knowledge and understanding to our fellow brothers and sisters.
Cheques should be made payable to 'The Plain Truth' and mailed to the postal address listed above.

Printed in Malaysia by:
Hin Press & Trading Sdn Bhd (71078-D)
No. PT 45855, Batu 2, Jalan Kapar,
41400 Klang, Selangor, Malaysia

ISSN 1675-3100. Copyright Worldwide Church of God, 2014.

cover story

- 5 A death in Jerusalem**
Jesus' death (and resurrection) changed human history.

articles

- 8 All reconciled; some redeemed**
Salvation includes everyone, but not all have accepted.
- 9 Living in Easter time**
Jesus has given us new life.
- 10 Does everyone have the Holy Spirit?**
The Holy Spirit calls different people at different times.
- 12 You are God's dream come true!**
God took care of every detail before he launched his creation.
- 14 Where your camera is set**
Jesus is the lens by which we must see all things.
- 15 Does God have a clue?**
Jesus knows us fully because he has been with us all along.
- 16 Finding my freedom**
True freedom is letting Jesus into our lives.
- 17 I see Jesus in you**
Christ in us leads us to do good works.
- 18 The house of the Lord**
God lives in us.
- 22 He lives!**
Jesus rose to give us his resurrection life.

regular features

- 2 Editorial**
- 4 What our readers say**
- 19 Another angle**
- 20 Speaking of life...**
- 21 Tammy's turn**
- 23 Hmm...**
Something to think about.

What our readers say:

I am just reading your magazine at the paediatrician's clinic. I find it very interesting and would like to request copies of your magazine. Thank you.

Yen-nee

Petaling Jaya

Ed: Thanks for your request. Sure, we will put your name on our mailing list.

Thank you for the wonderful work your team is doing! I am enjoying your latest issue (Feb–Mar 2014) very, very much. The articles are very informative, inspiring and encouraging. Thank you for the good selection of articles and for processing and sending this fine magazine to me. Keep up the good work.

Shirley

Kuala Lumpur

Thank you for sending me THE PLAIN TRUTH magazine regularly. I prefer to read online. Do you have a website from where I can download? Thank you.

Reader

Ed: Yes, we do have a website. You can download it from <http://www.gci-malaysia.org/archive.html>

I am gaining fresh perspectives from your magazine. Some doctrines I held dear no longer seem to be correct! I guess I must put away faulty doctrines and embrace new ones as God reveals.

Reader

Ed: Yes, that's right! The Bible asks us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). That includes replacing faulty doctrines with correct ones.

I have a question: I am confused between "universal salvation" and "universalism". What's the difference? Can you please clarify? Thank you.

Reader

Ed: Good question. Universal salvation means God has reconciled all humanity through his son Jesus Christ's redemptive work—through his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. All are included in his salvation whether they actually believe or not. When a person believes this (objective) truth he/she begins to personally experience this new life in Christ. This is what we proclaim. Universalism, on the other hand, means everyone is saved

whether they actually believe or not. We don't subscribe to this idea.

I find THE PLAIN TRUTH very interesting. Reading it has given me a lot of understanding. Please continue sending the magazine. I like to thank all the writers and staff, the people who care for us.

Loo Hok Chai, PJK

Klang

THE PLAIN TRUTH encourages and makes me pause. It makes me think more deeply about my family and life. It helps me to regain my life. My children and I are learning a lot from it. It's great to have it. Attached please find RM50, a small contribution towards the magazine.

Subra

Shah Alam

THE PLAIN TRUTH exposes me to many new things. I had never realized how much it has changed my life.

Sivananda

Klang

The articles are interesting and enriching. Enclosed please find my contribution towards the support of your ministry.

Grace Tsang

Penang

THE PLAIN TRUTH helps me in my spiritual growth. Keep up the good work. God bless all the writers, donors and sponsors.

Marcus Yurit

Tambunan

Enclosed please find a cheque for THE PLAIN TRUTH ministry. May the good Lord bless and keep you, and spur you on in your commendable endeavours.

M. J. Monteiro

The articles are really interesting, meaningful and inspiring. I have learnt so many things from THE PLAIN TRUTH. I would appreciate receiving the magazine always. Enclosed please find a small donation.

Lillian

Kuching, Sarawak

THE PLAIN TRUTH is truly food for the soul as the articles stimulate our conscience and helps us check our spiritual life. Thanks to the Editorial Team. Please continue

the good work in serving the Lord. Kindly accept my humble donation towards your ministry.

William Gomez

Butterworth

Greetings in Jesus' name! I am sending a small love offering. Thank you so much for the magazine that you have been sending. You are always in our prayers. (I would appreciate your prayers for me and my family too—thank you.) God bless you all, ever so specially in every way now and always in your commitment toward proclaiming the Gospel, all to the glory of His eternal kingdom.

Eric B. R

Subang Jaya

THE PLAIN TRUTH makes me feel as though God is with me. It guides and reminds me in my daily walk with God.

Prof. Dr. S. Kumaran

Kuala Lumpur

Although THE PLAIN TRUTH is sent free of charge, it is not without cost. Each copy is made possible by the generosity of others. So we are very grateful for those readers who send a donation, and make it possible for us to continue to publish the good news of the Gospel. Donations should be sent to the addresses listed on page 3 or sent electronically to the bank account:

The Plain Truth

A/C No: 1203-0386318-05-6

CIMB BANK BHD

Jalan Dato Hamzah (Branch)

12-14 Jalan Dato Hamzah

41700 Klang,

Selangor, MALAYSIA.

We welcome your comments. Letters for this section should be addressed to:

"Letters to the Editor", The Plain Truth, P.O. Box 2043, Pusat Bisnes Bukit Raja, Pos Malaysia Bhd., 40800 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

or sent via electronic mail to:

ptasiamy@gmail.com

The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity and space.

A death in Jerusalem

On a spring day in Jerusalem, a man named Jesus was tortured and executed by the Roman government. But after he died God resurrected him, and the world was forever changed.

Jerusalem seemed to be gripped by a fanatical hysteria during that fateful day on which Jesus died. Some were shouting that he had blasphemed against God and should be condemned to death. Others accused him of treason against the state, and clamored for his execution.

Jesus' closest disciples disowned him and fled. Many others followed Jesus to the cross, mourning and wailing for him. Some people hurled insults at him as he was dying. "Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him," they taunted.¹

One of the criminals executed with Jesus was profoundly moved, perceiving something special about Jesus—something beyond his humanity. A centurion praised God and said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"²

Strange things occurred that day in Jerusalem. The land was mired in a soupy darkness between noon and 3 in the afternoon. For no known reason, the curtain in front of the temple's Most Holy Place ripped in two from top to bottom.

Earlier, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, had agonized over what to do with Jesus. Pilate had been reluctant to sign the execution order because there was no legal reason for doing so. He knew Jesus wasn't guilty of any crime. But Pilate didn't have the political will to resist those who demanded that Jesus be crucified. Finally, to appease the mob, the governor simply signed away the carpenter's life.

Letter from Pilate?

One wonders how Pilate might have explained his actions regarding Jesus to himself—or his superiors in Rome. Pilate was known for overstepping his authority and for being brutal to his subjects. (A few years after signing Jesus' death warrant, Pilate was ordered to Rome to justify his slaughter of a Samaritan religious group that had gathered on Mt. Gerizim.)

Let us assume Pilate felt compelled to justify his execution of Jesus to the emperor. His letter might have looked something like the one in the inset (see box).

And so Jesus was crucified. The world took no notice of what happened that spring day in Jerusalem. Only a few discerned there was something different about this man, though they couldn't quite put their finger on what it was.

Pilate himself only saw Jesus as a political problem to be dealt with. He certainly had no idea that he had become a player in a momentous historical drama.

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we now know was the pivotal event of human history. God had sent Jesus to rescue the world from sin by his death. And he was resurrected so we might have eternal life.

by
**Grace
Communion
International**

Pilate had no awareness of this central truth of human history.³ He saw Jesus as just another human standing in his way, not God in the flesh.

The rescue

Strangely, many in the Christian world are also not sure of Jesus Christ's identity. Was he the wisest of wise teachers, but nothing more? If the answer is yes, Jesus' death could have no special meaning and his claimed resurrection would be a pious fraud.

The central event of all history—Jesus' death and resurrection—has meaning only when we understand his divine identity. Jesus was more than a good man, mystical teacher or the best of humans. To put it in a short sentence that describes a divine mystery: Jesus was God in the flesh.

We learn about Jesus' true identity from the first chapter of the Gospel of John. He begins by describing "the Word" as the eternal life that existed from the beginning. This Word was both *with* God and *was* God. In some mysterious and miraculous way, the Word became flesh—became a human being—and lived with us as the man Jesus Christ.

In Jesus, God "came down" to reach out to humans—to help us to be reconciled to him—and to restore our relationship with the Creator. The apostle Paul spoke of Jesus' work in these very terms.

He said God "reconciled us to himself through Christ."⁴ In fact, said Paul, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." In Jesus, God demonstrated his loving plan, which was his purpose from the beginning. Paul told his co-worker Titus that the Christian's future rests on the hope of eternal life that God "promised before the beginning of time."⁵

God takes every possible step to reconcile us to him. God is the quintessential pursuing lover. He yearns, as the apostle Peter said, for "everyone to come to repentance."⁶

And God showed this love while human beings were yet sinners—still his enemies. This proved God was not about rules, or about anger, or about condemnation. He was about love—about bringing us home to himself.

Suffering God

In Jesus, God entered the world to live with a suffering humanity. Hebrews tells us Jesus as God incarnate shared in our humanity.⁷ That means God can sympathize with our weaknesses. He has "been here, done that."

God knows what it's like to experience hatred and injustice. In Jesus, he even endured the final torment: extreme torture and death by agonizing crucifixion. The fact that in Jesus God shared our suffering should help to reconcile us to him. Because God reached out to us through a suffering human life, we have no reason to question God's motives, even though we may not



fully understand the processes he uses.

God's promise revealed in Jesus is that he will liberate us from the bondage and corruption we now suffer. And it will be a glorious and eternal freedom we shall have. That, as the saying goes, is something we can take to the bank. It is certain.

In Jesus, God entered our suffering world voluntarily to begin the process of transforming it. Jesus' death closed the gap sin had caused between humanity and God.

His life also

Jesus' death, however, is only half the story of salvation. The rest of the story is his resurrection. We need a living and a resurrected Savior. We need both the Cross and the Empty Tomb. We need both the death and the life of Christ. The apostle Paul showed how the two work together. He wrote, "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"⁸

Jesus Christ's death is about our present. It makes peace between us and God. His resurrection and life is about our future. It is a living promise that there is much more to our lives than our temporary and physical here-and-now existence.

The book of Revelation gives us a beautiful picture of our eternal future, in which we are promised eternal life in peace with our Creator. John, the writer, explains this through the image of the new Jerusalem, which symbolizes the eternal kingdom of God. Speaking of that eternal rest, John quotes a loud voice from God's throne saying:

"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."⁹

The resurrection—the way to this eternal kingdom—is the cornerstone of the Christian life. The resurrection of Jesus is the proof that we, too, shall be lifted up from death to immortal life. □

Foot note:

*No letter about Jesus from Pilate to Emperor Tiberius exists. However, several early church writers claimed that Pilate did, indeed, send a report of the trial and execution of Jesus to Tiberius. (See Tertullian, *Apology* 16; Justin, *Apology* 1.35; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.2.) Tertullian claimed that when Emperor Tiberius read the report about Jesus, he asked the Roman senate to declare him a god, but that the proposition was rejected (*Apology* 26).*

¹ Matthew 27:42

² Mark 15:39

³ John 18:33–38

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:18

⁵ Titus 1:2

⁶ 2 Peter 3:9

⁷ Hebrews 2:14

⁸ Romans 5:10

⁹ Revelations 21:3–4

To Emperor Tiberius regarding the execution of an insurrectionist from Galilee.

Greetings:

Your Majesty, I'm writing this letter so you will be aware of an unusual situation in the province of Judea. On the day before the Jews' Passover this year, I executed a man named Jesus, who was from the town of Nazareth.

I thought I would write a personal report to you about this as it is said by some that this man claimed to be a god. The Jewish leaders of Jerusalem told me he had taught everywhere that death would not hold him and that he would rise from the grave, to live again.

But that is not why I felt compelled to have the man executed. He was accused of insurrection and of being the ringleader of a rebel group prepared to overthrow Caesar's government in Judea. He even claimed to be a king himself—a king of the Jews.

When I discovered these things, as a precautionary measure, I authorized a search for the man and had him quickly arrested. His followers scattered into the hills when my soldiers arrived.

I investigated the charges against this Jesus very thoroughly before proceeding against him, of course. Though I was unable personally to substantiate the accusations, the man did have a large following throughout the province. This seemed evidence enough that the indictment against him as a ringleader of sedition was true.

In fact, it was the leaders of our loyal Jewish subjects in Judea—including the high priest—who brought the charges to me. They insisted they had evidence of a plot. Their own ruling body, the Sanhedrin, concurred that this man was guilty of crimes against Caesar, and said he should be crucified.

The accused himself did not deny the charges. In fact, he made no reply to them whatsoever. In order to preserve Caesar's enlightened rulership in Judea, I thought it prudent to deal decisively with the situation and proceed with the examination of the accused. At its completion, I ordered that he undergo the standard execution by crucifixion outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

After his death, I had the body placed in a tomb. I intended to secure the tomb with our own soldiers, but the Jewish religious leaders objected. They pleaded for their temple police to guard it. To show concern for our subjects and to keep the peace of Caesar intact, I allowed their police to be involved in the security measures. I also ordered a large stone to be rolled across the entrance of the tomb. Then, I placed a seal on it.

However, a report soon came to my ears that the tomb of this crucified insurrectionist was empty. The Jews said that in spite of their best efforts, the followers of this man somehow had been able to steal the body from the tomb.

I made diligent search but was unable to locate it. Whatever the fate of the body, this man's followers now insist he is alive. They are making this claim publicly throughout Jerusalem, asserting that they speak "in Jesus' name." His followers say he is a god indeed. Because of this many are joining their cause.

That being so, I was uncertain what further course I ought to take regarding the followers of this man they say is still alive. The nature of the situation seemed to justify my writing and consulting you.

*Pontius Pilate,
Governor of Judea*

All reconciled; some redeemed

Trinitarian theologians use various terms to distinguish between the universal/objective scope of what God has done in Christ and the personal/subjective realization of that work in the lives of those who have come to faith. For example, some speak of all humanity as reconciled already to God in Christ, while only believers are redeemed.

Dr. Joseph Tkach of Grace Communion International makes this distinction in one of his *Speaking of Life* videos. Here is an excerpt from the program script:

The words reconciliation and redemption can be used to describe aspects of God's work of salvation for the world through Jesus Christ. To reconcile means to

by
Ted Johnson

collective human failure to get along with each other. This is simply a reflection of alienation from God.

As the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 1:21–22, “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”

First, we should note that it was never God who needed to be reconciled to us, but we who needed to be reconciled to God. As Paul said, the alienation was in the human mind, not in God's mind. God's response to human alienation was his forgiving and cleansing love fulfilled in Christ.

Second, notice also that according to Paul

reconciliation leads to a further development of that restored relationship. It leads to a fullness of life that is characterized by holiness, blamelessness, and being above reproach because face to face (in his sight) we freely and gladly enter into the healed relationship and so receive all that God has to give us through Christ.

Getting at the same point, Paul wrote to the church in Rome to say: “For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”¹

God has turned to us before we ever made a move in his direction.

So God reconciles us even while we were enemies and alienated. But note that the restoration of right relationship with us leads to greater fruit that unfolds as the fullness of life, joyfully receiving the fullness of salvation itself.

And Paul tells us that it does not stop there. “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.”²

In his letter to the church at Colossae, Paul explained how in Christ, God reconciled the whole world to himself, “For God was pleased to have all his fullness



patch up a quarrel, or to make a relationship that has become strained right again. To redeem means to buy back, or to claim ownership.

Christ has accomplished both for us since there is but one whole and single work of his. But what he inaugurates is a healed, restored relationship making us his very own brothers and sisters. This relationship of belonging to him calls for our involvement in it, our participation. His provision for us includes enabling us to receive and respond and so live in that restored relationship. So, we can say that the fruit of Christ's reconciliation is our redemption in Christ.

Through most of history, humans have been in a state of alienation from God. That is, they have been unreconciled. We can see this by the record of the

continued on page 9

Living in Easter time

As we near our annual celebration of Easter, it's good to remember that Jesus' resurrection is not only a past event, but a continuing reality.

On Easter Sunday morning, nearly 2,000 years ago, the God-man Jesus rose from death to newness of life. He was not merely revived (as, for example, was his friend Lazarus), but through resurrection became something entirely new—glorified humanity, not subject to death.

Lazarus' grieving sisters asked Jesus to revive their dead brother. He replied, "Your brother will rise again."¹ They thought he was referring to the promised resurrection of the dead at the end of the age. But Jesus' enigmatic, rather shocking statement was this: "I am the resurrection and the life."

Jesus' own resurrection to permanent, enduring, glorified human life, created a new reality for all humanity. He is the resurrection and the life (the resurrection life) for all people. And Jesus said to the sisters that this stunning reality may be experienced by "anyone who believes in me." Even if that believer should die (in their non-glorified flesh), they still will be alive in accordance with the glorified humanity that Jesus shares with them. He is their resurrection life—a life not subject to the death experienced in our non-glorified humanity.

Of course, Jesus was speaking to Mary and Martha prior to the event of his death and resurrection, which brought about the new reality to which he was speaking. Thus when Jesus brought Lazarus back to life, that event was resuscitation, not a resurrection. At that time, Lazarus was restored to non-glorified life, and thus died again at some future date.

But with Jesus' death and resurrection, a new reality was forged for all humanity (Lazarus included). Now, in Jesus, our humanity is glorified—transformed; re-created. And that glorified human life is experienced

by
Ted Johnson

by all who believe in Jesus—who trust him to be who he says he is: the resurrection and the life.

Yes, Easter celebrates an ancient event. But it also celebrates a present, continuing reality for all people. Easter tells us that Jesus is alive! It tells us that the glorified, incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, is a living person! It reminds us that the incarnation continues forever. There never will be a time when Jesus ceases to be the union of God and humanity in one person (two natures; one person). Therefore, in Jesus (in his humanity, which he bears for us), humankind is glorified forever!

In the historic tradition of the church, Easter is a 50-day-long celebration called Eastertide. This is a reminder to us that Easter is about an enduring life—the life of Jesus, which, through the Spirit, is being shared with us. So, this Easter, let's remember that we are now living in Easter time—the time on this side of the empty tomb.

Something quite amazing happened when Jesus rose from the grave. Not only did he personally rise to new, glorified, life; but, in him, so did all humanity. As Paul points out in his letters, when Jesus died, we all died; when he rose, we all rose; when he ascended, we all ascended.²

A new humanity was created through Jesus' vicarious death, resurrection and ascension. And that being so, the invitation may now go out to all to believe! Through believing, what is true already for them in Christ, will be personally experienced—and that experience transforms the believer as they, through the Spirit, become who they truly are, in Christ.

I pray that during this upcoming Eastertide, you come to an even deeper, richer experience of your true life in Christ, and that you will have opportunity to invite others to believe. □

¹ John 11:23

² Romans 6:1–9;
1 Corinthians
15:20–26;
Colossians
2:20, 3:1–4

continued from page 8

dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."³

God has reconciled all humans to himself through Jesus. No one is excluded from the love and power of God. Everyone who has ever lived has a place reserved for them at God's banquet table. But all have not yet believed God's word of love and forgiveness for them, or embraced their new life in Jesus. They have not donned the wedding garments Jesus has prepared for them and taken their seat at the table. In other words, we could say that although they have been reconciled, they have not yet entered into their redemption. Some have yet to share in or participate in their redemption

accomplished for them in Christ. Consequently they are not yet experiencing the full benefits of Christ's work set out for them at his wedding feast.

And that's what the ministry of reconciliation is all about—we announce the good news that God has already reconciled the world to himself—through the blood of Christ—and invite all people to trust in, receive, believe in just this good news. All of what God has for us in Christ calls for a response to receive it and enjoy it—turning to God in repentance, taking up the way of Jesus' reconciling cross and following him daily. What wonderful news we have to proclaim. May God bless us all as we share in his reconciling work so that others may, even now, receive all the benefits of their redemption. □

¹ Romans 5:10

² 2 Corinthians
5:18–19

³ Colossians
1:19–20

Does everyone ha

A key concept of Trinitarian, incarnational theology, is that God has included everyone in his love and life through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and through what Jesus did at Pentecost to send the Holy Spirit to all humanity. Are we then saying that “all people have the Holy Spirit?” There are several issues at work here, which I’ll briefly address in this post.

First there is the issue of the nature and the timing of God’s call. Paul writes in Romans 8:30 that, “...those he [God] predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” Here Paul is viewing the grand sweep of salvation history and noting that, in Christ, in an *objective* (universal) sense, all humanity is called, just as all humanity, in Christ, is glorified. In other words, in Christ, *it’s a done deal!* This stunning truth is the gospel (which truly is good news!).

However, there is also the *subjective* (personal) sense of this reality—the way it is being experienced by each person in their own life. The call, which is theirs in Christ, must be heard, received and responded to personally. Paul makes this clear later in Romans, when he asks how what is objectively true for all in Christ, can be personally received (experienced) if each person does not hear about and then respond to this truth.¹

Of course, there is no meaning to this subjective experience, if the objective reality is not first true (which it is). Moreover, there is no possibility that an individual will be able to hear (understand) and thus be able to respond to this objective truth, if the Holy Spirit has not first been *poured out on all people* as Peter, on the day of Pentecost following Jesus’ ascension, declared had happened.²

Because of this outpouring, which is a revolutionary and stunning new event in salvation history, it is possible from that time forward that, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”³ Sometimes people object to seeing this outpouring as meaning that all people from that moment forward “have the Holy Spirit.” By that phrase, they probably mean that all people everywhere are converted to Christ. But that is not what a Trinitarian, incarnational theology is declaring. Speaking of people as “having the Holy Spirit” typically reflects a reductionist view of salvation which sees it as a mere transaction wherein we give God our repentance and faith and he, in return, gives us the Holy Spirit for the first time (a misunderstanding of Peter’s declaration in).⁴

All of us are quite fortunate that the transactional model of salvation is not the full truth. The truth of the gospel is that through Jesus’ life, death, resurrection and ascension, all of us have been included in God’s love and life. All have been “accepted in the beloved” as Paul says in Ephesians 1:6.

However, what is objectively true for all in Christ,

by
Ted Johnson

must be personally received. And thus the ministry of Jesus from his ascension forward is to send the Holy Spirit to “all flesh,”⁵ in order that those who are ignorant of their true identity in Christ may come to know the glorious truth, hear God’s invitation to repent (change their thinking about God and about themselves), then believe (accept this truth in faith), pick up their cross and follow Jesus.

We would not even begin to think about doing any of this unless the Holy Spirit was poured out and thus operating in our hearts and minds to “call us out of darkness into his wonderful light⁶ into “fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁷ This calling to God⁸ is the work of the Holy Spirit—a work that God himself initiates.

All people are called already to God in Christ in an objective sense. But the call becomes personal in our subjective experience when the Spirit moves (often mysteriously) in our life. This does not mean that the Spirit comes to us for the first time, but that now he works in us in a new way.

Theologians sometimes refer to this as the “personal call” to distinguish it from the “general call” that has gone out to all humanity through the declaration of the gospel.⁹ The Holy Spirit, working sovereignly in people’s minds, turns the general call into a personal call—opening the person’s mind and summoning them to put their trust in God and to follow Jesus. Unless God works in a person’s mind (heart) in this way, there is no possibility of them coming to Jesus (apparently John’s point in John 6:44). For an example of this personal call, see Acts 16:14 where God “opened” Lydia’s heart “to respond to Paul’s message.”

When the Spirit moves in a person’s mind and heart in this new way, that person is summoned by God to respond individually. God gives them the ability and the freedom to respond to his call with either their personal “yes” or “no.” God never forces this personal response, for love never uses coercion as a tactic (and, as you know, God is love).

Herein we see the importance of prayer in personal evangelism—praying that God will both call a particular person and that their response to God will be in the affirmative. Moreover, we are responsible as believers to actively share the gospel with individuals so that God may use our words as part of both his general and personal call in people’s lives.

Note that it is vitally important to see Christ’s incarnation, birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and his sending of the Holy Spirit as one seamless “Christ event” by which God placed humanity on a new footing—removing it from the parentage of the “first Adam” into that of the “second Adam” who is Jesus Christ (this is Paul’s carefully reasoned point in Romans 5). The stunning truth is that through the Christ event, humanity is re-created.

This being so, a more relevant question to ask

ve the Holy Spirit

concerning what happened on the day of Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus is this: In what sense was the Holy Spirit poured out on all flesh at Pentecost? First, it is important to understand that this “outpouring” was Jesus sending the Holy Spirit to all humanity in a new way (as pertains to the New Covenant). No longer was the Spirit being sent to only a few individuals within the Old Covenant community. From that day forward, the Spirit is being sent to all humanity. This is in accord with the prophecies of the Messianic Age (as Peter shows by citing the prophet Joel).

Of course, the Holy Spirit has been with all people all along in the sense that in the triune God, “we live and move and have our being.”¹⁰ However, now Jesus is sending the Holy Spirit to humanity in a new and personal way—as the personal presence of Jesus himself with all people. Dietrich Bonhoeffer referred to this as Jesus “sharing the place” of all people—this is the nature of humanity now in union with God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

Do all people know of this union, which now constitutes their true being in Christ? No, their true being is “hidden in Christ.”¹¹ Why don’t most people know of this? Because the Spirit has not yet performed the miracle often referred to by theologians as “illumination.” That miracle will come to each person in God’s perfect timing—just the right time for each of them.

This timing is in God’s sovereign hands, and remains somewhat of a mystery to us. However, what we are to do is no mystery—the Spirit leads us to join Jesus in



¹ Romans 10:9–15

² Acts 2:14–21

³ Acts 2:21

⁴ Acts 2:38

⁵ Acts 2:17

⁶ 1 Peter 2:9

⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:9

⁸ 1 Thessalonians

2:12; 1 Peter

5:10; 2 Peter

1:3

⁹ 2 Thessalonians

2:14

¹⁰ Acts 17:28

¹¹ Colossians 3:3

what he is doing through the Spirit, in and through the church, out to the world—declaring the gospel (the truth of people’s true identity in Christ) and then to help people commit their lives to Jesus and to share in his work as the Spirit opens their eyes to see what they had not seen before and to repent, believe, take up their cross and follow Jesus. ■

You are God's dream

In the beginning, before creation, before time began, God had a dream. It was a dream of great import because it involved everyone and everything—God, humanity and the universe.

This article tells you his dream and how he has realized/manifested it.

The dream

Before there was anything, there was only God. God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit enjoyed intimate relationship with one another. There was dynamic exchange of love bursting forth with excitement, passion and joy. Their love was unconditional and other-centered where they gave themselves to each other freely, withholding nothing. There was no suspicion, fear or threat whatsoever. In them was fullness of joy, peace, passion, fulfilment, bliss. They were complete in themselves, lacking nothing.

He dreamt of creating billions of humans—all made in his image and likeness¹—and expressing his life in and through them, as them, uniquely. He would express his love, joy, peace, goodness, passion and creativity so that they would experience his kind of life—his abundant life. And in doing, he would be freely himself.

When realized, his dream would give birth to billions of humans, each having his heart, mind and attitude. They would be united with him, yet retain their individual distinctiveness (just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, yet they are distinct from each another). They would participate in his life and experience his joy, peace, excitement and creativity.

It would be a dream like no other. Nothing, absolutely nothing, would deter or discourage him from realizing his dream. He would be absolutely committed to it. He would risk his very existence to make it happen.

Dream realized in heaven

How would he realize it? He would create humans in his image and likeness and express his life in and through them, as them. That's when he thought about creating the human race—Adam and the billions who would come from him. That's when he chose you personally—before you were born, before you had any opportunity to please or disappoint him. You would be his opportunity to be freely himself.

The Son of God, the second member of the Trinity, would come as a human being and forge a permanent union (relationship) between God and humanity. Jesus would come as God-man, as Emmanuel, as God with us to establish this union. He would be fully God and fully man. As God, he would reveal himself to them and fulfil all his promises to them. As man, he would offer God perfect faith and obedience on their behalf. He would do this by himself, single-handedly, without needing their assistance.

He would send the Holy Spirit, the third member of



by
**Dr. P.
Sellappan**

the Trinity, and adopt them as his children. The Spirit would give them his heart, mind and attitude, and empower them to participate in his divine life.

Jesus' primary purpose would be to forge a permanent union between God and humanity. His secondary purpose would be to atone for their sin. He knew they would sin, so he put in place a rescue plan. He would come (as the Lamb of God), assume their sinful nature and overcome it by blood, sweat and tears. He would restore their fallen nature to its original condition of blameless innocence. He would also take their sin (become sin for them²), suffer its consequences, and die for them, as them. Thus he would *completely* obliterate their sin and their sinful nature. Henceforth, they would only bear his nature (likeness). He would rise from the grave as glorified man and give them his life—his resurrected life—as a free gift.

Jesus would still come to forge a union between God and humanity whether they sinned or not. If they sinned (which was inevitable), he would die for them. If they didn't, he wouldn't die. If they sinned less, he would suffer less, but still die.

Before he came, Jesus knew he would become man and remain man forever. That's why he designed and created Adam in his own image and likeness (unlike other creatures). Adam (representing humanity) was his creative genius, his crowning glory. He would dwell in him and express his life through him, with him (as man), as him, uniquely.

Dream manifested on earth

In God's economy, whatever he plans happens before its physical manifestation. That means he has already realized his dream in heaven even if it is not fully manifested on earth.

To manifest his dream, he created Adam and Eve (and everything in the universe). He created them perfect, flawless. They bore his image of blameless innocence. He was so thrilled with his creation that he exclaimed it was "very good." He adored them just as parents would adore their new born babies.



ream come true!

His next task was to bring them to spiritual maturity so that he could dwell in them and express his life through them creatively and intelligently. So he gave them simple instructions and told them to rely on him (even as human babies depend on their parents) for everything.

But they didn't trust him—they sinned. Sin tainted God's nature in them. They lost their innocence. They lost sight of their true identity. Unless that tainted nature is restored to its original glory, they cannot meaningfully participate in his divine life.

That's exactly what Jesus did for them. He entered their hell, and from there, he identified with them completely. He assumed their sinful nature³ (but



without himself sinning) and by blood, sweat and tears he overcame it. He restored their fallen nature to its original glory. And he died to pay the penalty of their sin and rose to give them eternal life—his resurrected life. He did it so successfully that he no longer remembers their sin. Thus he has fully redeemed them in his reconciling work—in his life, death, resurrection and ascension.

Jesus came and identified with us fully. He came as us, wearing our flesh. He was like us in every way except that he never sinned. He worked hard to support his family. He got hungry, thirsty, tired. He wept and grieved with the hurting. He experienced pain, rejection and disappointment. He experienced threats, fears, doubts, temptations. In all these, he fully

entrusted his life to God.

The first Adam represented humanity, so was the last Adam, Jesus. Jesus was acting vicariously. He exchanged place with us—individually as well as collectively. His life was our life. His death was our death.⁴ His resurrection was our resurrection.⁵ That's why Paul tells us that we died with him in his death, rose with him in his resurrection, and ascended with him in his ascension. Today, he is seated at the right hand of God, and so are we. He did all this for us, with us, as us. That's why John writes *as he is, so are we in this world*.⁶

That's the reality—the objective truth. That's how God sees things. Our lives may contradict this reality, but it doesn't change it. This is where faith comes in—not our faith, but Christ's faith placed inside us. He asks us to believe this truth even if it appears to contradict. He asks us not to worry about our personal experience. Paul exhorts us to see everything from God's perspective:

- “The things which are seen are temporary but the things which are not seen are eternal.”⁷
- “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”⁸
- “But 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.”⁹

Awakening to reality

God realized his dream before he created the universe, before time began, before we were born. He sent his son Jesus 2,000 years ago to physically manifest that dream. Jesus came and redeemed the universe and everything in it. Adam's (our) fall tainted God's nature in us but Jesus came and restored it fully—to its original glory of blameless innocence. It's a *done* deal. He wiped our sin so completely that he doesn't remember it anymore. He calls us to rest and bask in his finished work.

Heaven and earth, God and man, have become one in Christ, the God-man. There is no separation or alienation whatsoever between God and man. He has redeemed and taken humanity into the very circle of the Trinity where there are pleasures forevermore.

Jesus is God's dream come true. But Jesus was acting for us—vicariously. He came as us. He came as you. So you too are God's dream come true. You are his temple, his tabernacle, his Holy of holies. He lives in you, moves in you, and has his being in you. He is expressing his life in and through you, with you, as you, uniquely. May you awaken to this awesome truth and experience his abundant life. □

¹ Genesis 1:26

² 2 Corinthians 5:21

³ Romans 8:3

⁴ Romans 6:4,8;
2 Corinthians 5:14

⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 2:6

⁶ 1 John 4:17

⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:18

⁸ 1 Corinthians 13:12

⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:18

Where your camera is set

If you are a serious photographer, or have even just taken some family snaps, you will know this simple reality: what you see in the picture depends on where your camera is set. The picture you produce will be what your camera sees, and what your camera sees will depend on where it is placed.

We say this in other ways: position determines perspective, and perspective determines reality. Or, our focus determines our perception, which in turn defines our reality.

Consider a day of life when your perspective on all that happened was love, gratitude and joy. Consider the same day if your focus was anger, anxiety and hostility.

So, the important question is what is our focus, isn't it? Well, almost. Biblically speaking, the real question is "Who is our focus"? While we might say, and earnestly intend, that whenever we read the Bible we "just read it as it is", in fact we bring ourselves to the text. We bring our background, education, experience, family of origin, religious education, culture, language and so on to the process. We bring our personal perspectives to what we read.

Let's face it, the Bible is a big, multi-layered and complex book, written in different cultures and different languages over thousands of years. But while the Bible is about many things, ultimately it is about *someone*: God. And the Scriptures tell us that God has chosen to reveal himself to us in his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "He that has seen me has seen the Father."¹

He goes on to explain in a recurring phrase from John's Gospel that he is in the Father, and the Father is in him, and that "I and the Father are one."²

Before Jesus, God revealed himself in different ways to different people. He used burning bushes, dry and wet fleeces, prophets and lawgivers, and kings and warriors and poets. But in Jesus, he gives us the full, final and complete revelation of who he is. By comparison, previous revelations were partial and incomplete. In Jesus, we have the "inside revelation" of God—from God himself revealing who and what he is to mankind by becoming one of us.³ We have the fulfillment of all that went before.

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me."⁴ He didn't just come to tell us about the way, truth and life, or to model or set a good example of the way, truth and life, he said he *is* the way, truth and the life.

To the Pharisees, who were trying to trap him over

by
John McLean

breaking the Sabbath, he said "You diligently study the Scriptures, because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."⁵ He was saying to them that you don't judge me by the Sabbath, you judge the Sabbath by me. Further, he was making the remarkable and radical claim that all of Scripture was about him, and further that in coming to him—that is, in relationship with him—was the way to life. After all, he is, as the author John tells us, "*the Word*" in the flesh.

This is what we mean when we say the Jesus is the lens through which we understand Scripture. The Christ Event (his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension) wasn't just another event in the whole history of events of human history—it is *the* event which radically changes and gives meaning to all other events, before or since. Christ is nothing less than the self-revelation of God to us. He is the New Covenant,

and in him we find the new life of the new creation.

So we can't take a verse from before the Christ Event and lift it directly into today without taking it through the revelation of God in Christ—without seeing and understanding it through the lens of Jesus. If we do, we run the risk of seriously misunderstanding and misapplying the text, just as the Pharisees of Jesus day—with all the best intent in the world—were busy doing. For example, if our focus is the law, or prophecy, then there is a very good chance we will

misconstrue the texts we read. It is only if our focus is on Jesus that we can then properly understand the law and prophets.

It is only in Jesus that we see the full extent of the self-emptying, sacrificial love of the Father. Everything he did in his humanity, he did for us. In himself, Jesus unites God and man. In union with Jesus through the Holy Spirit, we become "one" with the Father as Jesus is, sharing in his relationship that has existed in eternal joy, love, creativity and fellowship. We together call God "Abba", and rejoice in the Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of adoption. Through the lens of Jesus, we see that salvation is a relationship—sharing communion with God.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, who reveals who God is. He is the lens through which we understand all of Scripture. He is where our camera is set. He is our focus, and he is divine and eternal reality. □



¹ John 14:9

² John 10:30,
14:20, 17:20–26

³ Hebrews 1:1–4

⁴ John 14:6

⁵ John 5:39–40

Does God have a clue?

Your questions:

Does God have a clue what it's like to be you?
Has God ever lived by faith and not by sight?
Does a God who sees all does He understand?
Can He imagine the limitations, the short-sightedness of human life?
As Job once asked:
Do You have eyes of flesh?
Are Your days like the days of man?
Can He comprehend such blindness, to who's eyes all is clear?
Can a God who is all-knowing identify with a being as me—facing uncertainty trapped in situations where the outcome is not clear?
How does He know what it is like to not know all?
Could the limitless One endure the confines of human life?
Could he bear the ordinary existence of a man?
Is He powerful enough to become so weak?
Is He all-knowing enough to know our doubt?
If life was only neutral, faith wouldn't have been so unusual.
But often, the mundane turns to pain
Our uncertainties become frightfully clear:
Here where we live, there is rejection, there is shame, there is injustice.
Does God have any idea what it is like to be here?
Has the All-powerful One, ever been helpless?
Has the immortal God, ever faced death?
Has this God ever really experienced conflict or confusion?
Has He been tempted?
Does God have any clue, what it is like to be you/me?

God's answers:

I love your questions, now hear my reply:
I came ... and became all that you are.
Willingly subjecting myself to every human limitation.
I saw with eyes of flesh.
Not all was clear, not all was bare when I became you.
The incarnation is my answer:

He had to grow, he had to learn,
An ordinary man, a carpenter, most of his life.
The routine, the frustrations, the anxieties of daily life, he understands.
Yet, he began to remember, began to see, discovered

by
Andre Rabe

a faith, that allowed him to perceive, the spectacular beyond the visible.

The Word became flesh, entered our domain of conflict and shame.

Falsely accused, brutally abused.

As nails were driven through His flesh, He even knew even our doubt ...and on our behalf cried out:

My God, my God, Why?

Have you forsaken me?

But then, as God, he answered:

By entering our hell he declares:

I will rather go to hell than forsake you.

Even when you are at your worst I will not turn my face or despise you.

He experienced our torment,...felt our pain, subjected to our injustice, wounded by our violence, assumed even our doubt.

He came in the form of sinful flesh, exposed Himself in the most vulnerable state, defined Himself in a human face.

He knows you.

He has experienced everything you have experienced, with you
For in Him all things consists...including you.
You were in Him, when He became man... he became you.

Do you have a clue, how well God knows you.

He invites you to see what He sees,

And to know as you have always been known.

For the moment you become

aware of him, your hell becomes heaven.

He does not save by legal transaction.

He does not heal from afar by magic incantations.

He heals what He becomes, He saves what He assumes.

He became all that you are so that you may be all he is.

Our atonement secured by His at-one-ment with us.

He embraced us when we were at our worst, that we might share in His best: resurrection life.

Right now, wherever you might find yourself, He is with you, He is for you, He loves you and wants to turn your life into the greatest romantic adventure.

Simply become aware of His closeness. ▣

© Andre Rabe, <http://hearhim.net/wordpress/2013/10/01/does-god-have-a-clue/>

Finding my freedom

by
**Mychelle
Fleming**

This year marks an important anniversary in my life. A ten-year friendship-versary with nine special women. Over the past ten years we have navigated the beautiful mess of life, celebrating marriages, new life entering the world, and healing of terminal illnesses. We have grieved with one another through the losses of relationships, jobs, homes, and even the loss of a parent.

Today I was meditating on the crucial role these friends (and their expanding families) have played and continue to play in my life. I was overwhelmed with gratitude and reminded their presence in my life is the result of an answered prayer.

The year was 2003, my sophomore year of college. If I had to sum up my fall semester in one word it would be *freedom*. Oh the sweet

taste of freedom! I had moved

past the homesick phase that encompassed much of my freshman year, and was enjoying the ability to make decisions based solely on my own thoughts and desires.

After only a few months of “free” living it began to feel stale. Counter-intuitively, the freedom to make my life all about myself made my life seem smaller. Although my social life was blooming, my individualistic approach was also isolating, because I was the only person investing in my future. During this time I began to pray for real community. I wanted more than just “fun” friends to go out with—I wanted friends who would also hold me accountable. Through a series of serendipitous events, I was introduced to this group of girls. I immediately felt welcome and was invited to attend a small group with them. Throughout the rest of my time as an undergrad and over the past ten years, these women have been my prayer partners and cheerleaders.

Sacrificing my independent life-style for community and accountability changed my perspective on freedom and shifted my worldview. Society champions the virtues of independent living, but I realized I was not on my own. My best was brought out in community. As my spiritual life developed, I began to see this was God’s plan all along. Because our Triune God is a God of relationship, and since we are created in his image, we flourish when we are in communion with one another.

A verse encapsulating the change in my view of

freedom is found in the Gospel of Mark. Here Jesus tells his disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.” During my sophomore year the majority of my time was spent hopping from one social event to another. Thursday through Sunday was a series of sporting events, beach days, and parties. Although none of these festivities were evil or bad, I began to feel a heavy emptiness in my life. I vividly remember one of my friends informing me the output of my life was a result of where I was investing my time. I realized in focusing on myself and my social desires, I was losing my sense of purpose, passion, and hope, which flourish

when I pursue the perfect plans God has for me.

Self-centered living at face value appears satisfying, but a freedom from external constraints leads to internal brokenness, and cultivates a desire to be the god of our own kingdom. A life surrendered to God opens us up to the freedom for the life God created us to live. If we live as if we are God, our illusions will be crushed by the reality of our limitations. When we live in surrender, we have the freedom to bring our desires to God, and are made complete by the fullness of life and power that comes from him.

I have learned the power of community in my life. I am more aware of times I withdraw from community, and I have learned God works in and through the

community he plants us in. Like my friend’s admonition to re-prioritize my time, God has spoken his truth and love to me through countless other conversations with friends.

Surrender is a daily discipline that creates the freedom God calls us to. Is a relationship consuming the first fruit of your time and energy? Does your career or a dream have your first priority? Whatever it is, ask God to reveal what you are holding back and what you need to surrender. My hope is that you may be filled and overflow onto others as he promises in his word: “Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy; fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope.”¹ □



¹ Romans 15:13

I see Jesus in you

by
**Jessica
Morgan**

I was working one day at my job as a cashier in a sporting goods store, talking and just being friendly with a customer when, before leaving, she turned back to me and said, “I see Jesus in you.”

I wasn’t quite sure how to respond. Her statement not only warmed my heart, but it got me to thinking: What did she notice? My definition of worship has always been: living a life of love and light for him. I believe Jesus gave me that moment to encourage me to keep living that life of worship and to keep shining bright for him.

I didn’t always feel this way. My understanding of worship has developed as I’ve matured in my faith. As I’ve grown and served more in the church, I’ve come to realize that worship is not just singing praise songs and teaching children’s church; worship is wholeheartedly living the life God gave me. Worship is my response to God and him living in me.

For example: While I’ve always believed it is important to walk arm in arm with our Creator, because he is the reason we exist, it took me a while to realize that when I’m enjoying creation, I’m worshipping. It’s more than just enjoying a beautiful view; it’s realizing a Creator who loves me created the view for my enjoyment. When I think about this, I worship.

I’ve come to understand that the root of worship is love. Because he loves me, I want to respond in love to him. When I do, I am worshipping. This is what the apostle said in 1 John 4:19, “We love because he first

loved us.” Love (worship) is our normal reaction. When I love God with my actions and words, I am praising him and pointing my life to him. Francis Chan puts it wonderfully, “Our point in life is to point to him.” I want my life to be completely lost in him—this is how I worship. And because my worship is a reflection of my love, my worship becomes visible to those around me. And sometimes that visibility brings out a response, like the customer at the store.

Her response reminded me that others notice how I treat them. The way I treat others is not only an aspect of my worship, it is also a reflection of the one I worship. So what I exude by my personality is a form of my worship to God.

Worship is also expressing myself in gratitude to my Savior. In the life I have been gifted, I continue to try my best to spread his light and learn from him—whether it is reading a devotional and being open

to his will, praying with and for people in my life, or connecting with praise song lyrics that refocus my mind on the important parts of life. When I sing or think about praise songs in the car, in my head, at work, while painting and anywhere else in between, I am reflecting the one who gave me life—that is worship.

My worship affects my relationships with others. If God is the glue in my relations, then he is being honored and glorified. My best friend and I almost always pray for each other after we hang out and before we go our separate ways. In looking to God and seeking his will, we are thanking him for our lives and for the relationship we share. Because we know he is part of our relationship, our gratitude for our friendship is worship.

It’s amazing how easy it is to worship. When I invite God into my mind, heart and life—and seek his presence in my daily activities and relationships—worship is as simple as choosing to live for him and live and loving others as he lives and loves.

I love living a life of worship and knowing God wants to share in my day. I often ask, God, how do you want me to share your love today? In other words, how can I live in worship?

God’s plans are far greater than we could ever imagine. He knows all the pieces to our life puzzle; like how a customer’s encouraging words echo in my mind to this day, and contributed to my perspective on what a worship-filled life looks like. ■



The house of the Lord

I didn't want to go to church. It seemed to me that church was for weak people who needed support just to live their lives. I figured I'd be uncomfortable surrounded by "nice" people who spoke sweet words. I shunned the idea of being told to obey a bunch of rules. But finally I yielded to inner promptings to go to church. My greatest curiosity was about prophecy. Since the world scene looked ominous, I wanted to know if we were near "the end."

What I experienced in church was *not* what I expected.

The people

The congregation included housewives, children, crying babies, elderly, carpenters, farmers, truck drivers, teachers, engineers, accountants, businessmen, musicians, students, educated and uneducated, wealthy and desperately poor. They were not weak people, but were dedicated, capable people who wanted to learn, who had meaningful goals, and desired to please God. The pastor was a former college athlete. Other members often played basketball and other sports. One man had been to the Olympics. Some rode motorcycles. They spoke like normal people. Not what I expected!

Neither were they perfect, polished people. In fact, some were struggling with alcohol or drug addiction. Some parents had teenagers who misbehaved. But everyone was welcome--no class distinctions. Everyone chatted with everyone regardless of their occupation or educational status. Not what I expected!

As some have said, "Church is not a museum for saints, it is a hospital for sinners." Since everyone is a sinner, everyone should attend church.

Do you have worries, hang ups, frustrations, or guilty feelings? Do you struggle with sins, or addictions? If so, you would fit right in. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth he commented that some of them had been immoral, idolaters, thieves, drunkards, and swindlers, but that they had been washed through their faith in Jesus.¹ God loved all the members equally.



by
Paul Hailey

What about the "rules"?

I like to hike in the mountains. Hikers have guidelines: step aside and allow faster hikers to pass, don't throw rocks, don't take shortcuts, don't pick flowers, don't go alone, carry a pack with emergency items including a first aid kit, some water and food. That is a lot of do's and don'ts, mostly don'ts. But I don't go hiking to obey the rules. I follow them automatically without thinking about them as "rules." Instead, they are basic matters of courtesy and safety. My small backpack weighs about 5 kilograms—a small burden I am glad to carry. It gives me a sense of security.

So it is with God's "rules" of how to live. They make life more pleasant for us and others. Jesus said his burden is *light*, meaning "useful" or "pleasant."²

Coming into His presence

Christianity is not a solitary activity any more than

football is. We can get *some* idea of the game by kicking a ball in our yard, but to really experience the game we need to play on a team where we will have a coach and the support and encouragement of other players.

Jesus said that wherever two or more are gathered together in his name, he would be there.³ As the "Captain of our salvation" He teaches us His ways.⁴ In church we learn His ways. We

learn to follow Him, and life becomes more pleasant. Our faith grows. We can share our experiences and difficulties with other like-minded people. Jesus said He came to give us abundant life.⁵ I have found that to be true. My life is far richer than I had ever hoped for.

Jesus is the Head of the church.⁶ It is His church and He cares for each member. Like a good shepherd He leads us to green pastures, and to everlasting life.⁷

Church is much more than I expected. That's because God is more than I expected. Going to church brings us into His loving presence where we learn of Him, and become friends with other like-minded people who share our Christian journey. □



¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9–11

² Matthew 11:30

³ Matthew 18:20

⁴ Hebrews 2:10

⁵ John 10:10

⁶ Colossians 1:18

⁷ Psalm 23

A living hope

There are times when our hearts are deeply moved by the plight of our fellow man. We wish that we could do something to help the unfortunate or perhaps correct an injustice. Today there are countless people going through unimaginable suffering. Children so often suffer in the midst of man-made misery. We only need to watch the news on television to see first hand the anguish many go through in war torn nations or those starving in poverty stricken areas. Once I saw news broadcast of a foreign country where a group of children were clinging to the feet of a municipal officer who had come with a team of workers to tear down their homes. They were begging the man on behalf of their parents not to demolish their homes.

These people made a living rummaging garbage dumps to find items that they could sell for recycling. A television reporter asked the municipal officer why they had to destroy the dilapidated shacks that these people called homes. The officer feeling very amused asked the reporter how he could accuse him of destroying homes when all he was doing was getting rid of eyesores that gave the town a very bad impression. The people who lived in such squalor meant nothing to him.

Where do those who suffer such injustice and torment go for comfort? How much can charitable organizations do to change the plight of the suffering masses? What hope do these people have? Could there ever be a permanent solution to all forms of suffering in the world? I also see the rich living in luxury, lavishing their children with everything wonderful. Modern gadgets bring a virtual reality to teenagers thereby capturing their imagination and attention in a surreal environment. Pleasure is all that matters. Yet even in this 'have all' environment many of them suffer. Drugs and alcohol have ruined many lives. Theirs is another form of suffering brought on by unbridled freedom. Has freedom and wealth brought utopia to the 'fortunate'? Not really. What would make life really worth living?

In the 1920's my grandfather left India to travel to Malaysia to start a new life. He had very little money and no one in Malaysia to depend on. Once he arrived in Malaysia, it was a life of hardship. He became a



by
**Devaraj
Ramoo**

supervisor for rubber plantation workers and eventually raised a family and built a permanent life in his new country. What made him take such a big risk to begin life in this new land? Even today many take huge risks to start life anew in a foreign land. There is one factor that drives these people on despite the overwhelming odds. It is called hope.

Today many people go about their lives without hope. Why? The reason is hope was never instilled in their lives. Instead of hope, fear and doubt has grown. That is why our first reaction to any problem is fear and then followed by doubt. We fear our problems even though we have God. We doubt our God even though we pray to Him. We forget that hope is related to God. The Bible describes God as the God of hope. It states, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the

power of the Holy Spirit."¹

Who is this God of hope that fills us with joy and peace? More than two thousand years ago God sent His son Jesus Christ to bring the only hope that mankind would have as a permanent solution to all human grievances. Jesus who existed as the Word with the Father lived among us and then gave Himself as a pure and living sacrifice so that His blood that was shed on the cross would wipe away



mankind's sins forever. He paid the penalty for our sins thereby making it possible for the permanent solution to human suffering that the world truly needs. This Jesus who died for us was resurrected and is now our *living hope*. The true hope for us is in the living Christ who will soon return as King of Kings. We have been given a new birth into this living hope, Jesus Christ, who will not only carry us through all our sufferings but also end all suffering permanently.²

The day is coming when we will have it all. Our lives will be healed and made whole. The horrors we see today will not last forever. The Living Hope wants to reach out to you to help you bear with the sufferings in your life and to restore you to eternal life. That is the promise He has made. Reach out and take this hope into your life. □

¹ Romans 15:13

² 1 Peter 1:3-5

Who is God

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was England's best-known preacher for most of the second half of the 19th century. In a sermon he gave when he was only 20, Spurgeon declared that the proper study for a Christian is the Godhead. Here is a quote from that sermon—it's one of my favorites:

The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity.

It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with the solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God.

As have many other preachers and teachers, Spurgeon reminds us that the great and central question of Christianity is this: "Who is God?"

God's own answer is not a proposition, but a person: the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. As the self-revelation of God, Jesus is the focal point of our knowledge of God's nature. Jesus, who takes us to the Father and sends us the Spirit, teaches us to ask, "Who is God?" then bids us look to him for the definitive answer.

Throughout history, many great thinkers pondered



by
**Dr. Joseph
Tkach**

the question, "Who is God?" Unfortunately, they often did not, or in certain cases (before the Incarnation) could not, make Jesus the living center of their investigations. Working from the central revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity was developed to answer the false reasoning and heretical ideas about God that had infiltrated the church in the first three centuries of its existence. Though the Trinity doctrine doesn't answer all questions about God's nature, it helps us focus on who God is without wandering away from sound doctrine.

The early Christians were not unique in developing

errors of reasoning as they pondered the nature of God. Theologians and philosophers of every age got it wrong and our time is no exception. Old ideas have a way or repackaging themselves and worming their way into contemporary thinking. It is important that we are aware of two errors that are prevalent in our day. Both lead to wrong conclusions and a distorted picture of who God is.

The first error is a modern version of pantheism—the idea that God is a part of his creation instead of being distinct from it and Lord over it. Though Scripture tells us that creation tells us about God,¹ there is an important difference between

believing that God is present to everything and believing that everything is God.

Unfortunately, a belief in the divine spirituality of everything (often referred to as "the Universe") is common today. Hungry for spirituality and put off by traditional religion, many people are seeking "enlightenment" in obscure and fringe ideas. Go into any large bookstore and you'll find whole sections devoted to fantasy fiction and the occult. Video gamers are obsessed with ever more bizarre themes



continued on page 21

Let someone else do it

A common unspoken (or sometimes spoken) attitude is, I don't have to do (fill in the blank) because someone else will. Someone else will come along and clean the table in the fast-food restaurant. Someone else will write that letter to the editor about a current issue. Someone else will clean the trash off the street, so I can feel free to throw my paper cup out the window.

Yes, I know, I do it too (well, I don't throw my trash out the car window!). But I've noticed I'm often the "someone else." When my kids were teenagers, I opted to stop traveling and stay home so I could be with them during those years. While my husband traveled, chores I might have put on the honey-do list often couldn't wait for him to come home, so I had to do them.

Many times in the past I've been *the someone else*. When an opportunity arose, such as speaking or working with women's ministry, I would look over my shoulder to see who else might be available and realize I was the only one standing there. I didn't always want to, but I jumped in, sometimes not knowing what I was getting myself into.

Several biblical characters tried to hand off their calling to someone else, but it didn't work. Moses came up with some good excuses for not going back to Egypt. Gideon wondered if God was really talking to him. Mighty warrior? Not me! Jonah tried to run

by
Tammy Tkach

away, but the fish was faster. Each of them became *the someone else* he hoped would do the job.

When Jesus came to earth as a baby, he wasn't just someone else; he was the only one who could do what needed to be done. This sinful world needed "God with us."

No one else could heal the sick and calm the storms. No one else could move the crowds with his words and feed them with a basket of fish. No one else could fulfill each and every one of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Jesus knew why he came to earth, but he prayed in the garden for his Father to take the cup from him. He did add, "if you are willing" and prayed not his will but his Father's will be done. Jesus knew no one else could take his place on the cross. There was no someone else whose blood could cleanse the sins of humanity.

Being a Christian, just as being an adult, often requires us to be the responsible one, to be the one who stands up and says, "I'll do it!" Jesus calls on us to be someone who will answer his call and fulfill the royal law of love to him and our brothers and sisters.

Let's stop looking around for someone else and do what needs to be done. May we all be like Isaiah, who answered God's call with these words: "Here am I. Send me!"¹ □

¹ Isaiah 6:8

continued from page 20

and fantastic creatures wielding supernatural powers. Technology is blurring the line between fantasy and reality, and the spiritual landscape is becoming cluttered with offbeat ideas.

The same thing happened in the early years of the church. People had an appetite for magic and mystery. As a result, many non-apostolic epistles and gospels were in circulation—offering a mix of truth and bizarre ideas about God, reflecting the popular culture of that day. Paul reminds us what happens when people lose their spiritual moorings:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.²

A second prevalent error in our day concerning the nature of God is conceiving of God as a spirit force that dwells in everyone individually. From this perspective, God is viewed as a genie that we carry with us, making use of him as the need arises. It's as though God is a cosmic smartphone with all kinds of useful apps.

Following this line of faulty reasoning, we wrongly

conclude that when we travel, we are taking God somewhere that he is not already present. God becomes dependent upon us and is limited by our limitations. As a result, God can't be more faithful than we are. Though this false idea may boost our sense of self-importance, it is a false sense of importance that negates the grace of God.

The truth of God's nature, revealed in Jesus, is the opposite of this error. As the authors of the New Testament remind us, God remains faithful even when we are faithless. Our true importance is related to our identity as children of the God who not only dwells within us by his Spirit, but far beyond us. Our calling is to join God in what he is doing. We do so with great anticipation knowing that he has been at work long before we arrive on the scene. We are greatly privileged to share in what the Holy Spirit is doing to turn people around and to draw them into a reconciled relationship with the Father and the Son.

The more clearly we understand who God is the better will be our understanding of who we are and of our calling to live in communion with Christ by the Holy Spirit. □

¹ Romans 1:20

² Romans 1:21–23

He lives!

In March or April, Christians throughout the world celebrate Easter in remembrance of Jesus' resurrection. The Easter season continues until Pentecost, which commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and Jesus' other followers.

These two religious days, venerated by the Christian world, picture miracles important to Christianity. More than that, the Bible shows that the resurrection and Pentecost are central to our salvation.

The resurrection

Jesus' resurrection inspires us to profess faith in Christ. That's why Paul could write, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved".¹

Paul, of course, wasn't prescribing an empty confessional statement about belief in Jesus. Paul was interested in the faith behind the confession. It's a living faith the Holy Spirit expresses through God's people. As Paul pointed out elsewhere, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit'.²

The apostles were moved by the Holy Spirit to understand what Jesus' resurrection meant. They were convinced that Jesus is the way of salvation.³

Peter wrote that God "has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead".⁴ Paul staked his life and future on the resurrection. He wrote, "We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus".⁵

But what about us who live almost 2,000 years later? We didn't see Jesus walking the earth as a man — performing miracles, healing thousands, and raising the dead. We didn't see him die, be buried, and then see him and touch him after his resurrection.

Thomas and us

In some ways, many of us are like the disciple Thomas. He had not yet seen the resurrected Jesus and remained unconvinced. Said the doubting Thomas, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it".⁶

A week later, Jesus appeared to Thomas. He insisted that Thomas feel his wounds, saying: "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side".⁷ Christ told him to "stop doubting and believe."

To be honest, it may be difficult for us living almost 2,000 years after the fact to "stop doubting and believe" as well. Can we have faith in Jesus' resurrection? Thanks be to God, the answer is, absolutely yes. We have, in the Bible, the testimony of those who saw the resurrected Christ. Because of their testimony and the Holy Spirit, we, too, can believe.

When Jesus dispelled Thomas' distrust, he said to him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed."

by
**Grace
Communion
International**

But Jesus went on to speak of us, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed".⁸ It is we who are blessed, because although we have not seen, we can still believe!

We can stake our lives on the sure promise of Jesus. "I am the resurrection and the life," he said. "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies".⁹

The death of Jesus Christ, his resurrection and his living in us by the Holy Spirit constitute God's act of redemption. Jesus' death paid the penalty of sin and reconciled us to God our Father. By his resurrection, Jesus proved he was God in the flesh and that he would resurrect his people to immortal life.

Christ in us

In the gift he sent on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus demonstrated that he is intimately involved with his people through the Holy Spirit. The faith of God can now operate in us through the Holy Spirit.

Paul expressed this reality in memorable terms. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live," he wrote, "but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me".¹⁰

This mystery of Christ in us is demonstrated by the miracle of Pentecost, which occurred about seven weeks after Jesus was resurrected. That day is documented in Acts, chapter 2. Suddenly, about 9 o'clock in the morning on Pentecost day, an incredible series of miracles began. A sound like the blowing of a violent wind filled the house where the disciples were staying.

Next, what seemed to be tongues of fire appeared and rested on each person present. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, which empowered them to speak to the people in various languages. During this time, devout Jews from many nations were in Jerusalem to observe the Festival of Pentecost. The people in the neighborhood heard the noise and came to see what was happening.

Peter and the inner circle of the 12 disciples stood up and began to address the growing and curious crowd. The people who came to listen were amazed to hear the disciples speaking in the listeners' very own native languages.

Peter surprised the people by the direction of his sermon. He said, no punches pulled, that they were as responsible for Jesus Christ's death as those who had directly engineered it were (verse 23). It was his way of saying that all of us—all our sins—are responsible for nailing Jesus to the cross.

But Peter told the crowd there was a happy outcome to Jesus' death: He had been resurrected and glorified. "God raised him from the dead, said Peter (verse 24). He "has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both

continued on page 23

The adventure begins right where you are. His faith will allow you to see the spectacular where others can only see the mundane. But, for some of you, this adventure involves change. This faith will enable you to see opportunities that no one else sees... It's going to take courage to face risks, to step into the unknown, but it really is worth it!

Andre Rabe

You are valuable, you are loved, and someone knows you even better than you know yourself. There is an image and likeness imprinted upon your being that is the basis of your value... a value beyond your wildest dreams.

Andre Rabe

Coins used to have the face of the person who guaranteed their value, minted onto them. Any note or coin has a guarantor, a person or institution that guarantees its value. Even if a coin gets

lost, the coin never loses its value. The one who invented and designed you stamped you with His own image and likeness.

Andre Rabe

Christ told his disciples not to be anxious about tomorrow, but he never said not to consider tomorrow. Intelligent problem solving demands careful consideration of the future effects of present solutions.

R.C. Sproul

The house that is built upon the sand will crumble at the first sign of a windstorm.

R.C. Sproul

The first thing to understand about anger is that it isn't always a bad thing. Many people, especially Christians, have the mistaken notion that anger is intrinsically evil. As a result, they feel needless guilt. The idea that a Christian is never allowed to be angry is a demonic myth that tends to

produce neurotic anxiety. I've had to struggle with this myth nearly all my life.

R.C. Sproul

God has no pleasure in afflicting us, but He will not keep back even the most painful chastisement if He can but thereby guide His beloved child to come home and abide in the beloved Son.

Andrew Murray

Where does your security lie? Is God your refuge, your hiding place, your stronghold, your shepherd, your counselor, your friend, your redeemer, your saviour, your guide? If He is, you don't need to search any further for security.

Elisabeth Elliot

The fact that I am a woman does not make me a different kind of Christian. But the fact that I am a Christian does make me a different kind of woman.

Elisabeth Elliot

You might not always get what you want, but you always get what you expect.

Charles Spurgeon

Before any great achievement, some measure of depression is very usual.

Charles Spurgeon

Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.

Charles Spurgeon

Throughout the Old Testament this was always the idea of a sin-offering—that of a perfect victim; without offense on its own account, taking the place of the offender; the transference of the offender's sin to that victim, and that expiation in the person of the victim for the sin done by another.

Charles Spurgeon

If any man is not sure that he is in Christ, he ought not to be easy one

moment until he is sure. Dear friend, without the fullest confidence as to your saved condition, you have no right to be at ease, and I pray you may never be so. This is a matter too important to be left undecided.

Charles Spurgeon

When God accepts a sinner, He is, in fact, only accepting Christ. He looks into the sinner's eyes, and He sees His own dear Son's image there, and He takes him in.

Charles Spurgeon

Nothing binds me to my Lord like a strong belief in His changeless love.

Charles Spurgeon

There is no bigger lie! There are no ifs here. God is faithful even if we are not—we do not have to trust him for him to be faithful or to take care of us. He doesn't need us to do anything to receive his love, care and protection!

April Louise Flora

continued from page 22

Lord and Christ" (verse 36).

Steps to take

Through the Holy Spirit, the shocked listeners were convicted of their need to be spiritually converted. They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (verse 37). Peter outlined the steps they needed to take. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins," he said. "And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (verse 38).

About 3,000 people accepted the challenge and were baptized that same day (verse 41). Acts 2 tells us that this greatest miracle of all can occur in

¹ Romans 10:9

² 1 Corinthians 12:3

³ Acts 4:8–12

⁴ 1 Peter 1:3

⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:14

⁶ John 20:25

⁷ John 20:27

⁸ John 20:29

⁹ John 11:25

¹⁰ Galatians 2:20

¹¹ Titus 3:5–6

¹² Ephesians 1:13–14;

Romans 8:11

¹³ Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5–6

us as well. The Holy Spirit can enter our hearts and minds to enable us to believe and be changed.¹¹

The Holy Spirit also guarantees our future inheritance through the resurrection to life everlasting.¹² That is our hope and promise. We must believe and repent, undergoing spiritual rebirth through the Holy Spirit, and be baptized.¹³ It is we who must look into the promises of God, and then act to claim them. □

The Plain Truth Magazine



TO VOLUNTEER: If you live in the vicinity of Klang and would like to volunteer in packaging the magazine for mailing, please contact / sms Susan Low 017-2559244

FOR FREE SUBSCRIPTION (within Malaysia & Singapore only), please either:

1. SMS Susan Low 017-2559244 (Malaysia) / Jane 91440187 (Singapore)
2. Email your request to: ptasiamy@gmail.com

TO ATTEND SERVICE AT GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL (GCI):

Klang, Selangor
Tel: 017-2559244
(Susan Low)

Penang
Tel: 04-6587132 / 012-4237800
(Ong Eng Soon)

Kota Bharu, Kelantan
Tel: 09-7192528 / 017-9399373
(David Ong)

Kulai, Johor
Tel: 012-7771038
(Keok Chai)

Kota Kinabalu, Sabah
Tel: 088-244773 / 012-8285442
(Ranen Bhattacharyya)

Singapore
Tel: 65453813
(Joe Zachariah)

Published by Grace Communion International (formerly known as Worldwide Church of God, Malaysia)

Printed in Malaysia by Hin Press & Trading Sdn. Bhd. (71078-D), No. PT 45855, Batu 2, Jalan Kapar, 41400 Klang, Selangor, Malaysia.