

VICTORIOUS LIVING

Prof. M.Y. YOHANNAN

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Preface

A disciple writing a preface to a teacher's book! Would that be considered as inordinate, or as an indiscretion? On the other hand, is that a privilege and recognition? Yes, I am humbly accepting this honour with my head bowed-down in reverence.



When I traverse through the pages of the book 'Victorious Living', from time to time, my eyes fill with tears. On other occasions, I stand still; my eyes wide open with wonder and amazement. Occasionally I move to one side of the path of 'Victorious Living' and stay there praising and glorifying God. Every now and then, I pick up the pearls of wisdom that are scattered along the way and gather them carefully in my repository of meditations.

In 1964, when St Peters College, Kolenchery was established, M.Y. Yohannan Sir became a lecturer there. I was one of the students of the very first batch. The warm and positive teacher-student relationship that blossomed in that time continues to- date. During those times, Yohannan Sir held an hour-long Bible class every week. I still cherish the sweetness of the lessons from those Bible classes and savour them even now.

In 1973, as spiritual revival prayer meetings were conducted in the parish church of Yohannan Sir, one day I too was persuaded by some people to attend one such meeting. By that time, five years had gone by since I was ordained as a priest of the Angamaly Diocese, one of the oldest dioceses of the Malankara Orthodox Church. Despite having heard many proficient and eloquent speakers of the Orthodox Church before, it was on the day I listened to Yohannan Sir's gospel message that I became a repented priest. That Holy Gospel ministry in the fullness of the Holy Spirit completely overwhelmed and overturned me. I myself am a witness to the fact that almighty God has chosen, entrusted and commissioned Yohannan Sir with the duty to preach the miraculously powerful Word of God that can lead even the most stonehearted person to contrition and repentance. I wholeheartedly praise God for using Sir in His mighty hands, for leading me and my small family to the state of amazing heavenly peace and glorious hope in Christ that we experience today.

Jesus Christ was born into this world to be a victor and to be victorious. Those who rely upon Jesus will be victorious. All the eleven sermons compiled in this book give clear insightful affirmation of this fact through several verses from the Holy Gospel and through the contexts of the circumstances of life of different characters in the Bible.

The world challenges us whether a victorious living is actually possible. The holy scriptures declare and affirm that victorious living is indeed possible through Christ. We

see this concept clearly in Romans chapter 7, verse 25 - “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” and 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 57 – “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Through citing successful instances in the victorious lives of several biblical characters including Daniel, Joseph and Zerubbabel, the sermons in this book summon all of us to be victorious in our own lives. The instruction to consider Joseph, who came out triumphant in his battle against sin, as a role model and a shining example for youth is thought provoking and inspiring for today's younger generation.

Through the context of Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12; “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”, this book shows that one can to gain victory in the battle against evil forces which is possible only through the amazing grace of Jesus Christ, who gave up His life on the cross.

The experiences of Dr Reji Mathew, youngest son of Rev. Fr Chanthiam is one brilliant example of victorious living. His testimony of how his life that was dominated by gloom, fears, anxieties, uncertainties and anguish turned into one filled with pleasantness and radiance, will stir and indeed touch the hearts of many.

In this book, we also read about Prof Leelamma Mathew (wife of Prof C.M. Mathew Sir) who struggled a

lot, without victory over her self-justification and worldly love. She gives an emotionally moving description about how she gained a victorious life. Reading her narrative, there is no doubt that her experience of deep conviction concerning her own sin and the resultant contrite heart which eventually led to God's grace and victory in life, will direct many women to the tranquillity of a genuine Christian life.

Prophet Elisha's qualification in the Bible is "Elisha the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." I consider it most fortunate that I could stay attached to Christian Revival Fellowship, which is a Kolenchery-based interdenominational fellowship that functions under the leadership of most esteemed Prof M.Y.Yohannan Sir.

Yohannan Sir's sermons fully manifest and clearly retain the purity of the ideology that one can experience the remission of sins and a sanctification of heart without changing cast, creed, denomination or religion. I humbly introduce this book to all the readers with a sincere wish that the sermons in this book may grant victorious life to countless people who are trapped in the whirlpool of hopelessness and despair without victory over sin.

Rev. Fr. Thomas Pazhampilly,
Angamaly Diocese

Introduction

Victorious Living is the ninth collection of my sermons. Each of these sermons constitute simple explanations filled with the experiences and practicalities of leading a Christian life. I bow at the holy feet of most beloved and affectionate Jesus Christ and praise His holy name for giving me the grace to bring my efforts to fruition by publishing this book.

George Bernard Shaw, in his play 'Man and Superman' remarks: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

According to him, the man who plans and calculates, using his intellect to adjust everything to the world, forces himself to fit into the world; whereas the man who strides ahead by faith, without relying on estimations, forces the world itself to adjust for him! Therefore, all breakthroughs, innovations and developments depend on the man who marches forward with faith, without depending on the plans of conventional human wisdom and intellect.

Human intellect was terrified when faced with the roaring waves of the Red Sea in front and the ominous rumble of Egyptian chariots and troops pursuing them from behind. They were bewildered and cried out to Moses:

"Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?" Exodus 14: 10 - 12

Then through unwavering and steadfast faith in powerful God, Moses courageously said:

"Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today." Exodus 14:13 (NLT)

Human intellect explored Canaan, spying on the land and the people who lived there and reported:

"So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." Numbers 13 : 32, 33

Yet faith immediately declared:

“We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.”

Numbers 13 : 30

Human wisdom doubted:

“Can God prepare a table in the wilderness...Can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?” Psalm 78:19, 20

But faith proclaimed:

“Feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known.....Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.”

Deuteronomy 8:3, 4

“For forty years you sustained them in the wilderness; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.”

Nehemiah 9:21

Human wisdom and faith do travel together. Nevertheless, there is substantial difference between them. In situations where human wisdom hesitates to put the next step forward, resolute faith would keep walking ahead. Human intellect will take a person as far as his own reasoning and understanding can take him. However, by holding the hands of the God of miracles, unwavering faith will move him forward from his current stagnant state to the blessed state of God's care and provision.

Advancing in steadfast faith is the very foundation of a victorious life. This is the bedrock of Christian belief. The Word of God instructs us to be victorious in our day-to-day life by standing firm on the base of faith.

Our deeds are controllable. Words too can be controlled to a certain extent. However, how can we control our thoughts? With man, this is impossible; but with God, all things are possible.

“With God's help we will do mighty things.” (Psalm 60:12) “With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.” (Psalm 18:29), “For nothing will be impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37) – Holy men understood and grasped the significance and the very essence of victorious life, conveyed through these verses in the Holy Scriptures.

Every chapter in this book was written with an overwhelming desire to attain this victorious life achieved by the most holy forefathers.

It is the readers of a book who decide its potential and determine how gratifying and appealing the content is. Heartfelt encouragement from my readers has motivated and inspired me in this endeavour.

My gratitude to my spiritual friends who have helped me to publish this book. My sincere indebtedness to Dr. Gilu George, Bedford, UK, who has spent a lot of time to translate this book from Malayalam to English. She is rendering great help and leadership in the work of our

Lord. Being in a very high responsible position she has spared her time, spent her skill and vigour in translating this book.

I prayerfully submit this book into everyone's affectionate hands.

Your humble servant,
M.Y. Yohannan

NB: The following versions of the Holy Scriptures were used in the translation of this book

NIV - New International Version (where not explicitly specified)

ESV - English Standard Version

ISV - International Standard Version

NLT - New Living Translation

TLB - The Living Bible

Chapter 1

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” *Ephesians 6: 12*

Every believer is in a battlefield. However, the battle is not waged against men, but against evil spiritual forces! We are able to lead a victorious Christian life only by waging a constant battle against evil forces.

Our forefathers have taught us that only those who advance through difficult roads by fighting against the vicious evil spiritual forces can successfully travel through the 'Way of Life' and gain eternal glory.

The theme of an ancient poem is as follows: there are two paths – the 'Way of Life' and the 'Way of Death'.

That path that the multitudes follow is the Way of Death and only a handful follow the Way of Life.

Those who choose the Way of Life select a hard and strenuous road ahead. To proceed through that road, one has to ardently and constantly wage war against the evil powers of Satan. Those who continue that battle diligently

and continue to persist against the evil forces will end up victorious in due course!

“Jeevakaram, mruthikaramennevam
 Kandirusaranikal sahadenmaar,
 Noothanamaam jeevithamarjippaan
 Durkkada maargam kaamshichar
 Dushtathmavodu padavetti
 Jayamoderipparayunnu.
 Aavsyakkaarkkaasrayavum
 Bakthanmaarkkanugaamiyumam
 Karthavin naamam dhanyam.”

Satan was banished and exiled from Gods presence, because he rebelled against God. We can see how the Bible describes his fall, as written below:

“How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.”

Isaiah 14 : 12 - 15

From the very day he was banished because of

rebellion against God, Satan became an evil opponent and adversary, who confronted and resisted God's plan. One way or other, Satan tries to destroy human beings who are God's magnificent creation. His plans are focused on annihilating God's splendid work. "He comes only to steal and kill and destroy." John 10:10.

Satan's abode is in the lower strata of the terrestrial atmosphere. The part of atmosphere above surface of earth is the workshop of Satan, from where he continues his rebellion against God.

The phrase 'And God saw that it was good.' is present in the Bible's description of all but the second day of the six days of God's creation of heaven and earth. We do not see the mention of 'good' on the second day of God's Creation. God did not refer to His actions as 'good' on the second day when He created the sky, as the sky is the dwelling place of satanic forces.

First Day: And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good. Genesis 1:3, 4

Third Day: And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters He called "seas." And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:9, 10

Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit

with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:11, 12

Fourth Day: And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. God made two great lights--the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:15 – 18.

Fifth Day: And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky'. So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:20, 21

And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. God made the wild

animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:24, 25

Sixth Day: So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:27, 28

The sky was God's creation on the second day. 'God called the space sky. And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.' Genesis 1:8. The Lord did not say, 'It is good' on the second day (of the six days in Genesis 1), when the heavens were separated and sky was created - because it is the dwelling of Satan and his forces.

The jealousy and vengeance of Satan led him to deceive the first man and to bring about his downfall. Satan spoke to man with words that were contradictory to the Word of God.

"And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Genesis 2 : 16, 17

“The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:4, 5

Satan's attempts to destroy humankind manifests itself in three ways:

One: Through deception

St Paul says:

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11 : 3

Two: Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and gets man into trouble.

“And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

2 Corinthians 11:14, 15

Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light and deceives us. Satan's army may even quote from the Scriptures and try to entice and corrupt believers who are not strong in faith. The Apostle refers to them as false apostles, deceitful workers and rocks hidden among love

feasts.

'danger from my own people'

2 Corinthians 11:26

'false apostles, deceitful workers'

2 Corinthians 11:13

'These men are dangerous reefs at your love feasts'

Jude 1:12

'those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false'

Revelation 2 : 2

Three: The Devil prowls around and attacks like a roaring lion.

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

1 Peter 5 : 8

Our battle is against a fiery Satan. He prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom to devour.

We read in the Book of Job that Satan took notice of Job and cast an eye upon him. (Job 1 : 6 - 10, 2 : 2 - 7). Because of Satan's attack, Job went through a great ordeal of loss and suffering. He was stricken and afflicted by diseases. Tragedy hovered over Job! We can read about this in the below passages.

"The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to

Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land." Job 1 : 6 - 10

"Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason." "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head." Job 2 : 3 - 7

When Satan is given space and a foothold in one's life through sin, Satan's army takes over and gains control

over people's lives. They enslave people into a demonic state.

We read in Luke chapter 8, verse 2 that Mary Magdalene was a sinful woman who offered her body for an immoral life. She was possessed by seven demons. However, when she repented, became penitent, gave up her sinful ways, and accepted Jesus as her saviour and redeemer, the evil spirits left her. Jesus casted seven demons out of her and she became an ardent follower of Jesus!

The demon-possessed man of Gerasenes was insane and was not of a right mind. He was homeless and naked, hurt himself often and lived among the graves outside the town. Evil spirits had often taken control of the man and even when he was placed under guard and bound in shackles, he simply broke them and rushed out into the wilderness, completely under the power of demonic forces. Many demons had gone into him – six thousand or "a legion". Jesus commanded the impure spirits to leave the man. When the demons left him, the man became perfectly sane.

God is a Trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This has an analogy with the Sun – the Sun has light, rays and heat. All of these are part of the Sun - yet, all three are separate. Just as one cannot separate the heat from the light or the rays from light of Sun, the Holy Trinity cannot be separated one part from

another.

Satan also has his own trinity – Satan himself, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. Satan's trinity ends in the lake of fire.

“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” *Revelation 20:10*

Bible passages allude to Satan in various forms, such as a 'great dragon' or an 'ancient serpent'. The second member of the unholy trinity is the 'Beast' or the 'Antichrist'. The final personage of the unholy trinity is the anti-spirit – the 'False Prophet.'

Satan has assigned specific commanders and armies to destroy each place, country, home and every person. There are territorial spirits and territorial commanders. There are powerful evil spirits specially appointed by Satan over different countries.

We read in chapter 10 of the Book of Daniel, an account of how the angel Gabriel was sent from heaven with a message for Daniel, who was spending his time in prayers and fasting. Daniel had declared for himself a time of prayer and fasting for twenty-one days. The angel Gabriel was sent forth with answers to Daniel's prayers on the very first day of his prayer and fasting. However, because he was caught up in a battle, Gabriel, who was

sent with the answer, could get to Daniel only on the twenty-first day. For all of those twenty-one days, the “Prince of the Persian kingdom” who was a territorial commander appointed by Satan fought against and detained Gabriel. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help Gabriel and that is how he could finally get to Daniel.

The angel Gabriel had to return as soon as he had conveyed the comforting heavenly message to Daniel. Meantime the archangel Michael was fighting against the satanic army leaders of king of Persia. By the time Gabriel returns, he has to face another spiritual enemy; the territorial commander designated to help the prince of Greece. Thus, he will then have to face even more spiritual warfare, when returning to fight against the prince of Persia.

“A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince

of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.” While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, “I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I feel very weak. How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.” Again, the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. “Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong. “When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.” So he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come.”

Daniel 10 : 12 - 20

Esteemed child of God, do you believe that Lord Jesus Christ crushed the head of the snake, Satan on the

cross?

Do you believe in the redeeming power of the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ? Have you surrendered your life at the wounded feet of Jesus - at the Holy feet bearing nail marks? Have you exchanged your life into the bleeding hands of Jesus? If so, Jesus tells you:

"No one will snatch them out of my hand."

John 10:28

Dear friend, beloved sister, do you have this conviction? If so, please say a word to God from the depths of your broken and contrite heart: Oh Lord, from today I am your slave. Dear Jesus who died on the cross to wash away my sins, from today I am your slave.

Let us pray; Good Shepherd and loving Father, I praise you for all your blessings. Thank you for showering undeserved goodness and mercy on me. Thank you for Your holy messages. Please cover me with your Holy Blood, so that I am untouched by evil. Please hide me in your Holy Bosom.



Chapter 2

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” *Ephesians 6 : 12*

We are in a battlefield and we are fighting against a mighty enemy. Our fight is against the authorities and powers of evil. If we miss a step, we would suffer deadly wounds. We might perish in the battlefield.

'The Holy War' is a dramatic allegorical novel about this fight against evil - a fierce battle by the Devil raging to take control away from the rightful Prince of 'Mansoul', who represents God. 'The Holy War' is written by John Bunyan, the same author who wrote the influential 'The Pilgrim's Progress'.

In this allegorical classic, John Bunyan wanted his readers to understand how the struggles of their souls ran in parallel to the struggles of the wretched inhabitants of the place called 'Mansoul.'

The 'City of Mansoul' – representing humans or Man's Soul which originally belonged by right, to 'Shaddai'

or God, but was betrayed through Ear Gate and Eye Gate into the hands of 'Diabolus' or the Devil. In the hands of the enemy, 'Mansoul' loses its leaders named as 'Lord Understanding' and 'Mr. Conscience'. 'Lord Willbewill' becomes the lord of 'Mansoul' - man's fallen will, self-will, and ill-will. In the end 'Emmanuel' the son of 'Shaddai' and his army recaptures 'Mansoul', and 'Diabolus' is driven out. There is triumph over sin and evil. The delightful narrative of the entire story describes vividly the process of the fall, and subsequently conversion and fellowship with 'Emmanuel'.

“For the battle is the LORD's.” 1 Samuel 17:47

“For the battle is not yours, but God's.”

2 Chronicles 20 : 15

God equips and trains man for unceasing spiritual warfare against his enemy - the Devil. That is why David says:

“Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle.”

Psalm 144 : 1

The Lord equips his people with spiritual armour to fight against spiritual enemies. He teaches them how to put it on, as well as giving them the boldness to face their enemies and gain victory over them. We read about 'Lord the warrior' in the Scriptures. God reveals himself as the 'God of the armies' several times in the Bible.

I read about an incident that happened on a

battlefield some time ago. A fierce battle was going on. Some soldiers were hiding in trenches along a hilly slope. Enemy troops were advancing through the valley below. The enemy soldiers moving along the battlefield could not see the soldiers hiding in trenches.

The soldiers hiding in the trenches threw grenades at the enemy troops advancing along the valley below and many of them were killed and wounded. Nobody knew where the grenades were coming from. The enemy soldiers retaliated by throwing grenades in the direction of the hill, but none of them reached their target. They were unable to make out where the trenches were.

The hidden soldiers were very cautious and careful in ensuring that the enemies could not make out their hideouts. They did not utter even a single word nor did they move even slightly. Then a soldier had a strong urge to smoke. There are strict regulations about smoking in the warfront. However, this particular soldier could not resist his desire and he smoked.

Enemies in the valley below noticed smoke rising from that particular area. They threw a bomb in that direction. Every single soldier who was hiding in the trench was killed.

A little negligence, a little lack of attention, a small careless deed – lethargy and neglect in the battlefield eventually led to destruction!

We should be ever vigilant and never be relaxed at

any time in the spiritual battle against Satan.

“Alasatha lesam baadichaal
 Asubha vazhikku vasamvadanayi
 Swathmathe swayame nihanikkum”

Our holy forefathers and saints have sung the above verses, where they warn that even a little idleness or carelessness and carefree living can divert you onto dangerous paths, eventually leading to the death of your soul.

Most esteemed brother, do you not realise that your idleness and indifference on the spiritual warfront led to the destruction of your spiritual life?

Do you not recollect how David mourned, wept and fasted over the death of Saul and his son Jonathan?

Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen!

2 Samuel 1:19 (NLT)

Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen in battle!

2 Samuel 1:25 (NLT)

*Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen!
 Stripped of their weapons, they lie dead.*

2 Samuel 1:27 (NLT)

The spiritual way, where many mighty heroes have fallen! So many started well, but did not finish well. Yet, it is the way that a few uneducated fishermen conquered. Many powerful and mighty characters failed and became mere instruments tossed about in the hands of Satan.

However, the poor and illiterate disciples of Jesus won and became triumphant!

There was a time when the Philistines were scared of Samson, the strongest man of that time. Samson was a Nazarite born under a vow to the Lord. Nevertheless, later on in Judges Chapter 16, we read about Samson's downfall and the pathetic situation he faced. The enemy seized him, gouged out his eyes bound him with bronze shackles and set him to grind grain in the prison.

David's fall with Bathsheba is another noteworthy event. David son of Jesse was a man exalted by the Most High, a man anointed by God. Whereas, Bathsheba was not anointed. She was merely a soldier's wife. Compared to David, she did not have as much to lose.

What about David? His loss was profound and severe. He succumbed to sin and initiated a series of moral failures. David, who had followed God for years, had a big fall. It all started with a little idleness. Instead of going off to war, which was his responsibility as Israel's leader, he stayed behind idle in Jerusalem. In the past, he was at the forefront of battles.

Some members of the fellowship are in a similar situation. They do not have the same joy in attending the fellowship. They lack the old fervour, sincerity and concord. Their enthusiasm and zeal has dampened. Dear son, beware; danger is lying in wait. We read in the book of Judges: "For the men were lying in wait in the inner room. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to

him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" Judges 16:12

"One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace."

2 Samuel 11:2

Lazy slumber! At a time when others were fighting in the battlefield, King David remained at his palace, idle and sleeping. Dear child of God, take a moment to look back at your life? How and when have you been idle?

The hero of Israel is dozing in his bed! David, the sweet psalmist of Israel is having a nap in the middle of the day! David the skilled warrior and king of Judah overcome by lethargy and tiredness! David, "a man after God's own heart" and a visionary, losing all his vision and falling into slumber!

What did he do once when he got up from bed? Had he not taken a vow to pray in the morning, noon and evening?

"Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice." Psalm 55: 17

Do you think he got up to pray? Of course not! David arose from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. He continued in his idleness. He put aside his routine habit of prayer. His earnestness to follow a timely routine of prayer had dried up!

"It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the

roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful.” *2 Samuel 11 :2 (ESV)*

Observe how David's sin leads from one to the next - idleness to sleep and from that to a wandering lustful eye. David who was anointed by God is now slipping and sliding from one sin to another. Satan has cunningly trapped this child of God in sin. The mighty warrior David is entangled in traps from which he cannot escape. Satan has tied him up in the most heinous sins.

One can only read 2 Samuel chapter 11 which describes David's appalling fall with great sadness and tears. Adultery, drunkenness, murder, lack of conviction, self-justification – David fell step-by-step into several of the most loathsome sins. David stooped down into a state that he himself describes later and weeps about as a 'slimy pit, mud and mire'.

How cunning and devious Satan is! The one who fell Goliath with a single stone, the one who was the terror of the Philistine army, the mighty warrior of Israel surrendered his virtues, his chastity and all the values and principles he attained up until then in his life, easily in front of a woman.

Esteemed friend, “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Apostle Paul, in his last epistle, has written a verse with a sorrowful heart:

“For Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.”

2 Timothy 4 : 10

Demas – once the faithful companion of Saint Paul, who had been with him during his first imprisonment at Rome; but now, has forsaken his old associate.

We read in the Epistle of Paul to Philemon:

“Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.”

Philemon 1 : 23, 24

There is a mention of him in Colossians 4:14 as follows:

“Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.”

Colossians 4 : 14

We learn from those passages that Demas was a fellow labourer of the apostle in the Lord's work.

Apostle Paul wrote the epistles to the Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon while in Rome as a prisoner between AD 60 and AD 63. During that time, Demas was a fellow worker and was with him. Although Paul was released from prison after that, he was imprisoned again in AD 64. He wrote the First Epistle to Timothy in AD 64 and the Epistle to Titus in AD 65. St Paul

wrote his last epistle, the Second Epistle to Timothy, while he was a prisoner in Rome for the last time in AD 67. Within this short time, Demas became a lover of the world.

Demas might have had his own reasons and justifications. Nevertheless, Satan tied him up and restrained him in the desires of the world.

Satan ensnares men through the desires of the world, of the flesh and through pride.

“For everything in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--comes not from the Father but from the world.”

1 John 2 : 16

Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden through all three of these. Eve was tempted by the serpent to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Eve saw that the fruit was “good for food,” “pleasing to the eye,” and “desirable for gaining wisdom”. We read about Satan's temptation as follows:

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”

Genesis 3 : 6

Satan approached the second Adam - Jesus Christ - to deceive him in the same way he had deceived the first

Adam. Satan used all three temptations in the Garden of Eden with first Adam and later again with Jesus in the New Testament. Adam succumbed to the temptations, yet Jesus resisted them. The first Adam failed. The second Adam succeeded.

Dear friend, do you have a desire to be triumphant in your battle against Satan? Behold, the second Adam who is victorious is standing near you to make you victorious. "He came out conquering, and to conquer." Revelation 6:2 (ESV). Surrender yourself at the foot of Christ's cross on Golgotha where he crushed the head of the serpent. Dedicate your body, mind and spirit at His holy feet.

Tell him: Oh Lord, since you became victorious over Satan for me, from today I am yours.

Let us pray. Oh blessed Lord, most merciful God, I praise you and thank you. You were willing to sacrifice your own son on the cross to give me victory in my battle against the enemy. Please uphold me until the very end.



Chapter 3

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” *Ephesians 6 : 12*

Every believer is at war with Satan. We can become victorious in this battle, if we stay close to Jesus.

The LORD says:

“For I will fight those who fight you, and I will save your children.” *Isaiah 49 : 25*

During the Exodus, Moses strengthens the fainthearted Israelites when they felt intimidated and trapped, with the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh's army behind them. The Israelites were terrified. Moses however, tells the people:

“The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” *Exodus 14 : 13, 14*

“Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you,

will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness."

Deuteronomy 1 : 29, 30

"Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you." Deuteronomy 3 : 22

"Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory." Deuteronomy 20 : 3, 4

Since God has given us these eminent promises, we need not be afraid or anxious in our fight against the enemy.

What are the different facets in the fight against the enemy?

One: Fight against sin.

"After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin."

Hebrews 12 : 4 (NLT)

We can only be victorious in our fight against sin, if we take a firm decision that we will no longer give any space for sin in our life, even if we have to go through terrible suffering and loss, even to the point of giving up our lives.

Joseph ended up in prison because he fervently

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself...”

Daniel 1 : 8

This decision had far-reaching consequences and effects. The young man from Jerusalem who had no one to care for him, who was taken captive and brought to Babylon as a slave, ultimately ended up as the most prominent official in the government! (Daniel 6: 1-3).

The kingdom of Darius was divided into one hundred and twenty provinces, and he appointed a high officer to rule over each province. Three high officials presided over these one hundred and twenty rulers and Daniel was the first among them. Daniel proved himself more capable than all the other high officers. He was noble minded and the Lord exalted him above others.

“Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.” Daniel 6 : 3

Friend, can you despise sin like a poison? Although committing a sin may feel trivial or frivolous at first, it will later lead to disaster.

Solomon, the wisest among the wise says:

“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those

who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will utter perverse things.” Proverbs 23:29 – 33

One: Fight against sin.

Two: Fight for faith.

“I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.” Jude 1:3

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.” Philippians 1:27

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” 1 Timothy 6:12

We too are following along the paths trodden by saints, who fought for the faith until their death.

One can only read with tears the dramatic testimony of Pastor Richard Wurmbrand who endured fourteen years of Communist imprisonment and torture in his

homeland of Romania. Not even the most horrific tortures could break his faith. Richard Wurmbrand wrote the book 'Tortured for Christ'. It is a classic account of courage, tenacious faith and unbelievable endurance.

In his book "Tortured for Him", Dr Paul Carlson, who went to the Congo as a missionary doctor, has written about the mental and physical torture he endured because of his faith. Jim Elliot was a missionary who went to Ecuador to bring the Gospel to the people of the Aucas tribe. He was brutally pierced with spears and tortured by some of the violent and murderous people in the Aucas tribe. Graham Stuart Staines was an Australian Christian missionary who, along with his two sons was burnt to death in the Indian state of Orissa. All of them shine as dazzling stars in fighting the good fight of faith.

One: Fight against sin.

Two: Fight for faith.

Three: Fight on your knees.

"So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I fight to win. I'm not just shadow-boxing or playing around. Like an athlete, I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to. Otherwise, I fear that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside."

1 Corinthians 9 : 26, 27 (TLB).

Here St. Paul says, "I fight to win". He disciplines his body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, he fears that after preaching to others he himself might be disqualified. He disciplines and trains his body to do what it should do and not what it desires to do. If not, he fears that after training other runners, he himself might be disqualified at the end and cast away.

Fighting in prayer! Being a prayer warrior! The need for prayer and fasting becomes a reality here. A victorious life and the fulfilment of a successful and fruitful mission is possible, but only to the one who fights the battles on his knees in prayer and gains mastery over his body by fasting. Periods of fasting and prayer produce great spiritual results.

Holiness is the only yardstick of a victorious life. The sole benchmark for a fruitful mission of serving God is leading a Holy life. One should attain the surpassingly great fruits of prayer-life by disciplining one's own body and bringing it under strict control to lead a holy life and by fighting all battles on one's knees.

Four: Fight through suffering and hardships.

"Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were

suffering the same things.”

Hebrews 10 : 32, 33 (NLT)

Fighting through suffering and hardships is inevitable in the life of a Christian. No one can attain growth in one's life of faith without experiencing suffering and hardships.

Even when Apostle Paul expects persecution and affliction at Jerusalem, his love and ardent faith in Christ helps Paul in his mission ahead.

“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.”

Acts 20 : 22, 23

Apostle Paul strengthens the disciples and encourages them through the following verse:

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,"

Acts 14 : 22

Hardships and suffering are the inheritance of a believer. Suffering is a certainty. Scripture teaches us that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ.

However, we have to be careful about one thing. We should not be suffering because of our sins or wrongdoing. Every believer should ask himself the question - is this suffering because of my sin?

Apostle Paul instructs us:

“For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”

1 Peter 2 : 20

“But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.”

1 Peter 3 : 14

The history of the Christian church is a history of suffering. Nourishment by the blood of martyrs led the early church to flourish. For a time, the death of Stephen, the first martyr in the New Testament, might seem like a failure. Nevertheless, that single death was a factor that triggered the repentance of Saul - ultimately leading to the evangelisation of Europe.

One: Fight against sin

Two: Fight for faith

Three: Fight on your knees – fight in prayer

Four: Fight in your suffering

Honoured friend, dear sister, do you wish to strive forward in this life which is indeed warfare? A runner perseveres through the challenges of the race to reach the finish line and receive the prize. Just like that, do you not have a genuine desire to run steadily ahead without

wavering and without growing weary or exhausted to receive the Crown of Life? If so, please surrender your future at the most holy feet of Jesus Christ who fought against the enemy, suffered persecution and gained victory. Please tell Him: Oh Lord, I entrust and commit myself into the mighty hands of the One who can lead me forward in this spiritual warfare without getting weary. From today, I am wholly Yours.

Let us pray. Oh most exalted and compassionate loving God; Oh most holy, tender and affectionate love; we thank you for the heavenly messages. We glorify you for the most divine thoughts. Give us your grace to continue our fight without fatigue.



Chapter 4

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” *Ephesians 6 : 12*

Every believer is in a battlefield. If we stay close to Jesus Christ and abide in Him, we can be victorious over Satan, the enemy. If not, Satan will defeat us easily and lead us to everlasting doom.

Apostle Paul writes to believers to be on guard against Satan's strategies:

“So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”

2 Corinthians 2 : 11

Jesus tells us in Mark chapter 13 verse 23 to watch out so that no one deceives us.

“So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.” *Mark 13:23*

We pondered over the different aspects of our battles in the last chapter.

One: Fight against sin

Two: Fight for faith

Three: Fight on your knees – fight in prayer

Four: Fight in your suffering

Suffering is the means of promoting patience, experience and hope, as we see in Romans chapter five, verses 3 and 4.

“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Romans 5 : 3, 4

Nalappattu Narayana Menon was a celebrated poet and a multifaceted personality who enriched Malayalam literature through his poetic work and literary translations. One of his famous poems; Kannuneerthulli (Tear Drop) is a soul stirring elegy written after the death of his wife. The poet sang the verses below with the vision of the glory that comes after suffering.

"urukkidunnu mizhineerilittu
 mukkunnu muttam bhuvanaika shilpi.
 manushya hrutham kanakatheyetho
 panittharathinupayukthamakkan"
 “Anantham, ajnatam, avarnaneeyam,
 Ee loka golam tiriyunna maargam;
 Atinkalengandoridatthirunnu
 Nokkunna martyan kathayentu kandu?”

He compares the human heart to a solid block of gold. Almighty God, the Creator melts the human heart and dips it in tears to purify and refine it. The Creator does so with the ultimate aim of creating a beautiful ornament out of the gold block. Infinite, unknown and inexpressible are the ways that this universe, the cosmos, turns around. Mankind, you who are sitting in a little corner, looking on - what do you know about it? The poet describes how insignificant and negligible is man's insight and understanding in relation to the vast universe!

When faced with frequent episodes of trials, tribulations and suffering one after another, it is natural that we think and ask – 'why is my life filled with constant suffering and hardships?' However, our most merciful God is capable of transforming all this suffering and hardship for our ultimate good.

I have heard of an incident that happened during World War II. A pious farmer used to send a good proportion of his earnings to support the evangelical work of a fellowship. At the height of the war, on one occasion, he sent considerably less money than he usually used to send and wrote a letter to them about the situation. "I am unable to send you the same amount of money as I used to send before. Because of the impact of the war, there is a severe famine and massive rise in the price of commodities. Bombings have damaged my crops leading to yield losses. Please pray so that my farm lands are exempted from the effects of the war." They replied back

saying that unfortunately they were unable to pray as he had requested, but instead they that they would pray for God's will to be fulfilled in him. This man was not very pleased with the response he got from the fellowship.

On the next day, a German rocket fell on his fields and the blast created a huge fissure in his land. Water started gushing out of the crater formed by the bomb blast. There was more than enough water to tend for all of his crops! Moreover, neighbouring farmers also benefitted from the bountiful water source in this farmer's field. Farming improved and his income increased substantially.

Farmland being hit by a bomb would appear as a catastrophe. However, God turned that disaster into a blessing.

Intense trials and suffering are indeed painful. Nevertheless, our living God can give us blessings through them and turn adversity into gain. While it is never pleasant, good can come from suffering!

Five: Fight/Strive to enter through the narrow door

Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Luke 13:23, 24

Jesus proclaimed:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the

gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Matthew 7: 13, 14

The door leading to eternal life is a narrow door. Indeed, it is a miracle if one is able to identify that door! Very few are able to find that door.

Even from among that minority who find that door, not everyone can enter through the door. The few who do find the door have a genuine desire to enter through the door. Not only do they have the desire, but also they strive to enter through the door. But Christ reminds us that many will not be able to enter!

To go in, to gain entry into eternal life is not easy and requires a great battle, a spiritual warfare! That is why Jesus said:

"Strive to enter in through the narrow door; for many, I say to you, will seek to enter in, and will not be able."

Our holy ancestors clearly comprehended this and thus sang:

Raajyathin vaathil –

Cheriyathuma maargam – veethi kuranjathumaa

aavazhi gamanam kaamshippo nathyulsaha

mavasyam than

alasatha lesam badhichaal

*ashubhavazhikku vasamvadanaayi
swathmathe swayame nihanikkum*

Killing one's own soul, which means spiritual death! A slight idleness can lead to taking undesirable paths. An unpleasant, grievous, offensive, wicked way - straying from the normal path and diverging into such paths will lead to the spirit losing its connection with God. That is why we should pray:

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” *Psalms 139:23, 24*

Let me introduce a young man - Dr Reji Mathew, son of Rev. Fr Chanthiam the most senior priest in the Jacobite Church. He is someone who struggled and failed for a very long time in his efforts to fight against the enemy and to enter through the narrow gate. His life was in a miserable state of dejection and despair. Let us ask him about his experience:

Dr Reji, could you explain the circumstances under which your life became engulfed in fears and despair?

From my childhood, I actively took part in my church's activities and worship, Sunday school, youth associations, family prayer and prayer meetings. However, I was not able to maintain purity and holiness in my personal life. I struggled and wrestled with no control over my thoughts and desires.

I used to take new decisions in life, every time I heard the Word of God and that the Heaven is for holy men. However, I was unable to stick firmly to any of those decisions. This eventually affected my life. I became very gloomy and sombre. When I was a student at Trivandrum Medical College, my life was full of anguish and my days were engulfed in solitude and sadness. My state was so pitiful and I could not even concentrate on my studies.

How did this state change?

My older brother Prof C. M. Mathew compelled me and brought me to the Christian Revival Fellowship prayer meetings. There I heard the Word of God and realized that I will only continue to fail if I relied on my own efforts and if I tried to fight against sin with my willpower. Gospel messages gave me the realisation that in my fight against the enemy, I should put Christ in the forefront. Listening to the Word of God resulted in a miraculous change in me.

I was trying to fight against the enemy through my own efforts and endeavours. A new enlightenment came into my heart when I listened to the Word of God. I heard that the blood shed by Jesus Christ on the cross is the most holy blood, which defeated the enemy. I also heard that if the holy blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts of houses, those houses marked with blood would be spared from destruction by the angel of death. This gave me new insight and I heard that by faith in the supreme power of God, it is possible to experience victory. From that moment onwards, the influence of the

fear and dejection that used to grip me vanished. I gained a new faith and courage.

What is your experience now?

Satan had tied me up for so long in a disheartened and discouraged state, making me think that I would never be able to lead a victorious life. However, now I can glorify God and say that a victorious life is indeed possible for a young man. One can be successful over one's thoughts and deeds when it becomes an absolute necessity and when there is a firm belief that the Holy Spirit can make it happen. God's empowering Holy Spirit inside us can make us victorious. God granted me that feeling of necessity and faith. Today fear does not bother me. I am not desperate anymore. I lead a life partaking in God's work, singing his praises joyfully and glorifying His name.

Dr Reji Mathew is an active member of 'Amruthadhara' choir of the Christian Revival Fellowship. It is by God's immense grace alone that he reached the paths of victory and hope in his life's battles.

“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Isaiah 40:30, 31

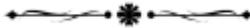
Dear friend, do you wish to be victorious in life's

battles? The One who crushed the head of the enemy will stay with you.

Does your heart yearn to declare with the Psalmist - "Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle." (Psalm 144:1)

If so, surrender your life into the hands of Jesus Christ who crushed the head of the serpent on the cross. Tell him; Jesus, from today I will love you and start leading my life as a new person.

Let us pray. Almighty and most holy God, I thank you as no one can snatch me out of your strong hands. Lead me victoriously. Please guide me through your straight paths.



Chapter 5

"Judah's sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars."

Jeremiah 17 : 1

The prophet Jeremiah is often referred to as "the weeping prophet". He prophesied and shed tears over the sins of his people, foreseeing the troubles and punishments that would befall them.

The prophet Jeremiah foresaw the attack of the enemy and the destruction and disaster that were to be inflicted on the people because of their sins and their evil and wicked ways. He exhorted the people of Judah to forsake their wicked ways and to repent and return to the ways of God very swiftly.

"O Israel, my faithless people, come home to me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever. Only acknowledge your guilt."

Jeremiah 3 : 12

The sin of Judah is inscribed with an iron chisel. It is engraved with a diamond point so that it cannot be erased.

Where is it written?

One: Sin is written on their stony hearts.

When a person sins, it is written on his heart, never to be erased. That is why David weeps remorsefully saying 'my sin is always before me' and 'it haunts me day and night.'

"O Loving and kind God, have mercy. Have pity upon me. And take away the awful stains of my transgressions. O, wash me, cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again. For I admit my shameful deed - it haunts me day and night."

Psalm 51 : 1 - 3 (TLB).

We pray, have mercy on us, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, I admit them and my sin is always before me.

When your sins are written on your hearts, you will feel guilty in your soul. Your mind will be disturbed and will not be at peace. Discord will affect your whole life.

Macbeth is a famous tragedy written by William Shakespeare. Macbeth wants to become king of Scotland and Macbeth's wife is desirous to become the queen. Consumed by ambition and spurred to action by the plots his wife planned, Macbeth murders King Duncan. Macbeth became the king of Scotland and Lady Macbeth

the queen. However, the guilt of committing murder and the resulting paranoia severely affects the rest of their lives.

Lady Macbeth is filled with guilt from the crimes she and her husband have committed. She tries to wash off imaginary bloodstains from her hands. She thinks that the odour of blood still lingers on her hands and believes that nothing can wash away the blood on her hands. Shakespeare writes the dramatic words below, as uttered by Lady Macbeth when she is overwhelmed by guilt.

“All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.”

Macbeth's state is even worse. He has come to recognize that his guilt can never be washed off, even if the blood can be washed from his hands. He fears that his guilt, symbolised by 'this blood', will remain forever. Macbeth is horrified at his own murderous actions, asking, “Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?”

Dear brother, sister, is your mind unable to break free from the impact of the aftermath of your sin? Are you still lamenting at times – 'I should not have done this', 'why on earth did I do so?' Are you still upset and haunted by your sins and moving around in a state of constant despair and uneasiness?

If so, a single drop of the holy blood of Jesus Christ can erase all the sins engraved on your heart. Rely on the

most holy blood of Jesus. Invite Jesus as your saviour and Lord.

Two: sins are written on the horns of the altars.

The Israelites constructed the Tabernacle exactly as God had directed Moses, to the pattern he was given. God then directed Moses to make an altar.

"Build an altar of acacia wood, three cubits high; it is to be square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. Make a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar are of one piece, and overlay the altar with bronze."

Exodus 27 : 1, 2

God had commanded to slaughter the bull offered in the LORD's presence at the entrance of the Tabernacle and to take some of the bull's blood and put it on the horns of the altar.

"Then slaughter the bull in the LORD's presence at the entrance of the Tabernacle. Put some of its blood on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour out the rest at the base of the altar." *Exodus 29 : 11, 12 (NLT)*

Animal sacrifices in the Old Testament precede and foreshadow the perfect and complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The blood of a slaughtered goat or bull being smeared on the horns of the altar was a foreshadowing of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Any sinner might cling

to the horns of the altar to escape from death. The horns of the altar provided a refuge for sinners who could escape judgement by holding on to the horns. All of this foretells the immense fortune that a sinner who relies on the atoning blood of Jesus Christ will be spared from eternal destruction. Jesus offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to provide atonement for sin.

The sin of Judah is described as being written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond upon the horns of the altar. Sin written on the horns of the God's altar, where God's presence resides clearly indicates that the sin of mankind is noted down before God.

If the sins inscribed in front of God are not erased, the result is eternal punishment. If remission of sins and transgressions does not happen, it is a most dreadful and alarming state.

David prayed with a broken heart:

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived

me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.”

Psalms 51 : 1 - 9

David's sins were forgiven. Psalm 32 flows out of the great relief from anguish of David's heart as he was set free from the load of his guilt and given the blessings and joy of forgiveness,

“What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.”

Psalms 32 : 1, 2 (TLB)

“There was a time when I wouldn't admit what a sinner I was! But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration. All day and all night your hand was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day until I finally admitted all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, “I will confess them to the Lord.” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.”

Psalms 32 : 3 - 5 (TLB)

How blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered! Yes, what joy for those whose guilt the LORD has wiped clean, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! David confessed his sin fully and freely.

David describes his state of mind before he could bring himself to confess his sin as below – 'When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.'

How then are the sins engraved on the horns of the altar erased?

The sacred altar and its horns, where the atoning blood of animals sacrificed was sprinkled, is mentioned in Leviticus chapter 4 verses 1-7; 13-18; 22-25; 27-30 and 32-34.

Apostle Paul talks about Christ's sacrifice on the cross being once for all peoples in his in his letter to Hebrews:

"But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands,

that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!..... In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Hebrews 9: 11 – 22

Sins are written on the tablets of hearts and sins are inscribed on the horns of altars. Esteemed friend, do you wish for your sins to be erased? Do you have a strong desire to get rid of the deep wounds and unmoving scars of sin from your life forever?

If so, be willing to lay your life down and surrender it at the foot of the cross. Bid farewell to your sinful ways, detest and reject all sins and get rid of them while submitting your wasted life at the pierced foot of Jesus. You will be sprinkled and cleansed with the Holy Blood of Christ. You will receive a sign of his Holy Blood. You will

experience a blessing that you have never previously experienced. Your heart will be brimming with an unexplainable peace and calmness.

If so, tell Christ: O Lord, until now, I led a life as a slave of innumerable sins. Today I surrender myself into the hands that were given up for me. I pledge that from today I will live a new life as a new creation.

Let us pray. Merciful God, our Lord; we praise you for your life-giving Word. We praise you for granting us the healing and joy coming from the forgiveness of sins. Please sustain us until our very end.



Chapter 6

“Judah's sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars.”

Jeremiah 17 : 1

The sins of people are permanently written in a way that they cannot be erased. God has written the sins down!

One: written on hearts

Two: written on the horns of the altar

Three: written on walls

“Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.”

Daniel 5: 5-6

Belshazzar ruled the kingdom of Babylon after the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine

with them. While Belshazzar was drinking wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar, his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. Therefore, they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the idols of deities made of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall. No one could read the writing on the wall or interpret its meaning. The king summoned the wise men, the enchanters, astrologers and diviners, but none of them could read the writing nor tell the king what it meant. Then the queen told him that there was a man in his kingdom “who has the spirit of the holy gods in him”. She mentioned that this person had “a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems”. She suggested to “Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.”

Daniel was summoned and he read the writing on the wall. Almighty God, who reveals all secrets, revealed the meaning of the writing to Daniel. Daniel said:

“You have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple

brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honour the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription. This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. Here is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.”

Daniel 5: 23-27

We see in Psalm 7, verses 7 and 8 that righteous God probes the minds and hearts of people and judges them. God is the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person (Revelation 2:23).

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Hebrews 4: 13

Dear friend, can you see the enduring writing on the wall? God sees everything. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Do you realize that it is not possible to hide anything from the eyes of God, the eyes that are like blazing fire? Are you aware that your sins done in secret will be exposed before the light of God's

presence?

Son, you can conceal things from people. However, you cannot hide anything from God. You can cover things up without your wife knowing. Daughter, you can hide things from your husband, your children and your parents. Nevertheless, you cannot conceal anything from omniscient and omnipresent God. All your secret sins are known to God, and shall be reckoned for. At this very moment, when God is looking at you, what will He say?

Will He say 'You have been weighed on the scales and found deficient'? On the other hand, will He say 'Well done, good and faithful servant'?

The fourth writing of sins is that of the Lord Jesus writing on the ground.

“But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.” *John 8 : 6*

“Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.” *John 8 : 8*

The Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery, to Jesus. She tried to wrestle herself free. However, the crowd did not allow her to get away.

“Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?”

John 8 : 4 - 5

This woman trembles with fear thinking about her fate. She was dragged and brought in front of those who have the authority to stone her to death. In a matter of minutes, stones would be pelted at her one after another. Her bones will be crushed and broken, her flesh will be torn and bruised, and blood would splutter everywhere. She stood there helpless, humiliated, shivering and confronting death face to face, awaiting her final moments.

Jesus said:

“Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” *John 8 : 7*

“Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.” *John 8 : 8*

What did Jesus write? He wrote the sins of every one of them. They were scholars of religious law. They were familiar with the Scriptures and remembered:

“Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water.”

Jeremiah 17 : 13

Their own conscience pricked and convicted them. Without even realising, the stones fell from their hands. They went away one after another.

This woman stands there awestruck and amazed. How fortunate was it for her to be brought before this

miraculous man! She evaded death. She stares at Jesus without even blinking, in complete amazement. Her eyes were brimming with gratitude, love, amazement and bewilderment.

*"Jesus straightened up and asked her,
"Woman, where are they? Has no one
condemned you?"* *John 8 : 10*

"No one, sir," she said. *John 8 : 11*

None of her accusers was free from sins. Jesus was the one and only person who was without sin! He had the authority to judge her and punish her. However, the one with that power said:

*"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus
declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*
John 8 : 11

Friend, this is the only thing that Christ anticipates and desires from you. "Go and sin no more." What have you decided? Will you quit your sinful ways? Will you forsake sin? Are you willing to receive Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to triumph over sin, into your heart right now? If He comes into your heart, you will gain victory over sin. Sin and the Devil to whom sin belongs, will flee from you. Jesus Christ who celebrated victory over sin will lead you prosperously.

The fifth writing of sins: the Spirit of the living God writes on the tablets of human hearts.

“You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

2 Corinthians 3 : 3

One's life acting as a letter of Christ! Instead of the sins, which were engraved in your heart, 'Jesus Christ' is now written in your heart. This letter is written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. The Laws of Moses were given on tablets of stone. The letter of Christ and His image are inscribed on the tablets of flesh of one's heart.

Until now, sins were written on hearts. Now your heart is a letter of Christ.

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 3 : 18

We are transformed to reflect Christ through us. The intensifying glory of Christ manifested through us! Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image and same likeness of Christ!

A young boy was selling oranges on a railway platform. He was walking among the crowds with a basket full of oranges. Some people bought oranges from this poor boy.

His widowed mother was at home, ill and bedridden. He had to buy food for that night's dinner with the money earned from selling the oranges. He was trying his best, attempting to sell all oranges as he could, before nightfall.

Suddenly someone from the crowd knocked him over and his basket of oranges fell on the ground. The oranges rolled everywhere on the platform. People rushing through the crowded platform crushed some of his oranges. This boy was heartbroken and started crying. No one seemed to care except for one kind man who stopped and picked up the oranges and placed them back in his basket. When this person lifted the basket on to the boy's head, through his tears the young boy asked, "Sir, are you Jesus Christ?"

This man asked him why he asked so.

The young boy replied; "I have heard that Jesus is good, kind, caring and loving. I saw that same nature in you - that is why I asked".

Friends, we should reflect the nature of Jesus in our life. We should stand as ambassadors of Christ on this earth.

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5: 16

Sins are written on hearts, written on the horns of the altar, written on the wall, written on sand and finally the

letters of Jesus Christ are written on your heart.

Beloved friend, most respected sister, is the letter of Christ written on your heart? From today, lead a life that reflects Jesus in your lives. Let the world see Jesus in you and through you! Start a new life!

Let us pray: Living Lord, most merciful father, we praise you for calling us to reflect Jesus and to transform into his likeness and His image. Bless us to lead a life with Jesus until our very end. Amen.



Chapter 7

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” 2 Corinthians 7: 10

There are two types of sorrow.

One: Godly sorrow

Two: Worldly sorrow

Worldly sorrow is not sorrow that is after the will of God. Worldly sorrow results in spiritual death. The sorrow of this world results in loss of true eternal life.

Sadness as intended by God produces repentance that leads to salvation, leaving no regret. It leads to repentance. It leads to gaining salvation and inheritance of eternal heaven. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces repentance.

In this world, there is always sorrow, affliction, suffering and distress. These will sadden any human being. However pious a man is, it is natural that he becomes upset, disheartened and grieved over disasters, hardships, misery, losses, separations and demise in this world.

Epaphroditus was a young man belonging to the

Philippian congregation, which was the first and oldest Christian church in Europe. When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, the church in Philippi in Greece gathered supplies and sent them to him through Epaphroditus.

Travelling was not easy in those times. Epaphroditus journeyed all the way from Philippi to Rome by foot, in harsh weather through cold, rain and the scorching sun without eating properly and often sleepless. He risked his own life, but he had no thought about himself and he laboured on Paul's behalf until his own health broke and he was seriously ill by the time he reached Paul. His illness became worse day by day and became so severe that he almost died. Paul was greatly distressed and deeply concerned about this and he earnestly prayed to God, heartbrokenly. God graciously granted Epaphroditus his health back and cured his illness.

Paul's own words in his Epistle to Philippians is as follows:

“For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away.”

Philippians 2 : 30

“Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.”

Philippians 2 : 27

Thus, we will have sorrow in the matters of this

world. Very much indeed! Then why did Apostle Paul say 'but worldly sorrow brings death'?

Sorrow according to the will of God is sorrow that repents about the wrong done and over the sins committed. As we read in Jeremiah chapter 8, verse 6 that is the sadness expressed in saying, "What a terrible thing I have done!"

This type of sorrow focuses on God – God-centred sorrow over the wickedness of sin. (NIV footnote 2 Cor 7:10). Godly sorrow results from a heart-felt conviction that we have saddened God by our sin. Such a burning conviction produces sorrow in our agonised hearts and we are deeply grieved in spirit. Godly sorrow has a feeling of wretchedness that can bring the repentant sinner to tears of grief, crying out to God, pleading for His mercy.

On the other hand, worldly sorrow is focused around one's self – it is self-centred sorrow. This sorrow is sadness about the several painful and frustrating matters of this worldly life. It does not lead the soul to God in true repentance, but results in spiritual death.

Many people reel in never ending pain and overflowing tears. When they pray they do cry – they express their pain sighing and sobbing. However, this grief stems from the suffering in this world. It is the weeping of self-pity, regretting over material losses. As a result, the spirit dies and eventually leads to loss of entry into the Kingdom of God.

In his Epistle to Corinthians, Apostle Paul points out the sins of people of Corinth, reprimanding and reproving

them severely for their dissensions and the disorders that prevailed. This epistle caused deep distress among them because the apostle wrote so harshly to them. However, the apostle perceives that it produced the kind of sorrow in them, which he desired - as it produced permanent good results. That sorrow produced permanent repentance and reformation and thus accomplished all that the apostle wished for through his writing.

“Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.”

2 Corinthians 7: 8-9

Friend, is your current sorrow godly sorrow or worldly sorrow? Isn't your heart filled with despair? Isn't your heart silently crying over the innumerable burdens, cares, afflictions and tribulations in this worldly life? Do you very often think about difficulties, failures and disasters in your life?

Are you lamenting over negative thoughts such as – 'I'm a failure', 'I am flawed', 'I am never going to succeed in anything', 'My life is not going to prosper', 'Who really cares about me?', 'I am unwanted and nobody needs me', 'Isn't it better that I just die rather than living like this?' - Are you struggling with such painful and pessimistic thoughts rising from your hearts, which do not correspond

with God's will?

If so, do believe – God does not do any harm or evil to anyone. Satan causes all harm and evil.

What does the Scriptures say regarding this?

“When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”
James 1 : 13- 15

Temptation is the pull of man's own evil thoughts and wishes. These evil thoughts lead to evil actions and afterwards to the death penalty from God.

Satan is the one who wreaks havoc and causes all harm. He comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. (John 10:10).

Satan, not God, caused appalling things to happen to Job. Satan was jealous of Job's piety, his zeal for God's glory and Job's prosperity. He cast his eye upon Job.

Satan attacked Job. Job's herds and property were carried off by raiders and destroyed by natural disasters. Job lost all his children. After learning of the sudden tragic loss of all his children, his wealth and his livestock, his reaction was to fall down and worship God. Job tears his clothes and shaves his head in mourning, but he still

praised God in his prayers.

When Satan saw that throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything and maintained integrity, he decided to afflict Job with a horrible disease. The Devil struck Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. None of these were caused by God.

We read about the prodigal son (Luke 15:14) facing a severe famine and finding himself in dire circumstances. His father was not the cause behind the famine or hunger. The prodigal son became so destitute that he even longed to eat the food given to the pigs – his father did not bring such a disaster on him. This adversity was brought about by his own deeds.

Despite all this, God can transform the disasters, losses and afflictions caused by Satan into ultimate good. It was the famine and hunger that brought the prodigal son to his proper senses, made him think about his father's house, and led to his repentance. Nothing but absolute bodily suffering and cruel hunger drove the prodigal son to penitence and to deciding to return to his father, which in the end saved him.

Even though Satan brought about huge disasters and distress in Job's life, God eventually turned everything in his favour. The Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.

"You say to God, 'My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in your sight.'" *Job 11 : 4*

Again, Job also says:

“I am pure, I have done no wrong; I am clean and free from sin.” Job 33 : 9

Job had a self-satisfaction, justification and contentment in his piety, his blamelessness and his goodness. God however turns the most dreadful disasters in his life to good.

The Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind and this brought about a transformation in him. Then Job admitted his nothingness, his insignificance and unworthiness to God.

“I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer twice, but I will say no more.”

Job 40 : 4, 5

Job continues:

“My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Job 42 : 5, 6

Job experienced a remarkable conviction of his sinfulness, penitence and repentance and was humbled because God changed his worldly sorrow to sorrow according to God's will.

There is a stark contrast between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. For the sorrow which God gives is the cause of salvation through a change of heart, in which there is no reason for grief; but the sorrow of the world is a cause of death.

Esteemed friend, which kind of sorrow is yours? Is worldly sorrow crushing your spirit in so many ways? Are you not being tossed around in severe hardships, unbearable suffering, afflictions and diseases? Are you utterly overwhelmed by depression and hopelessness due to the distressed circumstances in your life? Are you sinking deep into the whirlpool of despair where there is no foothold?

In your most miserable and wretched state, please understand this great truth – your spirit is no longer alive because of worldly sorrow. If you are willing to repent from your sins, God will restore your spirit to life. It was to raise the dead to life that Christ became the first-born among the dead to resurrect and live again.

Will you admit the lifeless state of your spirit openly to God now? Are you prepared to turn from your present way of life, change direction and turn to God your creator for a fresh start? Can you pray to Jesus to forgive your sins and to restore life in you, rescuing you from death, which is the wage of sin? If you choose to do so, Jesus the source of eternal life will come to you and put his hands on you. He will set you free from sin's controlling power.

Say these words to him: Jesus, since you died for me, from today onwards I will live for you!



Chapter 8

“This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty. What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'”
Zechariah 4 : 6 - 7

Victory is purely by grace alone. Victorious life is not possible for any man by his own efforts. Victory is achievable only by the immense grace of God. Victory over sin is feasible solely by the grace of Christ.

God's grace leads to repentance. God's grace also leads one to be drawn to the Word of God. Being able to delight in the Word of God and to savour its sweetness is a result of the grace of God. Being able to understand the Word of God is His grace. It is by the grace of God that an unsettled turbulent heart becomes peaceful and attains serenity and tranquillity. Being able to identify and perceive sin is by the grace of God. Becoming remorseful and conscious of sin is by the grace of God. Receiving a broken and penitent heart to repent from sins is by His grace. Taking a decision not to sin again is by the grace of

God. Rejecting sin and despising it to be abhorrent is purely by the grace of God. The very basis of Christian life is God's grace.

During the period of Babylonian exile, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel was the governor of Jerusalem and Joshua the son of Jehozadak was the high priest. Zerubbabel began rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem with the help of Joshua, which was destroyed by the Babylonians during the regime of King Nebuchadnezzar. Zerubbabel and Joshua ensured the building work made rapid progress and provided invaluable assistance in rebuilding the temple.

The prophets of God - Haggai and Zechariah - encouraged the people almost on a daily basis and at every stage of their work. Ezra the priest focused on the rebuilding of the temple and Nehemiah, the cupbearer to king Artaxerxes gave leadership in the construction of the walls around the temple.

When they started rebuilding the temple, there was much opposition from the land's inhabitants, especially when they heard that the repair of the wall of Jerusalem was going on. Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite were two central figures who mocked, harassed, intimidated and opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem. They threatened, mocked and demoralised the builders. Various difficulties and obstacles stood in Zerubbabel's way; it was as if high and mighty mountains impeded his work. He was disheartened and felt

weakened. God's spirit strengthened him through the prophet Zechariah, saying that Zerubbabel need not be disheartened because of his weakness; for man's weakness is no obstacle - God's might will provide strength to overcome weakness.

Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'" Zechariah 4 : 6, 7 (ESV)

This is God's message to Zerubbabel: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts - you will succeed because of My Spirit, though you are few and weak.' Therefore, no mountain, however high, can stand before Zerubbabel! For it will flatten out before him! And Zerubbabel will finish building this temple with mighty shouts of thanks giving for God's mercy, declaring that all was done by grace alone." Zechariah 4 : 6, 7 (TLB)

Is anyone who is downhearted and discouraged by obstacles and impediments in their life's journey reading these words? Are you in a confused and perplexed state, unable to put one step forward with no way ahead? Are you reading this with a heavy and lonesome heart and a weary shattered soul? Are you in a grievous plight, sinking deep into the fathomless whirlpool of despair, as all your

hopes and wishes have faded, dried up and withered?

If so, esteemed friend, the strong and mighty One who can turn mountains to flat plains has come to you and is standing next to you. Will you lift up your bowed head and look at him? God will open a new way for you! He will create new hopes in your life! New buds will sprout and spring out of your life. Branches will bud forth with fresh tender shoots in your life once again. He will lift you up and make you reach the sublime realms of a glorious tomorrow!

That is not by your own intellect or skill; not by your own ability, competence or splendour of action; not by your dexterity, power or might. Everything is by the boundless grace and mercy of our living God!

Grace is God's free gift. Grace means that God showered favour and blessing on those who did not in any way deserve it or earn it. Grace is the divine blessing given purely in mercy by the most glorified God; without taking into consideration any virtues, perfection, excellence and merits.

Who receives this grace? King Solomon; referred to as the wisest of wise says:

"...he gives grace to the humble".

Proverbs 3 : 34

"God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble." *James 4 : 6, 1 Peter 5 : 5*

Pride is a sin that God opposes. He resists the

arrogant. But he gives greater grace to those who are humble and lowly. God's grace will pour forth on to those who are humble!

“For this is what the high and exalted One says he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.” *Isaiah 57 : 15*

This is what eternal God says:

“These are the ones I look on with favour: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.” *Isaiah 66 : 2*

The Roman historian Tacitus recorded the terrible persecution and suffering of Christians under the Roman Emperor Nero. His words extol the humility and willingness of the saints and faithful children of God who suffered and died gruesome deaths. The brave and holy manner in which those martyrs faced their tormentors became an inspiration for many witnesses.

Tacitus vividly describes the persecutions suffered by the early Christian martyrs. According to him, every imaginable mockery preceded their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and or were tormented and crucified or even burnt alive to serve as torches as night approached. Nero used his own gardens for this and invited many people to watch this exhibition of torture as a public.

Sir Walter Scott was a prolific Scottish historical novelist and poet who lived between the last decade of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. He was a strong believer in Christ and had deep faith in the word of God.

On his deathbed he said, "Bring me the Book. When asked what book, he replied, "There is but one Book. That is the Holy Bible".

He was a mighty warrior of faith and was someone who experienced the sweetness of God's grace. Because he was infected by polio in his infancy, Scott had a pronounced limp. However, he was always content and satisfied.

George Gordon Byron was a famous British contemporary poet and satirist whose poetry and vivid personality captured the imagination of many across Europe. Byron too had a noticeable limp due to a clubfoot. Byron is often described as very flamboyant and proud of what he had. His life was full of aristocratic excesses, huge debts and immorality and he had no fear of God. He never realised what grace of God was.

On one occasion, Byron wrote to Walter Scott; "If you could give me your happiness and cheerfulness, in exchange I can give you all the fame, fortunes, privileges and aristocratic positions that I have received so far in my life".

Byron did not ever taste the grace of God and led a life of gloom and despair. He completely ignored moral

values and led a restless and tarnished life.

On the contrary, Walter Scott had peace and joy as his possessions in life. He was able to experience God's grace in his life.

Prof Leelamma Mathew, wife of Prof C. M. Mathew, is a dedicated and very active member of Christian Revival Fellowship who has experienced this grace of God. Prof Leela is a professor of Botany at St Peter's College, Kolenchery. Let us read how she came to experience God's grace in her life.

Prof Leela, what can you recollect about the experiences in the early stages of your life?

I was born and brought up in an ancient Jacobite family. I was the only daughter of my parents. However, my father died when I was very young and after that, I was brought up by my grandfather.

I grew up seeing my widowed mother's tears. This disaster of my father's death while I was a very young child had a huge impact on my life. When I grew up, my life was engulfed by a numbness and indifference to everything. I harboured resentments against God and my heart was gloomy and full of despair and melancholy.

Nevertheless, I had a keen interest in my studies and I did study very well. I completed my Master's degree from U.C. College, Aluva with very high marks.

I strictly followed all the rituals and rites of my church, and prayed and fasted routinely. I diligently held

all religious observances and carefully followed the traditional religious beliefs and practices. Because of all of these, I considered myself as devoutly religious and pious.

However, on the top of all my forlornness, my nature was one of self-justification, arrogance and self-esteem. I never knew that any of these were sins. All my desires and perspectives in life were completely worldly: I only cared for living a comfortable life, becoming very wealthy, successful and gaining respect, appreciation and recognition in the eyes of others.

What brought about a change in this situation?

The trigger in my life that led to me finding Jesus Christ was my marriage. From a worldly perspective, I considered myself very fortunate in becoming the daughter-in-law of Rev. Fr. Chanthiam, the most senior priest in Jacobite Church. However, one thing that strongly influenced me was the total change and transformation in my husband Prof C.M. Mathew's life, when he came into a true repentance. When a deep sanctification took place in my husband's life, I also was changed. That is how I came in touch with Christian Revival Fellowship. I realized that my self-righteousness and worldly love are big sins. I surrendered my life unconditionally into the hands of Jesus Christ.

What is your experience after your repentance?

Today, I experience an amazing peace and tranquillity. I lead a life of inner peace by giving room in my

life to the Holy Spirit who can wholly transform my innermost life. I realise that the inexplicable serenity and calmness that came into my life when I was able to recognise and truly realise Jesus is miraculous. With love for everyone, I am now able to value, regard and think of others as more esteemed than myself. Today I lead a life fully involved in the activities of Christian Revival Fellowship along with my whole family.

Leela is a blessed child of God who holds responsibility for and oversees the women's meetings of this prayer fellowship. Today she leads a life experiencing the spiritual fervour and zeal that come with the conviction that God sees each of us even before we are in our mothers' wombs and that it was God who brought her up.

Esteemed brother, beloved sister, do you have a desire to experience this amazing grace in your life?

Do you realize that change in a person's character is the biggest grace? Will you make a decision to live as a child of grace from today?

If so, tell Jesus open-heartedly: until now, I led a life without knowing who God is and without seeing myself as I should. I come to your holy feet, trusting and heeding the call of the graceful love of the cross. I surrender myself at your feet. Please have mercy on me. Please come into my heart and take hold of my life.



Chapter 9

So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty. "What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'"
Zechariah 4 : 6, 7

We reflected on the abundant and limitless richness of God's grace in the previous chapter. The Scriptures document the names of some very fortunate persons who received God's grace.

One: The Virgin Mary received God's grace. We read that the angel of God said to her:

"Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."
Luke 1 : 28

"Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God."
Luke 1 : 30

God magnifies His immense grace to Mary, a poor girl from the village of Nazareth in the district of Galilee. A normal unsophisticated young girl from an ordinary family,

brought up in a small village became the recipient of God's grace.

We also read in the scriptures about Elijah the Tishbite. Elijah was born in a remote and little known village called Tishbe. Once he turned to God's ways, his life began to prosper. He became a man of God, spoke with God's authority and was a fervent prayer warrior who was able to bring down fire from heaven.

When Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favoured woman! The Lord is with you!" Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. Then the angel Gabriel told her:

"Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

Luke 1 : 30 - 33

Mary clearly understood that the Angel was telling her marvellous and great things. However, she still struggled to comprehend them and could not imagine in what way this could happen. She seeks to know how this would take place, by asking;

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

Luke 1 : 34

The angel gave her a very precise account of the manner in which, what he had said to her would happen.

“The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” Luke 1 : 35

Over seven hundred years before Jesus was born, God had foretold this through the prophet Isaiah. A remarkable prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 foretells the unique birth of Jesus by a virgin. Mary who was just a lowly virgin girl was not aware of this!

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7 : 14

When Isaiah prophesied, his scribe Simeon was puzzled and disturbed by the Messianic prophecy that "A virgin shall conceive". Simeon hesitated and stopped writing. It was then revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he would not see death, until he had seen the fulfilment of the prophecy.

“It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.” Luke 2 : 26

Mary did not know that the aged Simeon was still waiting in hope to see that spectacle. Neither did she know that it was the offspring of the woman, who would crush Satan's head, remove the sins, and break the curse

that came up on the first man and at the Garden of Eden centuries ago. While anyone born on earth was referred to as the 'offspring of man', Mary never pondered over why the prophesy said 'offspring of woman'.

Mary was unaware that she was the 'woman' mentioned four thousand years ago when God spoke of the 'offspring of 'woman' and that she was 'the virgin' whom prophet Isaiah spoke of seven hundred and fifty years ago as 'the virgin' who 'will conceive and give birth to a son'. She did not see that God foretold these things about her. God had foreseen this rare and wonderful occasion as a miraculous event in history and He was preparing Mary for that moment. However, Mary who was a simple, humble, uneducated peasant girl from the insignificant village of Nazareth was unable to comprehend this!

Even though she did not know any of these, she noted one thing that the angel spoke to her:

“And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.”
Luke 1 : 36, 37

“For nothing will be impossible with God” – this account from the messenger of God strengthened her faith. The angel not only answered her questions on how this would be, but strengthened her faith; partly by the

instance of her cousin Elisabeth, and partly by explaining the infinitely powerful nature of God. Thus, all her questions and doubts were cleared.

Because of that, she was able to consider all the disgrace, embarrassments, humiliation and contempt that she was likely to face as insignificant. Without any delay, she gave her consent in simple and sublime words:

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered.

"May your word to me be fulfilled." Luke 1 : 38

Mary received God's grace and favour. She received Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world!

The Virgin Mary listened to and accepted the Word of God spoken to her. She did not think about the consequences of accepting the Word of God. She was not married yet. Nevertheless, she was not afraid of the scandals and the slander that awaited her when everyone eventually came to know that she was already pregnant before her marriage. Mary willingly submitted herself to God's plan. As a result, she was able to say with great peace and confidence:

"From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name."

Luke 1 : 48 - 49

Dear friend, are you willing to accept the Word of God with full faith? Can you open your heart to receive Christ? If so, you will be able to acquire the great fortune

admired by generations.

Secondly, Noah was also a person who received the grace of God.

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD..... Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”

Genesis 6 : 8, 9 (KJV)

Noah received the Word of God. He obeyed the Word of God about the disasters that were going to befall earth and its inhabitants. He listened to the Word of God about how to escape and to be saved. When warned about things not yet seen, in Godly fear, he built an ark to save his family.

God said to Noah that He was going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life on earth. He told Noah that everything on earth would perish. Noah was warned about the great calamity.

Until then God had not yet sent rain to water the earth. “But streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.”

Genesis 2 : 6

Noah received the Word of God about something that had never happened on earth before. No one had ever seen rain before. The author of Epistle to Hebrews says:

“By faith Noah, when warned about things not

prepared to liberate us from eternal punishment.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3 : 16

If we can be in Christ, who is the ark of salvation in this time of God's grace, then at the time of judgment we can avoid being regretful, embarrassed, dejected or forsaken. The ark of grace is kept fully open right now. The Holy Bosom of Christ has been pierced open. Any sinner can be saved now!

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body...”

Hebrews 10: 19, 20

If we inherit Christ today and accept the salvation that Christ gained for us through His death on the cross, we can escape from eternal condemnation.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8 : 1

When speaking of His second coming Jesus said:

“And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in

marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”
Luke 17:26,27

Noah built an ark by the grace he received from God. Leaving the door of the ark open, Noah continued preaching for one hundred and twenty years. Savage creatures entered the ark. Wild animals also entered the ark. However, man who prides in his unique intellect, wisdom and free will, man who boasts of himself as civilized, refused to believe and stayed away. Noah preached to people, but not one person entered whereas many animals were able to enter!

Even today, the situation has not changed. Those who have the nature of savage and untamed animals repent promptly and inherit salvation. Drunkards who cruelly beat and abused their wives and children and terrorised their own households and neighbourhoods, now give up sins and lead a blessed life!

Those who were a nightmare to their own parents and family; those who wasted everything they had by gambling and card games, those who hated their families and constantly brought tears to parents and relatives; they all now experience the blessedness and prosperity of a new life in Christ. Those who committed crimes like robbery and murder, those who were entrapped in underworld gang crimes, those who became hired assassins, have now undergone repentance and entered

into the ark, which is Christ and are now leading a peaceful life!

Women who broke apart other families and left many in tears and misery by leaving their own husbands and children to seduce other men have now surrendered their lives in front of Christ's love on the cross and experience true inner healing!

Those men who led a reckless life by watching pornography, those who stealthily drugged girls with marijuana at ice-cream parlours to make pornographic films of them, those who used such sinful activities to make illegal profit, despite ruining their own lives and wrecking families – even these people now believe in the amazing power of the holy blood of Jesus shed on the cross and thus lead a peaceful life!

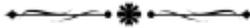
Those who tampered with account books by writing false accounts, those who committed tax evasion and frauds; men who led extravagant lives through corruption and accepting bribes, now lead a new life and enjoy the spiritual elation and bliss of eternal life!

Those who were the puppets of corrupt political leaders, supportive of their commands their injustice and lawlessness, those who thus become aimless partakers in the crimes of such people, leading a life of insanity – now experience holiness through the cleansing holy blood of Jesus Christ and delight in true worship and praise!

Many hired themselves out as slaves to foreign masters; working in the fields tending to the pigs, trying in vain to fill their stomachs with the husks that the pigs ate! Yet with their hunger unsatisfied, they have come to their senses and returned to their own father's house - several prodigal sons are now enjoying feasts at their own father's table!

But, you older son, who worked hard in the fields until now – why are you angry and not willing to come in to the feast? Why are you staying outside the gates with a questioning attitude? Why do you not go into the house and join in your father's happiness? Why are you standing there with resentment in your heart and a rebellious spirit, blaming and criticizing?

Accept Christ right now as your Saviour before it is too late. Please come into the house. Refresh the heart of your heavenly Father. Please do not let this time of grace go in vain. Say to Jesus Christ who shed His blameless blood for you: Oh Lord, as you died for me, from today I will be a new creation and live for you.



Chapter 10

Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” Zechariah 4 : 6, 7 (ESV)

We contemplated some of the fortunate people who received God's grace in the previous chapters.

One: The Virgin Mary received God's grace – she received Jesus Christ.

Two: Noah received God's grace – He received the Word of God.

Three: Joseph received God's grace.

“The LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden.” Genesis 39 : 21

The LORD was with Joseph and gave him grace.

Joseph received grace – he gained victory over sin!

Joseph's life was a life drowned in tears. Joseph's

life was also a life of miracles. Joseph's life was one of God's divine protection, safeguard and providence.

His mother Rachel died while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. Joseph could never forget the memories of his father Jacob holding the new-born Benjamin and weeping in sadness over the death of his wife Rachel.

Joseph often shed tears remembering how his mother Rachel was hastily buried in the midst of their journey, at the same place she died on the road to Ephrath near Bethlehem. A son who lost his mother! A son who longed for his mother's love and affection! The times in his life when his mind simply refused to believe the stark painful reality that he would never again be able to hold onto his mother or experience her tender love!

Joseph would often watch tearfully as his elder brothers were cuddled and nurtured by their mother. He would watch through the corner of his eyes, with deep sorrow in his heart that his own mother was not alive to cuddle him! He used to comfort himself and grew up with the pain of motherly love being denied to him.

However, Joseph was not sure why his elder brothers hated him. He did not consider himself to have any traits or qualities worthy of jealousy. Being a motherless son, his father Jacob was naturally fond of Joseph due to no fault of his own. Nevertheless, his brothers strongly despised him. Several accounts of this

hatred can be seen in Genesis chapter 37.

“They hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.” Genesis 37 : 4

“They hated him all the more.” Genesis 37 : 5

“And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.”

Genesis 37 : 8

“His brothers were jealous of him.”

Genesis 37 : 11

When Joseph went to visit his brothers who were grazing their flocks, to enquire of their welfare, they plotted against him and made plans to kill him. They threw him into an empty pit in the wilderness.

Later when Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites. Despite Joseph's plea for compassion and his unceasing cries, he was helpless when they sold him into slavery for a price of twenty silver pieces.

Irrespective of all of these, Joseph did not forget God. He did not question God about the frequent disasters that happened in his life. Joseph held no resentments in his heart against God. He earnestly relied on the omnipotent, the most gracious and the ever-merciful God with the ardent hope that a new glorious day will dawn in his life after the days of darkness.

Satan did not give up or despair when his attempts

to physically murder Joseph failed. Shamelessly, Satan instead conspired to devise new traps and cunning schemes to crush Joseph spiritually. Satan used Potiphar's wife as an instrument for this.

Joseph was taken to Egypt, and an Egyptian named Potiphar, a court official of the Pharaoh and chief of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites. Joseph soon gained the favour of his new master. Satan, who waited for a convenient time, saw this as a good opportunity to make devious moves to set a trap for Joseph. We read in the scriptures:

“It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master's wife, “Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?” As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.” *Genesis 39: 7 - 10*

Satan who was neither ashamed nor embarrassed, instead of giving up was determined to set a snare for Joseph through this woman. Though she spoke to Joseph

day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. Joseph would not budge and he never consented to her wishes. She picked a moment when Potiphar was away and the servants were all out of the house. Grabbing his garment, she made a plea one last time: "Lie down with me!" He twisted free from her grasp, leaving his garment behind in her hands and fled outside!

Potiphar's wife wanted revenge when she realised that Joseph was never going to consent to her wishes. She began screaming; summoning the other household servants into the house and claimed that Joseph had attempted to rape her and that he had then run off when she screamed. She kept Joseph's garment and showed it as evidence, so that others believed her narration. When Potiphar came home, she presented the same lie to him and he put Joseph in prison.

From the pit of death to the pit of disaster – Satan was behind these and he worked through both of these situations. The pit of death was the empty well in the wilderness. The pit of disaster was the residence of Potiphar.

From there to the pit of prison – thrown into jail, locked up among prisoners. Joseph was thrown into prison on the basis of false accusation.

Potiphar's wife skilfully manipulated her husband and made deliberate allegations against Joseph:

"That Hebrew slave whom you brought to us

came in here to rape me. But when I started to scream, he left his outer garment with me and ran outside." Genesis 39: 17, 18 (ISV)

Thus, Joseph ended up in prison. God's grace was with him in the pit of death. God's grace was with him in the dangerous situation of severe temptations of sin. God's amazing grace was still with him when Joseph was suffering within the walls of the dark prison, without knowing if he would ever be released.

How would his fellow prisoners have greeted him?

One of them said: "Why could not he have just done his work; was there any need of him to cast his eyes on his master's wife"?

Another one mocked him saying: "His master trusted him and put everything in his care and he thought that this included his master's wife"!

Yet another one scorned him asking: "When you attempted to rape your master's wife, did she just scream or did she beat you as well?"

Another humiliating question followed; "Were you struck on your face alone? Or did you also get fully beaten up by the servants?"

Even when he was humiliated, treated with contempt and asked all these questions, he kept quiet and suffered in silence. Joseph must have endured severe agony to be so ill-treated, when he had done absolutely

nothing to deserve it! Yet, he remained silent with the firm belief that even if everyone misunderstood him, there was someone who knew everything and saw everything as it actually was.

Joseph's garment that was found in Potiphar's wife's room was clear evidence against him. It is reasonable and natural that anyone would easily believe that at Joseph's age it is very likely he did fall into sin, especially when such an opportune moment arises. Even if he tried telling the truth and tried to convince people, no one would have believed him!

Joseph consoled himself – 'time will prove the truth'. The truth can be crucified; the truth can be concealed or suppressed. Irrespective of all of this, the truth will the truth will always finally come into the light and the truth will resurrect!

Most esteemed child of God, can you look at the cross of Christ? The ultimate manifestation of God's grace – He is suffering on the cross as a criminal! He was counted as one among the wicked criminals, hung between them and condemned to death. He was perfect, sinless, holy, divine, and unblemished in life! Yet, he had to suffer just as a vicious, brutal scoundrel, helplessly and in silence.

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers

is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment, he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.”

Isaiah 53 : 7 – 9

“In his humiliation, he was deprived of justice.”

Acts 8 : 33

Joseph being condemned and put in prison is a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ. Joseph was innocent while he was put in prison, just as Jesus was innocent but was counted among with transgressors. However, even in prison God's grace was with Joseph.

“But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

Genesis 39 : 21 (ESV)

Friend, if you are to gain the favour or mercy of prominent people, you need God's grace. God's grace is essential, if cruel and callous people are to show pity and mercy on you.

Let us pray to God to bestow His grace on us at all times. Let us plead to Him – Oh Lord, let your gracious hands of grace never be taken away from me.

Joseph was confined to prison for thirteen years. He suffered in the prison dungeons from the young age of seventeen until the age of thirty!

During his imprisonment, there was an occasion when he thought he had a sliver of hope, a faint beam of light! Among his fellow prisoners, there were two men - the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt. Both of them had a dream on the same night, and each dream had a different meaning of its own. Joseph interpreted the dreams for both of them. Joseph told the baker that he would be killed within three days and he told the cupbearer that the Pharaoh would restore him to his former position within three days.

Joseph very earnestly asked the cupbearer to keep him in mind, remember him and do him a favour when he would be restored to his former position:

“But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.”

Genesis 40 : 14, 15

Son, men may not always show you favour! We read as follows:

“The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.”

Genesis 40 : 23

Those who have benefitted by your help might forget you. Those, towards whom you looked up hopefully for help, might withdraw their hands. Those whom you waited expectantly for, might walk away without noticing, ignoring you as if they never saw you. Those who sought help from your own hands might raise their hands against you. Remember this in such instances:

"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

Romans 8 : 31- 36

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is

in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8 : 37- 39

Even when the chief cupbearer forgot, eternal God did not forget Joseph. From prison to palace! And from palace to paradise! God uplifts! Righteous God exalted Joseph from the prison to palace and eventually from the palace to paradise.

Child of God, the proprietor of all glory promises to bestow on you the same grace that stayed with Joseph and gave him victory over sin and gave him a holy life. Do you have a desire for this grace? If so, please tell Christ: Oh Lord, from today I am yours, I am your possession. Oh saviour, who suffered on the cross for me, bearing all my sins, from today I am your slave.



Chapter 11

“David, who enjoyed God's favour and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.” Acts 7 : 46

David found favour with God and received God's grace.

In the previous chapters, we contemplated that the Virgin Mary received God's grace, Noah received God's grace and that Joseph received God's grace.

David also received God's grace. He asked for the privilege of building a permanent temple for God. Solomon says:

“My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, 'You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood--he is the one who will build the temple for my Name.’”

1 Kings 8 : 17 - 19, 2 Chronicles 6 : 7 - 9

After completing the construction of the temple,

Solomon's prayer, at the dedication of the temple is as follows:

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" 1 Kings 8 : 27, 2 Chronicles 6 : 18

We read about David's strong desire to build a temple for God in the scriptures. David wanted to build this temple to honour the Name of the Lord.

After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet:

"Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent."
2 Samuel 7 : 2, 1 Chronicles 17 : 1

God appreciated and accepted David's wish and his eagerness to perform it.

"Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?" Acts 7 : 49, 50

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" 1 Corinthians 3 : 16

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you

have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies.”

1 Corinthians 6 : 19

The desire and eagerness to build God's temple is occurs by God's grace. David received God's grace!

Friend, have you devoted and assigned your heart to be a temple for Christ? Do you have a desire for Christ to reign in your heart just as the Ark of the Covenant, which contains the covenant that the LORD made with the people of Israel, was kept in the temple Solomon built for God? Are you willing to place Christ's throne in your heart?

David received God's grace and he made extensive preparations for the great work of building God's temple.

“So David gave orders to assemble the foreigners residing in Israel, and from among them he appointed stonecutters to prepare dressed stone for building the house of God. 3 He provided a large amount of iron to make nails for the doors of the gateways and for the fittings, and more bronze than could be weighed.”

1 Chronicles 22 : 2, 3

We can read about this in 1 Chronicles, chapter 22:

David said:

"My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the Lord should be

*of great magnificence and fame and splendour
in the sight of all the nations."*

1 Chronicles 22 : 5

Most esteemed child of God, is your life of great magnificence, fame and splendour in the sight of all the nations?

David collected vast amounts of building materials before his death. Just as David made ample and extensive preparations to build God's temple, have you made preparations? Are you living with the realisation and seriousness that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

David took great pains to collect for the temple of the Lord, four thousand tons of gold, forty thousand tons of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood and stone.

"I have worked hard to provide materials for building the Temple of the LORD--nearly 4,000 tons of gold, 40,000 tons of silver, and so much iron and bronze that it cannot be weighed. I have also gathered timber and stone for the walls, though you may need to add more."

1 Chronicles 22 : 14, 1 Chronicles 29 : 1 - 10

David worked enthusiastically for the Lord's house, putting forth his best effort, doing so for the Lord's glory, not his own. His zeal, diligent preparation and the enormous cost of constructing the magnificent temple of

the Lord gives us an insight into how much attentive, prudent and zealous we must be for God to dwell in us.

Dear child of God, Christ who gave David the grace to plan the construction of a temple for God, will give you grace to become a temple of God. One and only one thing is needed – you must have a fervent heartfelt thirst for that.

Five: Apostle Paul received God's grace.

“Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times, I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” *2 Corinthians 12 : 7 - 9*

St Paul mentions about a severe pain, which he refers to figuratively as 'a thorn in the flesh'. There is vagueness around the exact nature of his infirmity and it is still a mystery. Based on Galatians chapter 4, verses 14 & 15 there are some who have presumed that this could have been associated with his eyes.

“I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.” *Galatians 4 : 15*

Galatians chapter 6, verse 11 suggest a similar hypothesis.

“See what large letters I use as I write to you

with my own hand!"

Galatians 6 : 11

This verse indicates that his eyes could have been the seat of suffering.

Sir William Ramsay, a New Testament scholar identified and contended at length that Paul suffered from some form of recurrent malarial fever.

Paul pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away from him. We read that each time the Saviour replied – 'my grace is all you need.'

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

2 Corinthians 12 : 9

God's grace is bigger than anything else is. The biggest fortune, even better than the healing of a sickness, is to have the power of His grace abiding in our lives - grace that is enough to enlighten and enliven us, sufficient to strengthen and comfort us in all afflictions and distresses.

To lead a life of blindness, the state of not having eyesight is an excruciating experience! "Paradise Lost" is an epic poem written by the 17th-century English poet John Milton. He wrote this poem at the age of forty-four after he became blind. This major biblical epic describes the magnificent glory of God!

Frances Jane Crosby, known widely as Fanny Crosby was a lyricist, prolific hymn writer and composer. She lived a full life and died at the age of ninety-five having

penned more than 8,000 hymns and gospel songs, despite being blind from shortly after birth. Moreover, each of her poems epitomizes her dignified outlook and the rich experiences of a deep Christian life. God's grace was with her!

Once an educated young man was traveling by train. A tired elderly gentleman with a slightly unsteady gait, boarded the train at one station. This old man stooped slightly to one side, he had a shoulder bag on one side and a Bible in his hand. The old man sat on a seat opposite to this young man, opened his Bible and started reading.

This young man was curious to find out what the old man was reading and asked him; 'what are you reading'?

The old man replied; 'I am reading the Holy Bible'. He then continued to read.

The young man laughed mockingly at him and said - 'Are you such a fool? Even though science has advanced so rapidly and has rendered the beliefs of religion irrelevant, are you still reading this outdated book'?

The old man did not reply and continued reading the Bible silently. The young man went on scorning and ridiculing the Bible. As the train was approaching the station this young man who had to get down there, impatiently asked the old man – 'You are not even uttering a word even after hearing everything I spoke! May I ask what your name is?'

The old man replied; 'My name is Louis Pasteur'.

The young man was startled. He stood up, apologised to the old man and said; 'Please forgive my ignorance'.

Louis Pasteur was the Director of Pasteur Institute of Scientific Research. He was a leading chemist and a giant of microbiology who invented the rabies vaccine. Louis Pasteur was a believer in Christ and a pious man. God's grace was with him. That is why he was unaffected, had no resentments and remained calm and composed even when the young man kept on ridiculing him.

Louis Pasteur was affected by occasional bouts of fits and he was partially paralysed down the left side of his body, which severely impaired his health. This famous French scientist is best known to the public for his invention of the technique of treating milk and wine to stop bacterial contamination, a process now called pasteurization. His ill health did not discourage him nor dampen his spiritual work or scientific endeavours. God's grace was with him.

David Brainerd was a famous American missionary whose short life was beset by many difficulties. Robert Murray was another blessed evangelist. Both of them died at a very young age due to lung related diseases. Even when they were suffering from diseases, it did not hold them back or lead them to withdraw them from performing their Christian duties because of God's grace that was with them.

Ludwig van Beethoven was a very talented German composer and pianist. In his late twenty's his hearing began to deteriorate, and later on, he became almost completely deaf. He did not feel dejected but started to compose many admired works. He came to be known as a superior musical figure who produced most original, most sublime, and most profound musical compositions.

Adoniram Judson, known as “the Apostle of Burma” was a heroic missionary who stood steadfast in the midst of the storms that battered his life. He endured horrible physical suffering for the sake of the Gospel and even when his wife and baby died, he never succumbed to despair. He depended on God's grace alone and continued his missionary work in Burma, which resulted in seven thousand converts in Burma. Judson's work gave rise to 63 churches and 163 missionaries in Burma!

“Only one life, it will soon be past,

Only what's done for Christ will last.”

These lines are from the poem 'Only One Life' by C.T. Studd, a famous British cricketer, who became a missionary and went to China for missionary work. After ten years in China, ill health and the adverse climate forced Studd to return to England. He returned from China suffering from tuberculosis and was just skin and bones. One day, an unusual poster in the church, declaring 'Cannibals Want Missionaries!', caught Studd's attention.

He looked down at his own skinny body, smiled and

said: "Would the flesh on this body be enough for the cannibals?"

Even though his doctors did not permit him to go because of ill health, Studd set out on his greatest missionary work to Africa. God's grace was with him!

Virgin Mary received God's grace – She became the mother of Jesus Christ.

Noah received God's grace – Word of God. He received advance warning from God about the imminent punishment that was to befall earth.

Joseph received God's grace – He attained victory over sin.

David received God's grace – He organised the construction of the Temple.

Paul received God's grace – The very presence of God amidst all diseases.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

2 Corinthians 12 : 9

Beloved brother, most honoured sister, would you like to have this fullness of grace? Do you have a desire to lead a life henceforth as a witness of this amazing grace? Do you have a passion and eagerness to be saved by this grace and to attain eternal salvation? With the protection and care of this Holy grace, do you aspire to face illness, perils and hardships in your daily life with a smile on your

face?

If so, while you are reading these words, say to our merciful Lord:

Oh Lord, I admit that I am a sinner. Jesus, I believe that you bore the penalty for my sins by dying on the cross. I believe that you rose again and still live to give me peace. I believe that you will come again to call up the saints.

I now bid farewell to Satan and all the sin that he has claims on in my life. I accept Jesus Christ as my saviour and Lord. I surrender my body, mind and soul as a complete offering at Your holy feet. Please have mercy on me. I am making a pledge before you that, from today onwards, I will lead a new life as a new creation.

Let these Words of God's grace lead each one of you to eternal life!



OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

- | | |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. അമൃതയാര 2. ആന്തരികശാന്തി 3. ശുഭഭാവം 4. ശാന്തിതീരം 5. മധുമൊഴി 6. മുക്തിമാർഗ്ഗം 7. നിത്യവിശ്രാന്തി 8. നിരപര 9. ജയജീവിതം 10. വിശ്വാസജീവിതം 11. വാടാമലർ 12. ദിവ്യാരാധന 13. എനിക്ക് കുടിപ്പാൻ തരുമോ? 14. നീതിമാനാകുന്നതെങ്ങനെ? 15. തുറന്നവാതിൽ 16. വരവും ചിലവും 17. ദൈവരാജ്യം 18. AMRUTHADHARA 19. ഓർത്തുകൊൾവിൻ 20. ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ 21. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ് 22. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാവ്യാപാരം 23. പരിശുദ്ധാത്മാക്കൾ 24. ഉത്തമഗീതം 25. സങ്കേത നഗരങ്ങൾ 26. മരുഭൂമിയിലെ നീർപ്പൊയ്ക 27. യോന 28. പച്ചവെള്ളം വീഞ്ഞാക്കി | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 29. കൈരീത്തിന്റെ വക്കിൽ 30. എത്രത്തോളം രണ്ടുതോണിയിൽ? 31. ഏലിയാവിന്റെ ദൈവം എവിടെ? 32. പ്രവാചകനല്ല
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Ph : 0484 -2689489, 9142 303096

2nd Saturday	:	9.00 am - 2.00 p.m
2nd Sunday (Followed by 2nd Saturday)	:	12.30 pm - 5.00 pm
3rd Sunday	:	12.30 pm - 5.00 pm
Mondays	:	6.00 pm - 8.00 pm
Fridays (Bible Class)	:	6.00 pm - 8.00 pm
1st Tuesday (Ladies Meeting)	:	9.00 am - 12.45 pm
1st & 3rd Wednesdays (Young Men's Meet)	:	6.30 pm - 9.00 pm