

Insights

**(Two Score and Ten
Devotional Thoughts)**

Bro. Prakash V. Mathew

Insights

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

Foreword

An Appreciation

Preface

1. 'The Lord reigns'
2. What do we search for?
3. Living by Faith
4. A beautiful finish!
5. Accountable to God
6. Target
7. Haste is Waste!
8. Presence Vs Performance
9. Enlightened mind
10. Healing for the land!
11. Fool or Faithful?
12. Loneliness or Solitude
13. 'Solitary Reaper'
14. Time
15. Lord, only you!
16. Making Melody
17. God is Light
18. Fruitful field
19. Hopeful life
20. Eloquent silence
21. Incense of Prayer
22. Revive and rejoice

23. Ask, seek, knock!
24. “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star!”
25. ‘No Cross, no crown’
26. Just one thing!
27. “Brevity is the Soul of wit”
28. Religious Vs Spiritual
29. Naaman’s little maid
30. Honourable
31. Graceful Speech
32. Fountain of tears
33. Powerful Word
34. “Be strong”
35. Incorruptible Crown
36. All Glory is fleeting
37. Fear Ye Not!
38. ‘Courageous, Consistent and compassionate’
39. Walls never grow!
40. Real Prosperity
41. LORD looked!
42. Covid-19
43. Inherit Blessing
44. Miserable Comforters!
45. Great Gulf..!!
46. Towards a marvelous light
47. Model Christian Life
48. Enduring!
49. Heavenly life
50. We are Special

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This book is the second part of ‘Just a Prelude’ – published few years ago. It was the result of some meditation on simple subjects. As the title prints out, it was just a spark to continue self study on these topics. It is my sincere prayer that it will encourage readers to think and continue in a close relationship with the Lord.

Let me express my sincere thanks to Dr. C.T. Luiskutty for taking the pains of going through the manuscript and writing a forward for the book. He did the same for my earlier book too. I am also grateful to Prof. Mathew P. Thomas, Dr. James George and Dr. D. Joshua for writing reviews.

My I express my indebtedness to ICPF Board of Publications for taking the responsibility for the publication and distribution of the book. I’m thankful to Mr. Aji A.S. for doing the type setting & designing and Ebenezer Printers for Printing the book. I remember with thanks my wife mercy for her support, all other friends in ICPF for their encouragement. I don’t claim that the content is rich with deep insights. It’s Just a Prelude for deeper spiritual pursuit. The text quoted from the Word of God itself can ignite thoughts for meditation.

Bro. Prakash V. Mathew

FOREWORD

“**Insights**” is a compilation of the monthly thoughts and meditations published by Prakash Mathew sir in the ICPF publication ‘**Campus Counsellor**’. These very interesting biblical meditations have been a regular feature of campus counsellor for almost 10 years now, dispersing the word of God to the readers in the most elegant and resourceful manner, spun together flawlessly in simple yet insightful language , giving the reader the encouragement and the wisdom needed for the entire year, month after month. It is truly with great pride that the ICPF board of publication has now compiled the work into a single book for the benefit of the readers.

Prakash Mathew sir has been a very valuable asset to the ICPF family for almost 4 decades now, his experience as a Teacher and an education officer in his previous career gave him valuable insights into the minds of students as well as young adults who are the focus of the entire operation of the ICPF Organization. He has also made enormously valuable contributions in various positions in the organization as a student counsellor, an administrator, a teacher of the word of God and a prolific writer in the various publications of ICPF.

The ICPF family truly owes him an enormous debt of gratitude for dedicating a large portion of his life for the ICPF organization and its committed goals of evangelising the Universities and schools in Kerala, India and across the world.

His commitment to Christian values and biblical holiness has been attested by everyone who has worked with him as much as his friendly nature and humble demeanor being the hallmarks of his affable personality. The depth of his understanding of the Bible and its application in daily life of the believer is truly revealed in these writings, the attention to detail and the conformity to Christian first principles have been faithfully adhered to.

I am certain that this book will be a tremendous blessing for the ICPF family, patrons, young students and any casual reader. And it will certainly be a very good resource for meditation, biblical study and quiet time that every believer should find time for in his busy schedule.

In the name of the Triune God, I bless this book, the writer and all the readers for generations to come! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of us! Amen.

Prof. Mathew P. Thomas

FOREWORD

I am glad another collection of Bro. Prakash V. Mathew's short essays is being published as a book. As in the earlier book, *Just A Prelude*, the essays are very insightful and thought provoking. They are spiritually uplifting, as well as a commentary on the condition of the present spiritual world.

The author points his finger at the emphasis on performance rather than a thirst for God's presence - on the formality in preplanned programme rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to move at His will. Instead of allowing the melody of meaningful music to move our spirit we are content with emotional ecstasy associated with a lot of noise. The leaders and the followers should pay attention to the author's words, "Very often pseudo spirituality is worse than no spirituality."

Regardless of our age we should choose to follow the example of Caleb who was brave enough to walk "the less travelled road" and find satisfaction in knowing, "And that has made all the difference."

As a man of letters the author has made reference to the writings of renowned authors such as Wordsworth, Frost, Chekhov and Tagore. Such reminders are heartwarming in a world that overemphasizes pragmatism and materialism.

This will be a great blessing to the reading community that appreciates good writing.

Dr. C.T. Luiskutty
Vice President, ICPF

FOREWORD

Bro. Prakash V. Mathew is a man of literature; had been a teacher in the Government sector in the State of Kerala, India, from which he retired as educational officer. He is truly a sincere friend to friends and enemies (if he has any!!) alike and faithful to the core, because he is a man of God!!. The Inter Collegiate Prayer Fellowship (ICPF) is privileged to have him as the Administrative Secretary, since his retirement from government service.

Our friendship must be about three decades old and in the course of these times, I had several opportunities to admire his literary knowledge and his flair for writing both in Malayalam and English, as well. I am proud to state that Bro. Prakash has been groomed as a Christian disciple through ICPF prayer groups that used to be conducted at Prof. Mathew P. Thomas's house during his college days. ICPF Charalmount camps of the seventies had significantly impacted him as a young man which certainly helped him in deciding for a career wherein, he would be able to impact young lives. He is always a man of few words, but whatever he speaks in private or public, always carries thoughtful substance and values. But his writings are even more vocal and thought provoking (Paulian traits!!).

Bro. Prakash Mathew is a man for whom meditating God's word daily, is a way of life!! He also has the wise habit of jotting down the divinely inspired thoughts that emerges every day from the word of God. A previous book that he authored and published

by ICPF, named “Just a prelude”, was the product of such thoughts. This new book, named as “Insights” is just a continuation of such thought processes obtained from the Bible by way of personal meditation and study. I have gone through some of these thoughts and found them to be of high quality in content and excellent in narration as well as presentation. I am confident that for a reader of these manuscripts, it is not going to be just an inspiring one, but will eventually transform the person to be a meditator of God’s word and thereby wiser (Ps 119:99)!!

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AN APPRECIATION

I am very glad to write a few lines of appreciation for the book entitled “**INSIGHTS**” by my beloved brother Prakash V. Mathew sir. He is a godly man with combination of character, content and charisma. Bacon the famous Essayist said long ago “reading makes a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man.” This is very much true of Prakash sir.

This book is a continuation of his previous book entitled “Just a Prelude.” The present small volume of fifty essays are inspiring, motivating and correcting based on Biblical value system. He has picked up gems from the Bible and pearls from the world of literature.

The best sentence in the book is found in the article entitled “Walls never grow and the words are given below.” “Two men looked out the prison bars, one saw the mud and the other saw the stars.” It is no exaggeration to say that this book is the best book that I read in the year 2020.

Dr. D. Joshua
Vice President, ICPF

PREFACE

As in my earlier book, “Just a prelude”, “Insights” also is the result of some random reflections. Although the topic of articles are different, the aim always is to reveal the incomparable beauty, strength and love of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Knowing Jesus more and more and a meaningful life, inbibing His glory should be the thirst of a disciple. It’s possible not by gathering more information alone, but by getting more revelation. Insight is in fact, seeing beyond limitations.

This book is to be released just after an epoch making year of pandemic, whereby the whole world might have realised the inefficiency of all human achievements. Yet, we need to learn much more from experiences, Nature and meditation. Reflections related to such subjects too have influenced writing of some articles in this book. But all such perceptions are co-related with biblical foundations. There are of course, personal evaluations too, linked with messages read or heard from reliable sources.

I’ve tried to be brief in communicating the ideas and present simple, practical thoughts. Nevertheless, the verses quoted from Bible in each chapter is meant for personal meditation. God’s Word is far above any philosophy, whatsoever..! It’s the only life transforming panacea for any illness... May the Lord bless us all with His rich compassion.

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1

‘The Lord reigns’

“The Lord Reigns. Let the earth rejoice” - (Psalms 97:1).

In Psalms 93, 97 and 99, the first verse is ‘The Lord reigns’. Apparently, we see that countries, offices and institutions are governed by rulers. But our God is over-ruling all. His sovereignty rules over all” Psalms 103:19.

Very often we forget this great truth and so get upset easily. I remember an occasion when I was personally reminded and encouraged by this verse. It was a time when I felt a bit troubled in mind. Moreover, few lines from the famous hymns; “Oh, What a friend we have in Jesus”, was brought to my memory, which gave great solace:

“Oh what peace we often forfeit

Oh what needles pain we bear,

All because we do not carry

Everything to God in Prayer.”

Our focus on hard times in life situations will be to solve

the immediate problem. It's quite natural also. But our heavenly Father already knows our needs and ready to provide them. Our focus should be on our relationship with Him. When we get our heart right with Him, everything else will be taken care of. In other words, when we watch out for our heart, He'll watch out for our basket and what not?

We need to learn that God's presence is our protection. There is no place more secure than that. Our focus shouldn't be on survival. Instead let's have an intense craving for his daily presence. Oh! Let us feel it and experience it daily.

We see that people usually want provisions, protection and may be salvation too. But very few crave in their hearts for His presence! We need His Holy presence to go through the perilous times in our life. Moses knew this well and pleaded for it. When we recognize His presence and believe that He reigns, our minds will certainly find comfort.

The greatest need of Godly saints right now, is not for any better blessing; but to seek a deeper craving for His presence in their hearts, homes and churches. Only God's spirit can create such a divine hunger deep within us!

2

What do we search for?

“If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shall thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God” – (Proverbs 2:4).

A good deal of thought, time, energy and effort goes into answering the above question. Scientists are always looking for answers on how to feed the hungry or making a better life situation. Yes, the primary necessities of life should be addressed anyway!

When Jesus was preaching in the hills of Judea so long ago, he stopped for a moment realizing that the enormous crowd listening to him were probably hungry. He knew that their physical as well as spiritual hunger should be addressed. In Mathew 14:15-21, we see Jesus feeding a crowd of more than 5000 people. Is it not amazing that there were twelve baskets full left over after feeding the crowd? Ya, He gives more than enough.

Yet, Jesus knew that food was not the main reason why the crowd gathered there. They came hungering for the spiritual

needs - to hear his words of love and counsels. They came also for healing and better God centered living, much of which is found in the Sermon on the Mount. True, many were seeking physical healing and peace. But some must have come because they had an empty feeling. They were not sure, what exactly was missing, but it was something that the material world couldn't provide.

Of course, we need food to eat. But the poor bleeding human heart needs its rightful nutrient such as peace and a priceless sense of loving kindness also. Apart from the above, people often hunger for acceptance and a sense of belonging. Moreover, human soul deeply hunger for an assurance of God's love. We see people who hunger for a better self image. They would try to satisfy this by shopping obsessively for just the right clothes, cosmetics and what not? They search for the right style that would camouflage their bodily flaws. Most of them aim to achieve an apparent perfect figure. A lot of time, effort and expense wasted on trying to achieve the image they think as perfect! Yet perfection is a mirage...!

Unless we turn our attention to the spiritual direction and glance the only perfect man – Jesus, all our searches and efforts will be futile. Let's search for eternal reality and perfect truth.

3

Living by Faith

“The just shall live by faith” - (Hebrew 10:38).

Living by faith is not just an easy walk! But, at the same time, it's just simply trusting our life and future fully into God's care and leading. Abraham was the example of someone who fully trusted God, a man who was convinced that the Lord would be faithful to fulfill his Word in spite of all evidence to the contrary!

We are expected to have such faith – never weak or wavering. Yet such faith is not gained easily. Even Abraham remained ‘Abram’ up to the time that his faith was tested and proved. In the last days God is going to reveal a remnant of faithful servants with unshakable faith. Their example of living by faith in perilous times will be a testimony to the whole world.

We see people and even some believers, running the ‘rat race’ to achieve more earthly treasures. They argue that it's essential to be prudent in planning. This world often considers such people as successful and clever!

The verse in Psalms 46:10 goes like this: “Cease striving and know that I'm God.”

There are many people who think that it's their striving and schemes that make things possible! It's really amazing to note that when we 'cease striving', God reveals himself in all perilous situations. Abram's walk of faith was not that easy. But it was neither so complicated too because he just obeyed God's call to yield his life completely. That's all.

Yes, when we step out to face the future in faith; not knowing what lies ahead and no preparation whatsoever; we say; "Lord I'm stepping out, putting all in your hands." In Genesis 12:10, "we read, the famine was grievous in the land." All Abram saw was withered, barren landscape. It's natural to think that he heard a wrong voice! We know, he left his comfort zone, by faith, never knowing what lay ahead. Real faith begins with a total abandonment of oneself into God's care. In the midst of our dire situation, God will reveal his faithfulness. When a storm hit the boat and the panic stricken disciples woke up Jesus, he merely spoke a word: 'peace' and the storm abruptly ended. But can we sleep through the storm as Jesus did? Only if we've faith to trust him thus far! Let's pray that the Lord shall direct our 'steps' and our 'stops' in His perfect way!

4

A beautiful finish!

“So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief” - (Hebrews 3:19).

Our spiritual life is compared to a race. As we know, there are many who begin the race well, but they don't finish it! Many drop out along the way. We see that it's the same with many Christians as well. It was just the same with Israelites who left Egypt, but never entered Canaan. They started well, but did not finish the race!

We are told to take a warning from the Israelites. In Hebrews 3, we understand that their unbelief was an impediment. In Jude, verse 5, also their unbelief is mentioned. In 1 Corinthians 10:5-6, we read that God was not well pleased with them; for they were laid low in the wilderness. These things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

We know that the Israelites started wonderfully, banging timbrels and praising God (Exodus 15). But, after two years, God was angry with them and it continued for the next thirty eight years! We see that it's true with many Christians who

start their life and ministry in an excellent way. But in the course of their race, they search for many earthly attractions; slowly they forget their call and miss the target. I remember a Godly man expressing his wish that he wants his last chapters of life to be excellent and beautiful!

The problem with those who set out from Egypt to Canaan was unbelief and craving for evil things. Yet God gave them food from heaven during all those 40 years. He gave them water to drink from rock and did many more miracles. When God does a miracle for you, that is no proof that He is happy with your life!

As Christians, we need to be careful about finishing the race. There are a lot of people who start a Marathon race well, but didn't finish it at all. We often say that 'well begun is half done'. But this is not quite applicable in a race. There is no prize in any race for starting well! Let's thank God for the good start, but we've to strive for a beautiful finish.

At the same time, a life time of struggle will not give us victory. It's just the grace of the Lord that helps us to move forward in the race. Struggling and striving depending on human efforts give us a picture of living under the law, when man tries to do something for God. When we cease our own craving, we'll enter a realm of peace with God. That's exactly the mystery of believing. Yet the finishing mark should be in our dream.....

5

Accountable to God

“There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” – (Hebrews 4:13).

This beautiful and wonderful expression “Him with whom we have to do” – means that the one person in all the universe, with whom we are most accountable is- God Himself. The more we recognize this truth, the more godly we become. People who always think about public opinion will be a slave to the opinion of others.

If you want to be a true child of God, you’ve to recognize that “it is only God with whom you’ve to do.” Thousands of people praising you and acknowledging you to be a godly person will not make you so. Likewise, thousands of persons branding you as unholy will not make you so. God is your judge.

There is a story about an artist who had his first public performance, which can be termed as a debut. There was an uproar of applause from the audience after the show. But the artist was not taken away by their praises. All the time, he was

looking at the face of his master sitting in the front row. He wanted only the approval of his master, who was competent to judge his performance. He believed that he was accountable to his master and nobody else!

Certificates from people are worthless. Moreover, we normally seek to attain a conduct certificate from the Head of an institution rather than a peon there! Even if he dares to offer a certificate, it has no value. You'd rather throw it away instead of keeping it as a record. Whether it's good or bad, opinions of people are worthless beyond a level. They know little about your inner intentions; motives and thought life. To a great extent, they judge according to your performance. Let's admit; "Lord, you are the only one with whom I have to do."

There is a day when all of us will stand before Him. We can't hide anything from Him. "But all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him."

We can pretend to be spiritual before others. But nobody can fool the one who knows everything. It's good to stand before Him every day, to whom who are most accountable to. If we admit our faults and shortcomings, He is gracious enough to help us. It'll naturally bring about a change in our life for the better.

6

Target

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” – (Philippians 3:14).

Here, Apostle Paul is comparing Christian life to a race, where the participant focus only on the finishing point. He says: “but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.” In any race, concentrating all attention on the goal is very important. At the same time, rules and regulations should be taken care of!

Abhilash Tomy was an adventurous young man from Kerala, who succeeded in voyaging around the world alone, in a boat, within 150 days! It was an awesome achievement which was made possible just because he could forget the land behind him. The vast ocean alone lay before his mind’s eye with all its enchanting charm!

In 2 Corinthians 4:18, we read: “while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal!” Yes, unless and until our attention and dreams are on the eternal target, there is every chance to miss

the final destination.

Mountaineering is just not an easy task, as we know. It needs good practice and rigorous training before any considerable accomplishment. But, more than anything else, it needs a dream. Long before the mountain climber finally touch his feet on the peak, he must have certainly dreamt of it many times. That kind of a passion is essential for any athlete for his race or expedition.

As we've heard, sin means missing the mark. It symbolizes all that deviates our attention from the target. Bible depicts very clearly how serious can be the after effects of sin. We need to look at Eden and Calvary to see what a heavy price it demanded!

So, in Hebrews 12:1, we are exhorted "therefore since we have so great a cloud of witness surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

May the Lord impart His grace and power to finish the race without missing the target.

7

Haste is Waste!

“Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him” - (Proverbs 29:20).

We live in a world which demands speed and haste in words and deeds. No one is willing to wait; let alone wait for the Lord! In Psalms 27:14, we read: “Wait on the Lord.” Most of us want to do things quickly. We’ve no patience to wait. In a sense, it shows our lack of faith!

“Slow me down” is a beautiful poem, in which the poet prays to slow down his pace. Of course, there is something more in life than increasing the speed! The word of God also very clearly warns us to be slow to speak, and quick to hear. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let everyman be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” – James 1:19.

Hasty decisions and actions are most often dangerous and can bring in untold miseries. It’s always better to wait on the Lord for a clear guidance in all walks of life. But, instead of depending on the Lord, we see things from our own perspective and rush into actions!

When we trust the Lord whole heartedly, we get the

confidence that ‘The Lord reigns.’ No matter, however complicated the situations are, our Lord is able to handle it perfectly well. Only thing is that we must have the willingness to wait and depend on His time and plan.

If on the other hand, when we act on our own, most probably the situations get more entangled. It will take more time to regain normalcy. That’s how haste leads to waste! Waste of time, energy and especially the final result!

When we watch the beautiful nature around us, we see that it’s the master plan of the creator that makes all things work together in an amazing manner. In Psalms 19:2, 3, we read: “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”

There is an assigned speed and rhythm to all things in the universe. There is no meaning in making any haste for anything whatsoever. There is a magnificent and majestic way of progress. Human interventions can only cause damage to many divine systems. Likewise when we acknowledge the divine control and leading in our life situations, everything turns out to be smooth and excellent in performance as well as outcome!

8

Presence Vs Performance

“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her” - (Luke 10:42).

When Jesus visited the house of Martha and Mary, it was Martha who received Him into their house. Moreover, she did many more things which are part of good hospitality. She served Him with all her heart. Jesus himself told Martha that she was careful and troubled about many things. All these are essential as part of receiving a guest. But Jesus did not give credit to the ‘performances’ of Martha. Instead, He appreciates Mary for choosing the ‘presence’ of the Lord.

In the spiritual realm, we see these two factors playing a vital role. Very often, even spiritually enlightened people go for perfection in the performance part of any programme. But, when priority is given to performance, we easily forget about the most important part, viz: ‘Presence of God.’ When we acknowledge His Kingship, we’ll certainly experience an inner rest. Then, there will be no haste, no excitement for perfection in performance. No matter, whether we make sure of all minor details of ‘performance’ and associated paraphernalia, we’ll give

priority for the ‘Presence’ of the Lord. When we recognize that He is Lord of all situations, we believe: “God performeth all things for me” – Psalms 57:2. (This is one of my favourite verses in the Book of Psalms).

In a sense, we are too much bound by formalities. Just examine any spiritual programme, where we care much about the order of events! If the order is beautifully in-tact, we are satisfied. We claim that the event was a great success and blessed!

In between the order of performance and its formalities, we lose the most essential presence! Why can’t we be a bit more informal and non-official in spiritual dealings? After all when we are before the great presence of the Lord, it must be most seriously viewed. May be, it’s good to have an order and decorum in all public situations. But, at the same time, there is no meaning in simply maintaining order for it’s own sake, and the majesty of the Lord is ignored!

With all our diplomacy, we make very little impact on our educational system, government and society. We need to seek the presence of God rather than all colourful performances. Our literature and media are polluted, let alone the godless generation. The presence of God is the only panacea for all ills and defects of the society. If we seek only the performance part in all spiritual gatherings and ignore the real presence of God, we make a grave mistake! As “Mary hath chosen that good part”, let us crave for His presence, leaving behind all performance tactics and acrobatics for comparatively insignificant matters!

9

Enlightened mind

**“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.....”
- (Ephesians 1:18).**

This is part of Paul’s prayer – It was his earnest wish that believers may know about the hope of their calling and also the riches of the glory of their inheritance in the saints. Normally, people pray for apparently urgent physical needs. But Paul knew that once our eyes of understanding is enlightened, we’ll be able to see all things in a different perspective.

As we know, mind is the seat of our emotions, will power, thoughts etc. In Isaiah 61:1, we read that binding up the broken hearted is part of redemption. We need a complete healing touch in our mind, because almost all events of our life leave a lasting impression. For good or bad, these imprints can influence our personality. Very often, we give importance to spirit and body and ignore mind. Mind also needs divine healing and enlightenment.

Once our mind is enlightened, we’ll perceive things from a different angle. It was by the excellency of the knowledge of Christ that Paul could count the pomp and pleasure of the earth

as dung (Philippians 3:8). When we go up in the sky, all the majestic buildings down below will appear to be very small! When we come to a closer understanding of all the so called excellent things of the world, viz. pleasures, positions, possessions and popularity, an enlightened mind will judge them as just trivial and fleeting!

We need to raise our head above ‘daily trifles’. As Paul exhorts, it’s better to think of ‘whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report (Philippians 4:8). Naturally, an enlightened mind will be sober. They will not make ‘much ado about nothing’. So, Paul’s prayer for enlightenment of the eyes of understanding is a plea for deeper Christian life.

We may be ashamed to evaluate how shallow we are when we go after all the different programmes and performances, without caring the least about Lord’s presence and guidance. We can experience the real rest for our mind and spirit, once we acknowledge the kingship of our Lord. No need of any unnecessary haste or worry! Our God will do everything beautiful in His time, much more better than we can ever conceive of. But we need an enlightened mind to wait for it.

10

Healing for the land!

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” – (2 Chronicles 7:14).

When we hear innumerable stories of suicide, murder, corruption, etc we feel the urgent need of healing for the land in which we live. It’s high time that we humble ourselves and pray for it! It’s God’s promise that He’ll heal the land, if we turn from our wicked ways and seek His face. In Daniel 4:17, we read: “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.” Very often, people in power are not just prudent, but ‘basest of men’ in their heart and schemes. Prayer alone can bring about lasting change in many complicated situations.

A close watch at all the complicated situations will tell us that the root cause of all turmoil is nothing but sin! So, forgiveness of sin by the creator is essential for healing of the land. Unless there is healing, we’ll witness all the horror that increases in all parts of the world.

‘WHO’ defines health not only as the absence of diseases, but also physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being. True healing can be experienced only through healing of the land. This can be achieved only if the inhabitants turn to God and repent of their sinful ways of living.

We know that the world is heading towards a catastrophe which is the reasonable result of sin. But if God’s people repent and turn to God, there will be a change for the good.

Prayer can bring God’s angels rushing to help us. Moreover, prayer can overthrow the plans of satan. Prayer in accordance with the will of God are never lost. God preserves them in His own record, and one day they will be answered. Let’s hold on to the promise of healing for the land and obey what’s expected from our side. Anyway, the mystery of unseen spirit world is a reality!

11

Fool or Faithful?

“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then where shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” - (Luke 12:20).

In Bible, we see some people being addressed as faithful. Those people may not be very wise according to the standards of the world. But they were sincere and faithful to the Master. In the text quoted above, we see a very wise and hardworking man. But why should he be called as a fool? It is not considered a grave mistake to be a wealthy man as long as his riches were legitimately earned. As we know, the last supper was arranged in a large upper room furnished (Luke 22:12). Jesus never despised that facility.

Abraham was known to be a man with much earthly belongings! Here, in the passage mentioned above, we understand that the man was a very good agriculturalist. And that's something to be appreciated. We also note that this farmer was a very hard working man. That was one of the reasons why he had a good harvest. Jesus's disciples were all hardworking people. Hard work is really a commendable quality. This man did his farming in a very systematic manner. Anything planned in the proper way will yield better result.

He planned to extend his barn to keep more fruits and goods, which shows his pre-planning techniques. A minute of planning can save an hour in execution. All what we understand about this man till this part needs our applause.

If so, the question remains: “Is there a fool in this story?” Of course there is a fool, because it was Jesus who called him a fool. Jesus never hesitated to call names like: son of serpent, Satan, hypocrites, whited sepulchers, blind guides, generation of vipers etc. While we notice only the outer appearances, utterances and performances, God sees the inner motives and judges accordingly.

In this story, we see a man talking to himself as if in a soliloque. First of all, we see that this man was self centered. God was not seen anywhere in his plans and life. Although he was blessed in many aspects, he was not giving glory to God. Secondly, he thought that all his wealth was for him alone. He was not ready to share it. Thirdly, his epicurean philosophy: ‘eat, drink and be merry’ shows that he was least concerned about eternity. Instead, self centeredness, unwillingness to share blessings and negligence of eternal life were his grave mistakes. People around him might have looked up to him as a fortunate man. But Jesus called him a fool. Let’s examine our life in the light of the story of this wealthy man!

12

Loneliness or Solitude

“Be still and know that I’m God” - (Psalms 46:10).

In His poem ‘Daffodils’, William Wordsworth mentions the ‘bliss of solitude’. But usually loneliness is considered a curse. Old age is often connected with loneliness. Most often, senior citizens are left alone due to many reasons. After an eventful period of life, they stay back, weak and worried. Quite often we see them pondering over the past, left alone in the hermitage of hopelessness! But there are certainly some elderly people who grasp the necessity of being alone and get along happily.

In fact, there are two sides of being alone. Loneliness is an intense inner state of mind. May be there are times, when we love to be alone. For example, alone in meditation and alone with God are deliberate choices for contemplation. But loneliness can be really painful, which may lead to dejection; whereas ‘solitude’ denotes the glory of being alone.

In Psalms 46:10, we are exhorted to be still. That means, we can move from pain and disappointment of loneliness to the glory of solitude! It is good to learn the art of silence and

get to know God more intimately. Solitude is an excellent time to know the beautiful presence of God.

If presence of God is our greatest need, we'll crave for it and forget all other matters around. In that sense, times of loneliness are golden opportunities to draw near to God. If you feel that you are alone and dejected due to generation gap or whatsoever, practice the art of golden solitude. 'Far from the madding crowd' is a better occasion for deep spiritual awakening.

People find it difficult to be left alone. Rejection and dejection go together. But these problems can be turned to projects, once we learn to be alone with God. Those who heard the still small voice of God were those who found time to be alone with Him. We'll feel the presence of God and its reality deeply once our loneliness give way to fellowship with God. He'll certainly brighten our life with His presence and we'll experience the glory of solitude as long as we are determined to seek His fellowship.

13

‘Solitary Reaper’

“And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day” - (Genesis 32:24).

Solitude has exquisite charm, if it is properly exploited. Great accomplishments are achieved when left alone. Here, in the text quoted above, we see that Jacob was left alone. Rather he preferred to be alone for the glorious encounter with God. Being left alone may not be a welcome condition, if not a deliberate choice!

‘Solitary reaper’ is a beautiful poem by William Wordsworth. Composed of thirty two lines and divided into four stanzas, this poem is dominated by one central figure – a girl standing alone in the field, harvesting grain. It is her solitude that sets her apart.

In spiritual harvest also, there are certain people who stand alone and proceed with their mission, not conforming with the standards of the world. The deliberate choice of Jacob to be alone was really a turning point in his life. Marvelous achievements in life are made possible only when we take a stand alone. Growing in a group is different from harvesting alone!

The girl in the poem is reaping and singing by herself. Second stanza of the poem is a list of things that cannot equal the beauty of the girl's singing. Yes, worldly standards cannot match with the mission we undertake. The poet could not understand the words being sung. He only guesses the theme. Yet, the music stayed in his heart, as he continued up the hill.

Brother Jake Thomas, class mate and friend of me, who took a road less travelled by ordinary missionaries stands apart. I think, he is among the group of very rare saints. Just like the song of the solitary reaper, many people couldn't comprehend the meaning of the song of this saint too. But for all those who closely watch him, the music stay in their hearts. Dr. Kiri Vyasani from Tamil Nadu is another example, who took Ph.d (Linguistics) in 1969, and still use only bicycle as his vehicle for travel!

'Solitary reapers' are there in our society who are less acknowledged and appreciated by majority. But, they move forward with a vision in their mind and a song in their heart. 'Single in the field' is not an easy choice. "Stop there, or gently pass" – is a good advice for those who may not understand the song of the solitary reaper!

14

Time

“Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time” - (Colossians.4:5).

“Time and tide waits for none” is a common saying which highlights the value of time. All the people irrespective of their ability, health or wealth, share same amount of time. There is no disparity in the availability of time. But, using this precious gift wisely is a matter of great importance.

‘Catch time by the forelock’ is a maxim, which describes the necessity of using time judiciously! Time management is a popular subject in the secular sphere also. In Ephesians 5:16, we notice the usage - ‘redeeming time’-which is very meaningful!

‘Redeeming time’ - can be interpreted as - ‘making most of the opportunity’. In Bible, we see the history of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David and others who used their time fruitfully and differently after their real confrontation with God. Their priorities in life changed altogether!

In the life of Paul also, after his conversion, there was a sea-change in his use of time, let alone his priorities in life.

Even the time he spent in jail were used to write several epistles, which the church consider as a great treasure. That was part of 'making most of the opportunity' - practical in his own life.

In Psalms 90, we see the prayer of Moses: "Teach me to number our days." He knew that it's good to calculate life span in days rather than in years! For an average human being, it's only the matter of below 25,000 days for active work on the face of the earth.

As King Solomon observed, 'Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Let's be prudent enough to plan and progress in life, only according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Every moment is precious!

One thing is quite certain, for a child of God. As we are in His hands and under His protection, our times are scheduled and destined by our Lord. Nobody can change it. We are inscribed on His palms. Let's submit ourselves and our time for His glory...

15

Lord, only you!

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God” - (Isaiah 50:10).

“I will cry unto God, most High, unto God who performeth all things for me” - In Psalms 57:2, we read this complete dependence on God. We come across certain people who are blessed with courage and strong will to face problems in life. But there are also people who are aware of their weakness..! They have the understanding that their intellect, skill or strength are not ever dependable. They look up to the Lord who ‘performeth all things for them’.

When we go through the dark alleys of life, we find no one to help and comfort us. Those whom we thought would be near us may turn a deaf ear to us! We’ll come to the eternal truth that God only is our refuge and strength! May be it’s God’s way to teach us this beautiful truth. Even if we walk through the dark valleys of life, where we find no trace of light, the Name of the Lord is a strong fortress! God can turn our obstacles into

opportunities.

“I do not ask to see the distant scene...

One step is enough for me...”

Yes. We need His guidance just for the next step. There is no need to worry about the long distant path ahead..!

Very often, when our relation with God is set right, everything else will be taken care of. When we are under dark shades, there is a tendency to find fault with people and circumstances. But, we’ll gradually realize the purpose behind all rejection and isolation. No matter how dear we were to our close associates, they will turn out to be strangers at times! The one who purchased us with his precious blood stands responsible at all crisis in our life time. His eternal love holds us and protects us till we reach His presence, full of glory! Oh! let us confess that we’ve only God for us and He alone we need..!!

16

Making Melody

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the spirit. Speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” - (Ephesians 5:18, 19).

We see a similar verse in Colossians 3:16 also. We are admonished to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. Of course, we need to Praise the Lord and sing loudly to magnify Him as we gather together for worship. At the same time, there is no meaning in just making loud noise without the spirit of worship. The trend today is shouting and screaming, without the discipline of silence. Everything turns out to be noisy these days, especially in spiritual meetings.

It seems that those who lead the worship in public meetings are under the assumption that they are expected to make loud, noisy utterances to wake up the crowd. Music and fast beats that suppress the words and meaning of songs are definitely not just according to the Word of God. How is it ever possible to ‘make melody’ in the heart with loud music and meaningless utterances? ‘Melody’ is a word which is not so easy to describe. It’s something more than just the sweetness or rhythm of music.

Anyway what we see in many spiritual programs under the name of worship brings no glory to the Name of the Lord. Instead, it aims at uplifting and promoting people. Many of those who appear on the stage and exhort people for worship, with the loud background sound of musical instruments, are not good models for young generation.

Stage performances often give a wrong message. Many people are enchanted by the charm of public appearances. World famous evangelist Dr. Billy Graham entered his eternal home on Feb 21st 2018. People all around the globe watched his burial service held on March 2nd. There was no one to make a show off. Speeches were brief, music melodious. Even the President of the country was not given any special prominence. Everything was in order. I think we need to follow such good examples, especially when the outside world watches us closely, through social media.

17

God is Light

“This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all” - (1 John 1:5).

Our God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. Moreover, He is holy and just. Above all, it is His compassion and love which made it possible for a fellowship with human race. In the text quoted above, we read that our God is light. Not only that, there is no darkness at all in Him. It's a great mystery that this great God, whom our human intellect can't easily comprehend, dwells in us!

In practical life, even as believers, we go through some dark phases of life. This may be disappointing, let alone the intense pain we bear! But, once we start praising the Lord in such devastating times of life, we'll see rays of light beaming through darkness! In Bible we see the unfailing promise of God: “I'll not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” We see it in Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5 etc. These unchanging promises are a great anchor for all who trust the Lord.

At the same time, in Deuteronomy 31:17, we see God's anger kindled against those who turned unto other gods. We see the strong declaration: "I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them." Always, promises are given with valid conditions. Although we notice the promise given to Joshua in 1:5, we also see the condition in verse 8, where Joshua is exhorted to meditate the law day and night!

In Hebrews 13:5, just before the promise: 'I'll never leave thee, nor forsake thee', we are also admonished to be 'content with such things as you have'. In fact, we live in a dark and unsatisfied world. But as long as the eternal light abides in us, darkness will depart in His Mighty Name.

In Exodus 10:21, we read about "darkness which may be felt." But how wonderful it is to note verse 23- "but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."

In this dark and dismal world, where we hear stories of hopelessness and despair, as children of God, we are expected to shine. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light" - Matthew 6:22. May the Lord help us to live a life without blemish by His grace.

18

Fruitful field

“Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest” - (Isaiah 32:15).

As we know, the first few verses of Isaiah chapter 32 is regarding ‘millennium’. But in the verse quoted above, we understand that when spirit is poured, wilderness will turn into a fruitful field. Wilderness is a symbol of hopelessness and confusion. Wilderness usually is a barren land with no fruits, flowers, water and not even a trace of life!

If wilderness should change into a fruitful field, there should be buds of life there. In a sense, a place or person without the presence of Holy Spirit is just like wilderness! There will be murmuring, complaints, dissatisfaction and what not? We see so many people around us with such a mind set. The real reason behind it is far beyond our comprehension.

As we know, Israel murmured at Rephidim against the Lord, for they had no water to drink. We read about their murmuring against God and their leaders more than 12 times. On most of

the occasions it was for food and water. Basic reason for discontentment and murmuring, even today has not much changed!

Where there is scarcity of drinking water (spirit filled life), discontentment is quite natural. Some people have constant complaint against anything and everyone. This cannot just be viewed as a psychological disequilibrium. When we lead a spirit filled life, we'll be content in our attitude and approach.

In Matthew 14:15, we read about a desert. It was late evening time and there was a hungry multitude. In short, time, place, circumstances were all unfavorable. But that desert place shortly turned out to be a place of great feast. It was made possible just because of the presence of Lord Jesus. Yes, when the spirit of living water flow, dissatisfaction flee from the place and wilderness turn to be fruitful field!!

19

Hopeful life

“As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in” - (Joshua 14:11).

We live in a world where a good number of people are pessimistic. But Christian life is a life full of hope and optimism. We believe that ‘the best is yet to come’! In the book of Job 8:7, we see: “Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase” In Ecclesiastes 7:8, also a similar verse is seen: “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning there of.”

The verse quoted above from the book of Joshua is a declaration and testimony of Caleb which is a real challenge for all. We see the life of many heroes in Bible. Some of them had a very good beginning. But their end was disastrous. For example Samson and Solomon had a good start. But towards the end, they deviated from their goal. In the case of Joseph, although he suffered in prison for 13 years, he kept his dream alive and continued as Prime minister for 80 years, perhaps the

longest term as a ruler in world history!

Moses, who led more than 20 lakhs people through wilderness for long years, was also a real hero. Joshua also was not just an ordinary man. Joshua 1:5, 4:4, & 10:12 gives us ample proof to show that his life was full of extra ordinary and wonderful incidents.

But Caleb, who traveled with Moses, was just an ordinary man. His testimony at the age of 85 was really an eye-opener for any Christian Pilgrim. In verse 12, we see his firm faith and hope, when he declared that he would be able to drive out the Anakims.

The secret behind this strong and positive attitude is seen in a few verses in Numbers Chapter 14. In verse 24, we read that “he had another spirit and followed me fully.” Yes, all real pilgrims select a special faith.

(Two roads diverged into the woods, I took the less travelled by,

And that has made all the difference - Robert Frost)

Another quality was that ‘Caleb wholly followed the Lord,’ (Joshua 14:14) - that means he stood close to God always. But this hope expressed in verse 12, is the most important factor; “I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said,”. Yes, Our Lord is always the Victor.

20

Eloquent silence

“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” - (Zephaniah 3:17).

In Hebrew language, meaning of the name ‘Zephaniah’ is: ‘The Lord has concealed’. Yes, there are many mysteries related to God which are not revealed. In some translations, ‘he will rest in his love’ is given as: ‘he is silent in His love’. We know that God who hears and answers prayer is the strong hold of any saint. But, there may be occasions when ‘he is silent in His love.’!

People need somebody to hear their sorrows. Even when some people pay heed to our words, none of them can help us or deliver us from our deep agony. Usually, people will either sympathize or criticize. Most often, people find no one to hear patiently their stories of grief. Everyone is immersed and engaged in their own world of sorrows..!

“Laugh and the world will laugh with you,

But when you weep, you weep alone...!”

There is a famous short story by Russian novelist, Anton Chekhov by the title, “Misery.” It was published in 1886. The cab man described in the story tries to share his sorrows with others, as his son died recently. He desperately and unsuccessfully tries to have a talk with the people he meets and tells them how shattered he is! But nobody listens. He ends up talking to his horse, just for some consolation! This story beautifully depicts how we crave to share our sorrows...!

In Matthew 15:23, we see a Canaanite woman requesting Jesus to have mercy. Her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. We see the ‘silent’ love of God here. As he was silent, her belief strengthened. God’s silence may be stronger and mightier than words. Towards the end of the story, we see that this Canaanite woman’s ‘daughter was made whole from that very hour.’

There was a story in ‘Streams in the desert’ - a daily devotional book by Charles Cowman. It was a vision that a saintly woman saw, in which three persons were on their knees, praying. She saw in her dream that Jesus touched the first person, looked with compassion at the second one and just passed by the third person. She was perplexed and asked God, why there was disparity in the approach to each one of them... She got the reply that the first one needed a touch, while second one needed only a meek look and third person could recognize God’s love even without any gesture. Even when God is silent in His love, His compassion flows towards us. He is the same yesterday, today and forever...!!

21

Incense of Prayer

“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice” - (Psalms 141:2).

No doubt, we’ve reached a period of time, when we must pray, pray and pray! Nothing can be supplemented instead of fervent prayer. In the text quoted above, Psalmist’s appeal was that his prayer be as incense before God.

In Exodus 30:24, we see five ingredients for preparing ‘holy anointing oil’. In effective prayer also we find five important factors. Let’s note them one by one;

- (a). Prayer with tears - In 1 Samuel 1:10, we see Hannah ‘who prayed unto the Lord and wept sore’. Her prayer was answered in time. The weeping prophet Jeremiah, in 9:1, pray as follows:

“Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night.....”

- (b). Prayer with supplication - In 2 Chronicles 6:35, we read: “Then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause.”

- (c). Prayer with humility – “If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will I heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).
- (d). Prayer with confession- We observe how Ezra prayed and confessed with a great congregation of Israel, with weeping! (Ezra 10:1)
- (e). Prayer with thanks giving- “When Daniel know that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did afore time.” (Daniel 6:10). I’ve heard about late Pastor Stephen Natarajan, chief pastor of TPM that he slipped into his eternal rest, while praying.

Prayer with tears, supplication, humility, confession and thanks giving will never go unanswered. It should rise up to the throne of God as incense. Moreover, we see in Exodus 17:11, how Moses held up his hands and prayed bringing victory for Israel. As Oswald chambers said: “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work”!!

22

Revive and rejoice

“Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee” - (Psalms 86:5).

The above verse is often quoted in connection with revival meetings. Of course, there is an intense longing for revival and new life behind this prayer. Even though the ‘captivity of Jacob was brought back’, psalmist fears that anger of God is still prevailing! (verse4) That’s why he prays: “Revive us O! Lord!”

Here, in this appeal, we observe the chance of rejoicing in something else even after revival. Many a time, we find so called revived people rejoicing in blessings rather than the Lord who bestow it. In Exodus 32, we note that Israel did the grave mistake of worshipping the molten calf. In fact, even after that, in 33:2, we read that they were given provisions, protection and preservation! But God declared: “I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff necked people” (33:3).

Moses was not all satisfied with all the promises and blessings. He wanted the real presence of the Lord. In Exodus 33:15, we see his prayer: “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” How do we know that we are under His grace?

“Is it not in that thou goes with us?” (Verse: 16) That means, just blessings are not real proof of His presence.

As we know, light and heat comes from sun. But sun is not just light and heat! Sun has a different identity and existence. Moreover, we’ll experience real joy only by life poured from above. Those who crave for Lord’s presence will not be satisfied with joy from any other source whatsoever. “For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in His holy name.” (Psalms 34:21)

There will not be any source on earth, for a true child of God to rejoice. He’ll acknowledge that everything comes from, through and for his Master. Let’s learn to be happy in the Lord and only in Him! That’s real revival. Rejoicing in the Lord is part of revival. True worship is never a mechanical process. In other words revival and rejoicing go hand in hand!

23

Ask, seek, knock!

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and he shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” - (Matthew 7:7).

Three words in the above verse stands out which attracts our special attention. They are ‘ask’ ‘seek’ and ‘knock’. We know that this is about prayer. Some people think that it denotes the intensity of prayer. We know how Jacob wrestled at Jabok..! But, more than that, it can also be three levels of prayer..

Every true prayer ought to begin in the heart of God. That means we need to seek the will of God in all our appeal. In Isaiah 55:8, we read: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.” This really means that there is no place whatsoever for the thoughts and ways of man to stand before God.

At the same time, as children of God, we are given the right to approach the throne of grace and submit our needs to our Heavenly Father. Whatever is asked in His Name will be granted, if we ask according to His will. Although God knows our needs before we ask, it’s the Kingdom’s rule to ask!

In Matthew 6:33, we are admonished to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. In Colossians 3:1, we read: “if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” Seeking things above is actually a higher level of prayer life.

We usually knock, so that the door may open to stay with. Staying together is yet another stage of close relationship. In psalms 27:4, we see the desire of psalmist to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord. When Smith Wigglesworth was asked how long he usually pray, he said: “Not more than half an hour at a time, but resumes within another half an hour!” More than the schedule or pattern of prayer, craving for Lord’s presence to behold His beauty is desirable! “Real prayer is the means by which we become fused with God to such an extend that God can easily flow into our affairs and we can easily flow into God. Let’s have a prayerful life.

24

“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star!”

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” – (Philippians 2:15).

We, who are in Christ Jesus, are expected to shine like stars. In one translation, we read: “Shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly, to the word of life”....

‘Twinkle twinkle little star’, as we know, is an English lullaby. Its lyrics, originally a poem by Jane Taylor, capture the wonder of God’s universe where stars hang:

‘up above the world so high’

Like a diamond in the sky’.

In the rarely published later stanza, the star acts like a guide:

“As your bright and tiny spark

Lights the traveller in the dark”.....

In Philippians, Paul challenges believers in Philippi, to be blameless and pure as they shine..... like stars in the sky’ - while

proclaiming the good news of the gospel. We often wonder how we can ever shine like stars! We feel inadequate and struggle to think our light is bright enough to make any difference!

In reality, stars don't try to be stars themselves. They remain as they are! But light changes our world. God brought physical light into the world. (Genesis 1:3) and through Jesus, God brings spiritual light into our lives (John 1:1-4). When we've God's light in us, those around us see the light and are drawn to its source.

As effortlessly and silently, as a star hanging in the night sky, our light makes a difference because of what it is – light! When we follow Paul's directive 'to hold firmly to the word of life', in deep darkness, we simply shine!

Then, we draw others to the source – Jesus!

Jesus brings light into our life. Praise be to His Holy Name. Not only that we shine like stars, but we also eagerly await our glorious bliss in eternal life! As we read in Daniel 12:3, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

25

‘No Cross, no crown’

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” - (Hebrews 12:2).

Few months ago, I was asked to give an introduction about the life of Eric Liddell, to a group of young kids in Bangalore. It was just before showing them a video about the life of this uncompromising man of God. I had to go through some information about Liddell’s life which really astonished me.

Although his parents were Scottish, Eric Liddell was born in China on 16th January, 1902. He was often called as the flying Scotsman, because he was the fastest runner in all Scotland. His parents were missionaries in China. For nearly a century, he was the most well known among Christian athletes.

In 1924, Liddell skipped the Olympics 100 meters race since it was scheduled for a Sunday. (Now we see children spending the whole Sundays for coaching classes). He was not ready to compromise, in spite of compulsions and criticisms. People tried to find fault with him for his lack of ‘sportsmanship’ and

even ‘patriotism’! Although he was ready to risk his name and fame, for God’s glory, he was miraculously crowned by divine faithfulness!

Liddell won gold for 400 meter race, which was scheduled for another day, with little training. He also won bronze for 200 meters. Liddell’s religious convictions and Olympic gold made him a hero for Christian athletes. In 1981, with the release of an Oscar-winning film, ‘chariot of fire’, which told story of Liddell’s Olympic victory, he was once again remembered.

Since 1981 there have been a handful of biographies of Liddell, which describe 1924 Olympics. His athletic achievements gained him recognition, but his choice to put God first has made him a hero for all time. In 1945, he passed away at the age of 43. We respect him especially for his strong faith and convictions. He preached the importance of surrender to God and applying divine principles in everyday life. Unless we are ready to pay the price for a noble cause, we may not be able to achieve lawrels of glory!

26

Just one thing!

“But only one thing is necessary, Mary has chosen the good part” - (Luke 10:42).

In the midst of much busy schedule and engagements in life, there is every chance of overlooking the most important matters. Priority setting is essential in individual life, at home, in organizations and even as a nation. In our country, it's often said that priorities were topsy-turvy, even after so many years of independence! We spend much for space exploration, sports etc even when thousands of villages lack pure drinking water!

In the text quoted above, what exactly did Mary chose? She recognized that presence of Jesus was more precious than any other activity. Almost all things we consider valuable on the face of the earth are perishable. One thing which can't be taken away from us is the sweet presence of the Lord. That's why Psalmist pray: “One thing I've asked from the Lord – that I may dwell in the house of the Lord.” – Psalms 27:4. Usually people pray for one thing and wish something else!

Even if we attend so many things and ignore the most important, it's really tragic. In Philippians 3:13, Paul declares:

“But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.” Yes, we’ve a goal in this life. We hold on with all diligence to eternal life! In Philippians 4:8, we read: “Finally brethren, whatever is true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute…… Dwell on these things.”

RabindraNath Tagore prayed “Lord, help me to raise my head above daily trifles.” Everything from kitchen side to international issues are really worthless. We’ll be weary and tired soon in our life’s toil. Concluding remarks of wisest man ever lived was: “Fear God and keep His commandments.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Yes, there is nothing more important than God’s presence and His ways. Let’s hold on to it and long for it; rather crave for it. Just one thing is enough, but that’s more precious than anything the world offers……

27

“Brevity is the Soul of wit”

“He became flesh and dwelt among us” - (John 1:14).

In speech or writing, what is expressed in brief has an exquisite charm and beauty in it. Earnest Hemingway’s novel, ‘Old man and the Sea’, which won Nobel Prize for literature, is famous for its brief, but meaningful statements. “Man can be destroyed, but not defeated” – is one among such a sentence from that book. Shakespeare acknowledges this truth through a character in ‘Hamlet’ – which is the title of this article.

Once when Lord Byron described the first miracle of Jesus at Caana, he wrote: “Water saw Jesus, it blushed and it turned into wine” See, how powerful and beautiful description of that miraculous incident with bare minimum words! The opening sentence of a story was once given as follows; “For sale, baby shoes, never used!” Brief, but elaborate and self explanatory opening sentence for a good story.....

In the Bible also we see some very brief, but forceful statements, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35) is the shortest among them. But who can fathom the depth of its meaning? The verse

quoted from the gospel of St. John - “He became flesh and dwelt among us” is also full of meaning. God came down from all the glory of heaven down to earth. Moreover, He dwelt among us, died on the cross and resurrected. It’s in fact, gospel in nutshell!

Let us note some more references: In Chronicles 4:9, we read, “Jebez was more honourable than his brothers.” In the next verse, we see his prayer, though precise, powerful and pointed’. Description of Job as “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil” (Job 1:1) is also a detailed character sketch in very few words! David is described as “a man after my own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) by God Himself. Although these descriptions are brief, they tell us volumes!!

In Ephesians 1:1, Paul describes himself as “an apostle of Christ”-, while he refers Timothy as “My true son in faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). All these small statements speaks a lot. It’s really interesting to guess how others may describe our life in the shortest possible terms! It may help us for self examination. Brief statements are often far more appreciable, beautiful and forceful than long-winding, complex descriptions – Aren’t they?

28

Religious Vs Spiritual

“Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah” - (Jude 11).

In the verse quoted above, we see three religious people, but not really spiritual, as per word of God. Cain, for example, believed in sacrifices and offered fruit of ground (Genesis 4:3). But his scarifies had no comparison with that of Abel. It was just as hell and heaven apart! Cain was symbol of external religiosity. Abel on the other hand, killed a lamb and placed on the altar. He was surrendering himself through the offering. God was pleased in it.

Religious people often engage themselves in so many good things, like Cain. But they won't surrender their self. Unless we die for our self, we cannot enter the new covenant. One is a wide path, while other is a narrow way. In Abel's sacrifice, heavenly fire came down. It shows that not only a good life, but also fire from above (anointing) is necessary.

Likewise, Balaam's history is seen in the Book of Numbers, chapter 22. He was also known as a religious man. But, he was more interested in money and popularity than closely following

God. At times, he seeks God, but leans on his own understanding. The spirit which goes after position and possessions may not be discerned by all people.

In the Book of Numbers Chapter 16, we see Korah, another religious man. He belonged to the tribe of Levi. He was clothed in religious attire. But he always rivaled along with Datan and Abhiram. We see in Numbers 16:32, that earth opened up and swallowed them. A very tragic end! He was representative of those who rebelled against Godly governance.

We need to discern those who wear attire of religion and lack real power. In verse 3 of the Book of Jude, we read: "I exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto saints!" Very often pseudo spirituality is worse than no spirituality. Let's be on our guard to stand for the true faith, once entrusted. While religion is based on rules and regulations, real spirituality is based on true relation with God. Scope of relation is far more than an excellent worship. It extends to glorious fellowship with Trinity!

29

Naaman's little maid

“And she said unto her mistress, would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy” - (2 Kings 5:3).

The above reference is about the little maid, who was brought away captive out of the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. Naaman was an honourable, mighty man of valour, but was a leper. The little maid, who was a captive from Israel, introduced the prophet in Samaria so that her master may recover from leprosy.

On February 27th, 2019, Wing Commander of Indian Air Force, Abhinandan Varthaman, was under the captivity of Pakistan for 60 hours. International dialogues and discussions were held and on March 1st, he was released! Being under captivity of the enemy is a great malady! However brave and confident we are, crossing the barriers can bring in the risk of captivity. Once we are caught by the enemy, we come under the rule of enemy's territory! So, let's be on guard, as believers, never to cross the borders.

Abhinandan's bravery, straight-forward and cautious answers when questioned, were all adored. But instead of imitating these

qualities, many youngsters tried to put up a moustache like that of the great warrior!

Any captive will nurture dreams of his home land. In the text quoted above, naturally the little maid from Israel also might have nurtured dreams of her native land. It may be the reason why she introduced the prophet in Samaria to Naaman. In verse 17, we read Naaman requesting two mules burden of earth from Israel to offer sacrifice to the Lord. Is it not a wonderful provision that, although the maid was still captive, earth from her own land was brought to fulfill her dreams of home land!

When we remain true soldiers of Christ, never neglecting heavenly assignments, heaven will provide wonderful opportunities. In Hebrew 11:36, we read about great heroes of faith, who were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. So, whether or not our long cherished dreams are fulfilled, we'll certainly see the mighty Hand of God in our spiritual pursuits!

30

Honourable

“Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee....” - (Isaiah 43:4).

We know that most people like to be honoured. To get honour, they usually search for fame, positions, possessions and what not? Some adore themselves with costly attire and try to be as presentable as possible. Some travel in luxury vehicles and live in majestic mansions. Ordinary people crave for honour and acceptance from others, let alone leaders and prominent people!

In the text quoted above, we see that children of God are precious and honourable in the sight of Almighty. Sometimes we get no recognition whatsoever from the world around, as we’ve nothing to show off. But how great it is to be precious in the sight of our God! The pomp and glitter of worldly glory is of no value before God Almighty!

In 1 Samuel 9:6, we read, “And he said unto him Behold now, there is in this city a man of God and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass.” Yes, a man of God is honourable and all what he says will surely come to pass! His ‘Yes’ is ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ will be ‘No’. Not only that a godly man

is honest before God, he'll stand upright before anyone. Straight forward, sincere, non-hypocritical and valiant men need to fear no one!

In 1 Chronicles 4:9, we read about Jabez, who was more honourable than his brothers. Although he was once a 'son of sorrow', he prayed sincerely to God and his requests were granted. His prayer, even though brief, was powerful and pointed. He had nothing to boast. But God considered him more honourable than others. It's not our worldly position and possession that determine our worth. It's the value that God offers which make us different. Thank God, we are precious for Him. He exhibited that wonderful love on the cross of Calvary, to make us honourable.

People often judge according to outward appearance. But this perception can be misleading. What is valuable before the world is abominable in the sight of God. Divine yard stick is quite different from human understanding!

31

Graceful Speech

“Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person” - (Colossians 4:6).

What exactly is speech with grace? It’s nothing but using apt, words at the suitable occasion. ‘Poetry is best words in best order’, or other words, musical thought! Selection of words for speech or writing is important to convey meaning. In 1 Corinthians 2:13, we read: “which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

Is it not surprising to note that spiritual things are explained and conveyed in a spiritual manner through spiritual words? Even the tone and intonation will be influenced, which is beyond human comprehension! In Mathew 26:73, we see that a bystander pointed out to Peter: “for even the way you talk gives you away.” In some translation, it goes like: “Your pronunciation betrays you.” In Ephesians 4:29, we are admonished: “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth.”

Zephaniah 3:9 tells us about ‘pure language’. Although there are a whole lot of words in language for communication,

selection of words goes a long way in making it powerful and pointed. It's said that a prince will never stoop to the level of street boys or use their vocabulary! What does that observation mean? In 'Romeo & Juliet', Shakespeare asks:

“What's in a name?

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet!”

Although it may be true in a sense, pure language is essential for exact communication.

We often hear about different types of language for different categories of people. In the area of language for communication, linguists talk about language for doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, businessmen etc. It means that they use a special set of specific and selected words more often for their sphere of interaction. Likewise, spiritually motivated ideas are difficult to be conveyed using ordinary language.

It's really a mystery that spiritually guided vocabulary is specially used by the Holy Spirit to influence and transform human minds, transcend in a supernatural way to a world beyond human understanding. But it's scope and power is far beyond the spiritual jargons, we hear from professional preachers!

32

Fountain of tears

“Oh !that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people” - (Jeremiah 9:1).

It was John Vance Chency who remarked: “the soul would have no rainbow had the eyes no tears!” Charles Dickens observed: “Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts.” - Tears are really God’s gift to us. They heal us as they flow. They are the summer showers to the soul.

God’s word also points out the need to pray with tears. Prophet Jeremiah wished to intercede with tears. His longing was so intense that he prayed that his eyes were a fountain of tears! Shedding tears is never a sign of weakness, instead, it shows integrity of purpose. Through tears we’d be able to see far ahead, than through a telescope. That’s why a missionary once remarked: “Once your tear glands get dried up, quit the ministry !”

There are very few who are blessed with the grace of interceding with tears. In Ezekiel 22:30, we read, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge and stand

in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it., but I found none.” In Isaiah 59:16, we notice the same situation: “And I saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercesor.” There may be many people who are in the lime light, and like to be so, with titles and designations; but very few behind the curtain praying with tears..!! Christ alone is our mediator, always!

In the Bible, we read about Hagar (Genisis21:17), Hannah (1 Samuel1:20), Mary Magdalene and many others who prayed with tears and how their prayers were answered miraculously! But, it’s rather terrifying to note that many of the professional preachers who bark on the pulpit, never shed a drop tear in prayer! Many of them are so hard hearted that they try to find fault with anyone and everything..! Negativism rule their minds and personality. Pseudo spirituality is more dangerous than zero spirituality!

Many of David’s psalms, on the other hand, are really excellent poems exalting the majesty of God’s glory. In psalms 34:6, David declares: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” At the eve of another year, let’s look upwards with tears. Yes, crying with tears is the way to redemption. It’s such a mystic, secret place - the land of tears...!!

33

Powerful Word

‘For thy word is alive and Powerful’ - (Hebrews 4:12).

Whatever we’re feeling right now, God’s Word has wisdom for us! In fact, as Hebrew 4:12 says, the Word of God is alive. Is it not wonderful to note that the words in the New Testament that were written more than 2000 years ago have something profound to say about our everyday struggles today!

If we follow Christ, Romans 8:11 says that we’ve access to the power of the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that rose Jesus from the dead, the same Spirit that inspired Paul to write letters to churches around the world that now inspire us! The same Spirit that spoke to King David, as he wrote some of the Psalms now speaks to us directly!

When we read the Bible, Holy Spirit can speak to us, just as He did to the authors of the Scriptures. Moreover, we believe that the whole scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it can be effectively and correctly explained only by the Holy Spirit. It’s good to read books by good authors, but don’t think that any good author is authorized with the whole truth of the

Bible except the Holy Spirit.

We've heard about the words, 'logos' and 'Rhema' to denote 'written word' and 'the living word'. In 1 Corinthians 2:4, Paul Says, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." 1 Thessalonians 5:19, gives a direct command: "Quench not the Spirit."

There are people who preach pure doctrine, but doesn't exhibit the living power of gospel in their practical life. Character transformation is associated with the wonder working power of the living word and not just coming under the discipline of written laws alone! In 2 Corinthians 3:6, we read: "For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." May the life and power of the living word reverberate through our day to day life, in this New Year! Let's concentrate on the person of the living God than mere dead dogmas! God reigns!! (Psalms 93:1, 97:1, 99:1). Our relation with the Lord is more than a legalistic one!

34

“Be strong”

“Be strong and courageous, be not afraid or dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than him” - (2 Chronicles 32:7).

In the text quoted above, we hear encouraging and uplifting words of King Hezekiah. His name itself means: “God is comforter.” Even in a very crucial situation, he was confident. He was not moved by the multitude. He knew well that if God was with them, they can never be in the minority group..!!

What exactly was the foundation of his confidence? First and foremost, it was his faith in God’s omnipotence. In 1 Chronicles 29:2, we see that “he did which was right in the sight of the Lord.” He also opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them “While Ahaz shut up the house of God” (28:24). Hezekiah did what was pleasing to God. People of integrity will be strong in their convictions as well as positive in their outlook.

We see that only those who are passionate to keep the house of the Lord properly can encourage others. In Mark 11:16, we

see that Jesus “would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.” Yes, house of the Lord should always be kept in its sanctity. It’s not a place for silly business..!!

In Isaiah 50:4, we read: “God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” In Ephesians 4:29, Apostle Paul exhorts: “let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers...”

Words of grace naturally comes only from a graceful heart. Positive words that comforts and consoles people are rarely heard from cowards. Only men who are bold inwardly can utter inspiring words of encouragement. Those who are blessed with creativity can witness the unseen presence of God amidst alarming multitude of challenging enemies. If God is with us, who can stand against us? ...Psalms 121:4. “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” Based on this verse, a great preacher recently remarked humorously in an interview “Why should God and we, together keep awake?” True... Help us to believe in a God who “performeth all things for me!”

35

Incorruptible Crown

“And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we can incorruptible” - (1 Corinthians 9:25).

We live in a world where there is a craze for crowns of glory! People don't care much whether it's temporary or not! In olden days, even after rigorous practice and training in Olympic competitions, the winners received only olive leaves that withered away shortly. But, just for corruptible crowns, athletes were ready to sacrifice time and energy.

In reality, not only crowns and positions, but all glory of this world is temporary and fleeting. In 1 John 2:17, we read: “And the world passes away and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God abides forever.” Yes, when our inner eyes are opened, we'll certainly understand that no achievement whatsoever is long lasting. Word of God convinces about incorruptible crowns. Apostle Paul mentions about many type of crowns for the over comers and victors in the spiritual realm.

First of all, we read about crown of life in James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10. In Revelation 20:15, we see the warning: “And whosoever was not found written in the Book of life was cast

into the lake of fire.” We see many other references about Book of life in Bible. Whose name will be written in it? Only those who accept Jesus as their personal savior and Lord will get their names written in that Book. They will get a crown that cannot be taken away by hook or crook!

In 2 Timothy 4:8, we read about ‘crown of righteousness’. This crown is given for the righteous deeds done by victors. We get the reward for every single act of kindness in the most judicious way. Nothing will remain concealed, nothing need be published either. Another one is crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4). This incorruptible crown is given for those who minister according to divine guidance sacrificially. Those who lead and encourage others to eternal life will get ‘crown of rejoicing’. (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

In Revelation 3:11, St. John admonished: “Hold fast which you have, that no man take your crown.” Yes, crowns are waiting for victors. But it needs much patience and perseverance to achieve it. The most amazing fact is, we’ll naturally submit all crowns at the feet of the one who wore the crown of thorns for us. In Mark 15:17, we see that grievous picture of our Lord. “And they clothed him with purple and intertwined a crown of thorns and put it about his head.” In Revelation 4:10, we read that “the four and twenty elders fell down before him that sat on the throne saying. “Thou art worthy, O Lord to receive glory, honour and power. Let’s place all crowns, credits and credentials at His glorious throne!”

36

All Glory is fleeting

“The words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools” - (Ecclesiastes 9:17).

It was Charlie Chaplain who said: “Nothing is permanent in this wicked world – not even our troubles. Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher maintained that change is the only reality in nature. The wisest man ever lived, King Solomon, after examining and evaluating the pomp and glory of this world, declared that it’s nothing but vanity!”

The mystery behind life and death was a matter of great wonder for many philosophers and thinkers. A Shakespearean character describes life as a “tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing.” Somebody remarked that death is just a curtain between life on this world and the other world. Anyway, the mystery of life and death is still a baffling question for most people.

Steven Paul Jobs, the pioneer of micro computer revolution in 1970’s and 80’s was well known as an American business magnate and co-founder of Apple Inc. He was born in the year 1955, and departed in the year 2011 due to pancreatic tumour.

His Stanford commencement speech of 2005, about ‘how to live before you die’ attracted attention of people worldwide. Although it’s about making use of this life to its full potential, there is some more reality in it.

To quote a few lines of that speech:

“Remembering that I’ll be dead soon
is the most important tool I’ve encountered
to help me make the big choices in life,
Because almost everything,
all external expectations, all pride
all fear of embarrassment or failure
these things just fall away in the face of death
leaving behind what is truly important!”

In Acts 20:24, Paul says, “I consider my life worth nothing.” Does it mean that life is worthless? Never! Paul wanted to emphasize that his prime concern in life was to run his race, and finish his God given ministry. Ambitions in life drive people to move forward. But there is nothing greater than fulfilling God’s mission. All glory, achievements, positions, accomplishments and expectations fade away in the face of death.

Our life gains its real meaning only when we move forward with the passion to fulfill our calling. God has a special purpose with our life. When we submit ourselves under the yoke of his guidance, we’ll be led forward through astonishing ways. With all the great glory reached so far, humanity will come to realize that it’s just fleeting! The best is yet to come!

37

Fear Ye Not!

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground, without your father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows” - (Mathew 10:29, 30, 31).

Infact, most of the people who pretend to be brave are not really so! They feel insecure, lonely and dejected in their private life. Only Word of God can give us hope and confidence. David Wilkerson is a name known to almost all in Christendom. He was the founder of ‘Time Square Church’ in New York. ‘Cross and the Switchblade’ is an autobiographical masterpiece, which very beautifully depicts how he started ministry among the teen age gang of the city. It was with great dedication and determination that he could finally lead Nicky Cruz, the gang leader towards a reformed life.

An article which appeared in ‘Time Magazine about this underground gang was the motivation behind the great sacrificial task of Wilkerson.’ In 2016, when I visited New York, I was longing to visit ‘Time square Church more than ‘Statue of Liberty,’ Wax Museum or 9/11 Movement. ‘Time Square Church’ and stories of David Wilkerson excited my thoughts.

This great legend, while walking down the country road in New Jersey, once prayed to God to free him from unnecessary fears and anxieties. Then the Holy Spirit prompted him to read the text quoted in

the beginning. Two words- ‘Sparrows and ‘hairs’ – specially reverberated in his mind. They seem to be insignificant, but really thought-provoking!

In Luke 12:6, we read: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings and not one of them is forgotten before God?” Simple arithmetics behind this statement tells us that the fifth one was given free of cost! If God remembers such insignificant bird, how much more valuable are we for Him? Moreover, we’ll marvel at the intricate wing system of sparrows. They are specially mentioned in the above verse from among the nine thousand + species of birds. It’s because sparrows are designed in such a way that they are capable of flying more than three thousand miles at a stretch continuously!

Likewise, the hairs of our head are all numbered. It’s estimated that on an average, there will be between one lakh and one lakh fifty thousand hairs on our head. Even on a bald head, there are vellus variety hair which can’t be seen by naked eye. Hairs on our eye-lids, ears and nose are also designed with specific purpose. Though apparently insignificant, they perform great functions in preventing dust and ‘impurities entering our vital organs. Those hairs go deep down as a tunnel till blood vessels!

Seemingly simple sparrows and hairs on head are taken care of by our creator. How much more He cares for us. In Psalms 139:14, we read, “I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are they works; and that my soul knowth right well.” – Mathew 6:34 also reiterates the fact that we need not worry about anything as our Father’ in Heaven cares for us. “Take therefore no thought for narrow for the me now shall take thought for the things itself.”

May the Lord graciously fill us with his wisdom to view simple ‘Sparrows’ and ‘hairs’ to learn the love of Father God. Even when corona virus and the threats of the pandemic shake the world, we’ve shelter under His everlasting wings. He shall cover us with His feathers of protection and care.

38

‘Courageous, Consistent and compassionate’

**“And of some have compassion, making a difference”
(Jude 22).**

Courage refers not only physical courage to face dangers, but also moral and mental strength to withstand difficulties. It’s an attribute of good character that makes us worthy of respect. Courage is not absence of fear; but the ability to manage and overcome it. It doesn’t necessarily mean the boldness to face a lion in its den or encounter a terrific situation. “Cowards die thousand times before death, the valiant taste of death, but once” – Shakespeare. RavindraNath Tagore points our real courage is the integrity, ‘never to bend the knees before the insolent might!’

Consistency is one of the main factors leading to accomplishment and success. There is nobility in compassion, beauty in empathy and grace in forgiveness. Courage, consistency and compassion are qualities commonly mentioned while depicting character sketch of an upright person. It’s so pathetic, that we find such men of quality only rarely. Recently I happened to hear these adjectives mentioned while someone paid homage to a departed soul. It was the funeral service of Pr. K.G. Mathew (Former General Secretary of SFC) it was

really true about that man of God. He was a man of integrity and possessed these qualities in its spirit. I came to know that he was the grandson of Nedumplackal Kunjampeelichayan. (a name well known in Mallappally, Vandenmadu and Vechoochira about a century before).

While we come across many people who sway according to the flow of wind, we find few who stay consistent in their view and stand. We see people who change their opinion without any prick of conscience. It's really a grace to have conviction in belief and stand for it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "believe your own thought." Believe what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men - that's genius. " – Compassionate people will never dare to judge others in a hurry. They will never 'disown the poor;' and will not stoop before threats! Compassion is a divine quality of the spirit.

Among the many spiritual qualities of a Christian, these traits can be marked special. The pity is that many of the so called leaders and preachers of modern-day world stand much below the expected standards of an average believer! Yes, let's yearn to maintain courage, consistency and compassion in day-to-day life!

39

Walls never grow!

“By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, often they were compassed about seven days” - (Hebrews 11:30).

We read the history of Jericho walls falling down in the Book of Joshua 6:20. “So the people shouted. . . . wall fell down flat.” As we know, walls represent difficulties that we confront in life. It may be sickness, dejection, mental strife, enmity or other obstacles that stand in our way of life. In the above mentioned incident, how did the wall fall? Was it just because people shouted and priests blew the triumphant? Never! High decibels of sound may have its effect. But we know that the loud voice and blowing of triumphant alone will not make big walls fall down!

As we read Hebrews 11:30, we understand that Jericho wall fell down by Faith. Without faith, seven days or seven years of walk around will make no difference. It will be a vain exercise. Even today walls that stand against us will fall down by faith. Moreover, no wall can ever prevent us from proceeding forward in our journey of faith. No wall is strong enough to divert us from achieving our life’s goals, when faith operates.

In Psalms 18:29, David proclaims “And by my God have I leaped over a wall.” It points out that we need not expect the

walls to fall down always. God will enable us to leap over the walls that prevent us from moving forward. Let the wall be there! God will help us to leap over it and leave the wall behind, sometimes! When we are far ahead of the wall it's not a challenge! In Genesis 49:22, we read, Joseph is a faithful bough, even a faithful bough by a wall, whose branches run over the wall! When the faithful bough runs over the wall, and cover it, wall is under the bough! Wall can never be a hindrance for the faithful bough to grow and overcome it. As the faithful bough grow more thick, no wall can be seen either! Instead of demolishing the wall, its covered by the growth of the bough.

Infact, we notice that while the fruitful bough can grow, walls can never grow! Even if the walls that confront us on our way can be a little challenge, there are ways to overcome it. Solution may not all ways be in breaking down the wall. We gain victory by leaping over the walls like David. It can also be growing over the walls as a fruitful bough like Joseph. No walls can block our way, as no wall can ever grow! We are triumphant by faith is the Name of our Lord Jesus.

‘For every ailment under the sun, there is a remedy or there is none; if there is one, find it, if there is none, never mind it!’ There is way out always. There is a story about somebody who was send to an island for the promotion of a particular brand of shoes. As there was nobody in the island wearing shoes or even chappals, he came back disheartened. But another man took up the challenge and he taught them to wear shoes-and reported that there is great potential for business!

“Two men looked out of prison bars –
One saw the mud, other saw the stars!”

Let's walk and talk faith and see that walls are no more in our way!

40

Real Prosperity

“So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” – (Daniel 6:28).

Irrespective of country and age, people everywhere desire to prosper. In 3 John, in the first verses we read: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” World Health Organisation (WHO) has given a definition for health “as a state of complete physical, mental and social well being, and not just the absence of disease or infirmity.” They are not concerned about spiritual health!

Prosperity can not be limited to physical aspects of life. Real prosperity is total well being of a person. Daniel was a godly man who prospered in his life, during the reign of Darius or Cyrus. In Ezra 8:21, we read about a fast at the river of Ahava to seek of him a right way. Infact, Prosperity is going through the right way in life. It's far beyond material prosperity, fame or pleasure.

Daniel's life is a model for those who desire prosperous living. He moved through the right way in all situations of life. What helped him to achieve such a covetable and lofty life? In

Daniel 1:8, we read that “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.” So, his determination to remain undefiled and pure was one of the secrets of his success and prosperity. Then, in Daniel 6:4, another important quality of this godly man can be noticed. It was nothing, but his faithfulness. In 6:10, we see that he knelt before God in prayer as he did aforetime. Prayer was not a ritual. It was a regular practice for him to meet the Lord in Prayer.

Purity in life, faithfulness and prayer life will bring in prosperity. It will encompass all aspects of life. It’s not a matter of just material prosperity. When our life is in the right track and as we move forward according to divine guidance, our concerns in life will certainly be far beyond worldly standards. Prosperity will have a different meaning for those who walk with the Lord. We usually see believers who fast and pray just for some earthly gain.

In Genesis 32:24, we read, Jacob wrestled until the day break. Some people interpret it as wrestling in prayer until something was achieved. But in Hosea 12:4, we understand that he prevailed the angel at Jabok, not by might, but by his tears!

Our God is so gracious and compassionate that he won’t neglect our tears and submission. As David sought right words and right way in life, let us also strive to be pure; faithful and prayerful. Then goodness and mercy shall follow all days of our life (Psalms 23:6).

41

LORD looked!

“And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and those shalt save Israel from the hand of the midianites: have not I sent thee?” – (Judges 6:14).

In the text quoted above, we see that the Lord looked upon Gideon. From the opening verse of the chapter, we understand that Lord delivered Israelites into the hand of Median as they did evil in the sight of the Lord. All what Israel sow was destroyed by enemies. Even in any disastrous situation, we see a ray of hope, when the Lord is pleased to look upon us!

There are ever so many references in the Word of God, where the Lord looked upon individuals and nations. It may be a merciful watch or at times, it may be to pour out His wrath! In Exodus 14:24, we read, “In the morning watch, the Lord looked into the host of Egyptians, through the pillar of fire and cloud and troubled host of Egyptians.” Yes, just a look of our Mighty God can annihilate all our enemies!

In all life situations, we’ve only one fortress to look at. As the Psalmist says: I will lift mine eyes into the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. Yes, our Lord reigns. He is in control

of everything at all times! In Psalms 34:5, we are encouraged: “They looked unto Him, and were enlightened: and their faces were not ashamed.”

Psalms 14:2 says, “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of man, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. God looks down from heaven and we need to look up to Him.” In Hebrews 12:12 also we are admonished to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

In Acts 3:4, we see Peter, fastening his eyes upon a lame man with John said, “Look on us.” – We need this look of compassion for others.

In the Book of Judges, when we read the story of Gideon, we understand that he got a divine call in his life. Although he had lot of mistakes and mishaps in life, he had a divine commission which he wanted to fulfil. We understand that Gideon had a divine vision too in his life, all because Lord looked upon him!

“Seek ye my face, my heart said” unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek (Psalms 27:8). Let us seek his face only. From nowhere else we find relief and help. As ICPF Family, we need to seek the face of our Lord, so that He’ll be pleased to look upon us with compassion. Let us remember that we’ve a divine call, divine commission and a divine vision like that of Gideon!

42

Covid-19

“The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all” – (Psalms103:19).

The year 2020 may be earmarked special due to many factors... In the light of covid-19 the pandemic which threatened the whole world, people try to find their own interpretation and explanations about it. But, as we all know, the alarming and unprecedented situation had no solution, whatsoever! No world leader, scientist, scholar or physician could find a remedy. Everyone was panic stricken. But we can find solace in God’s word even in any tough situation. There are ever so many promises which are encouraging and helps us to move on victoriously day by day!

In a world of famine, floods and fire; disease, death and disruption of everyday activities, we need to look up to heaven. Our God is seated on the throne of glory and in control of everything.

His eyes are upon us, His arms are long enough to reach us and strong enough to hold us. Let God breath His spirit of peace amidst fear and turmoil of our hearts.

Humanity should confess all sins against God. We should repent of all foolishness of denying true, living God and creator! We need to humble ourselves and confess our arrogance and pride that led us to think that we are self-sufficient. Let us pray for all those who are effected and vulnerable to Covid-19.

As the whole world is reeling under the exceptional exponential spread of the virus, let us bend our knees, bow our heads before Almighty. He only can command the wind to stop and ask the waves to calm down. Of course, there's no meaning in just analyzing the situation and discussing the statistics. It is our duty to pray for all those who are working among the patients.

We need to think about health department staff, government authorities and volunteer workers. "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" – (Psalms 20:7). God may be expecting us to deepen our dependence on Him through this epidemic. We have to put our trust in God, both in times of peace and calamity. "Go home, my people, and lock your doors, hide yourself for a little while until the Lord's anger be passed" (Isaiah 26:20).

Amidst all difficulties connected with lock-down, we see that those who marketed religion had a great blow! Real spirituality is of course, above all human barriers. Except for a personal fellowship with co-believers, sincere people could spend more quality time with the Lord without any murmur! It was a blessing in disguise for them to be 'Far from the madding crowd' and enjoy a quiet time!

43

Inherit Blessing

“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing: knowing that ye are we there unto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” – (1 Peter 3:9).

Apostle Peter reminds us that we are called to inherit blessings. What does that really mean? Wealth amassed or positions held are not in any way part of inheriting blessing. Real blessing is far beyond that. All divine protection, provision and guidance are part of blessing. Yet, experiencing and inheriting blessing is something more than what we receive. Experiencing blessings with grace is something more beautiful than just inheriting it!

We know that even if God spoke to us or we received some blessing, it's not a proof that we are in God's perfect way. We know that God spoke to Cain not Abel. But he was not pleased with Cain and his offering.

We read in Genesis chapter 4:17, that Cain built a city while Noah made an ark. When Noah started building Ark, he was not encouraged by others. On the other hand, he was ridiculed for preaching about heavy rain which was not heard of till then!

Dear children of God, we need only God's grace to fulfil

our mission and target in life. When the rain came, the Ark was above the judgement of flood. Those who were inside the Ark was saved, not those who built big cities! We know about Jacob, who was so wealthy, praying God for a blessing. It was his tears that helped him to prevail. “Yea, he had power over the angel, and he prevailed, he wept” – (Hosea 12:4).

In the Book of Joshua 24:13, we read: “And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them, of the vineyards and olive yards which ye planted not do ye eat.” Of course God’s provisions and blessings are wonderful.

Ps. 92:13 – Those that he planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. –there is a special blessing through the courts of the Lord. Of course, there are blessings from earth and elsewhere! But inheriting real blessings of the Lord gained through intimacy with God is special. May the Lord shower his grace and love each day as we grow in a strong relation with creator God! When the Holy Spirit reveals us the real blessings and our inner eyes are opened, we won’t give importance to silly and simple excitements which the world offers!

44

Miserable Comforters!

“I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all” – (Job 16:2).

As we all know, the world as a whole was passing through unprecedented and unpredictable situations in 2020. We hear and read a lot of news, evaluating the present condition. In the Book of Job, we notice a special and paradoxical statement – “miserable comforters” – Don’t you think that all what we hear around these days are something like that?

Most countries of the world are under the shadow of fear and embarrassment. Threat of virus has turned out to be a riddle without a stable remedy. Rulers, doctors and all sections of people are under fear. Statistics of terrible loss of life, finance, business, industry and all other areas are alarming, When stories of tragic news come one after another where can we find solace?

When such maladies challenge our very existence, people feel dejected. In the Book of Romans 8:28, we read: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.” Our God can turn all apparently troublesome things for good- Yes problems into projects and handicaps into handles!

As we are eager to know what happens around, we read news papers, Listen to T.V. news and watch other social media

sources, everyday. But then we feel the meaning of miserable comforters' from all updates! No report is sufficient enough to console our hearts or ease our tension. Only the Word of God can soothen our soul with a divine experience of consolation!

We know the term: 'blessing in disguise.' Long term Lock-downs might have interrupted our busy schedules, created dissatisfaction and boredom. But certainly we learnt many new lessons in life which we haven't ever dreamt of. In Bible, we read about many men of God, isolated due to various reasons. Job was locked down due to diseases. Joseph was imprisoned. David had to hide himself in caves. Paul in jail and John was exiled to Patmos. But all of them came out victorious! "Slow me down" – is a thought-provoking small poem by Owen L. Craine. The poet observes that; there is something more in life than increasing the speed."

Yes, we need to slow down. Humanity was in a speedy rat race. Things we thought as urgent are not even necessary now. It's possible to worship God without big church buildings, thundering music, big preachers and all other paraphernalia. We learnt to conduct weddings and burials in a simple way.

We can live without colourful festivals, crowds and 'Much ado about nothing.' We practice to enjoy sweetness of lovely homes. Home-sweet home! Our family prayers become more powerful, meditations meaningful and communications lively. Dining rooms are now places of mirth with simple food.

Infact, His kingdom ruleth over all (Psalms 103:19). "Finally brotheren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lively, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

45

Great Gulf...!!

“And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us; that would come from thence” - (Luke 16:26).

We know that this simple story which Jesus told involves great realities of life. We see a poor man -Lazarus and a rich man, whose name is not mentioned. The rich man might have had a big name and position in society. But in God's account, it's not counted! Of course Jesus narrated this story with specific objectives. The central theme of the passage in Luke 16:19-31 is about 'what really matters in life.' The reality inherent in the story is applicable to all people of all ages, living in any part of the world. When people feel that they succeeded in life, they easily forget really important matters in life. Someone remarked that life on earth is just a dressing room to get ready for eternity. We read that angels came, when the beggar died, to carry him to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. May be, it would have been a big burial ceremony!

Yes, there is disparity between rich and poor, educated and uneducated, developed and under developed countries and so

on. At the time of boarding a flight, there is business class, first class, economy class etc. But when the flight lands at the airport, all come out through the same exit. Death is an equalizer where all differences vanish. But, just after it, there's a great gulf fixed. In Psalms 116:15, we read: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants." While the rich man just died like any other human being, death of Lazarus brought joy and celebration in heaven. What a difference! In the Book of Acts 7:56, we read of Stephen who was stoned to death by his adversaries. But he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the son of man standing on the right hand of God." We know that Apostle Paul declared in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." For many saints, death itself was a beautiful celebration, let alone in the other shore! The rich man must have had the funeral of a celebrity. In the case of Lazarus, angels carried him, even though others ignored. It is in the other shore, our worth is revealed...Haleluha!

We know for certain that heaven and hell are realities, which Jesus affirmed. In Hebrews 9:27, we read: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" After death, eternal bliss or damnation.- no other way! Purpose of life is to get prepared for the place we are destined to enter. Here on earth, Lazarus was at the gate of the rich man, but in Abraham's bosom on the other shore! What a great difference! There's a popular hymn in Malayalam which says that we'll certainly know, who we are only on the other shore!! Oh! Lord help us not to be ashamed on the other shore, where the real worth will be revealed...

46

Towards a marvelous light

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” - (1 Peter 2:9).

Apostle Peter was disclosing a mystery in the text quoted. We are called out of darkness into a marvelous light. As there is distinct difference between light and darkness so is the chosen people compared to people of this world. We are a peculiar people, and a royal priesthood-which we often fail or forget to recognize!

In Psalms 18:28, we read; “For thou wilt light my candle. The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.” In Psalms 27:1 David declares: The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? If we are living in light, we need to fear no one. God who led us from darkness into marvelous light is the source of real light. Following verses in Bible also affirms the truth that God is the real light.

Ishiah 60: 20:- “Thy sun shall no more go down; Neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the LORD shall be thine everlasting

light; and the day of thy mourning shall be ended.”

In John 8:12, Jesus Christ declares; “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness; but shall have the light of life.” In John 12:35, Jesus also warned us—“yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.”

In Ephesians 5:8, Paul says, “For ye were sometimes darkness; but now are ye light in the LORD. Walk as children of light.” In all the verses quoted above, we see distinct difference between light and darkness. We are given a warning in God’s word that devil comes in the apparel of the angel of light! He’ll pretend to be religious. But the real self is to be discerned.

We need deep discerning spirit to know this. All what is not from Jesus is duplicate and fake. We live in a world of counterfeit things and dark shades. We need to be very vigilant to know the truth. All problem solving techniques based on human intelligence is far from divine light. There are spiritual realities that are revealed only in the bright, marvelous light. Far beyond reasoning and rational analysis, eternal realities of an unknown world exists. This cannot be comprehended by human intelligence. Bible portrays marvelous light which is visible only if inner eye is enlightened. Darkness try to influence human mind. Great men of God could discern spirits as they were glowing in marvelous light. Never to be guided by small, insignificant lights, but marvelous light- Jesus Christ.

It is in this context, that we need to pray for divine insight in our life. Yes, to see something far ahead and deep down, we need ‘insight’ !!

47

Model Christian Life

**“I have fought a good fight... finished my race”
- (2 Timothy 4:7).**

What is more covetable than a life with a beautiful finish? We know that it's not an easy walk over! Life lived with purpose and discipline only can expect a perfect finish. A purpose driven life, naturally has to pay the cost! It is, of course a disciplined life, which reminds me about the life of Bro. Jake Thomas. Moreover, such a life has its own special characteristics of sacrifice too. Let us look closely at some of the peculiarities of a meaningful life:

- (i) It is a life of surrender (Romans 12:1). Only a life fully surrendered into the hands of the creator will find the real track to proceed.
- (ii) It will be a life of dependence (Proverbs 3:5). Those who lean on his own understanding will not be able to see divine guidance.
- (iii) It is a life of happiness (Philippians 4:4). In a world of dissatisfaction, a life according to heavenly pattern is a

life of contentment and happiness.

- (iv) It is a life of wrestle (Ephesians 6:12). It may sound paradoxical that a purposeful life will have special trials also and has to wrestle against the forces of evil.
- (v) It is a life of hope (Romans 5:3, 4). We know, Paul lived a life of hope amidst all challenges. It is much more than mere optimism or positive thinking. Even when he was behind prison bars, he saw stars above!

“Two men looked out of prison bars,

One saw the mud, other saw the stars!”

- (vi) It will be a model life (Philippians 3:7). We see such a model life in Apostle Paul. Even after so many centuries, his life is a challenge for a true believer. Who else can proclaim that “I have fought a good fight and I’ve finished my race”? It was not gained by wealth or fame. The beautiful finish in the life of Paul was gained through trials, dedication, integrity, discipline, goal and what not? Paul did everything with an eternity perspective, which turned his end glitter like gold. He fought his fight and finished his race, which is a real model for a true Christian..

In the Book of Acts 20:24, Paul declared his goal in life. “...neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course, with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” What a life of dedication..!!

48

Enduring!

**“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and look joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance”
- (Hebrews 10:34).**

It goes without saying that nothing in this material world is enduring. Then, what exactly is mentioned as ‘enduring substance’? There are only very few things which are enduring. In 1 Kings 19:8, we read about Elijah, the prophet who could walk up to Horeb, the mount of God, with strength of meat’, forty days and forty nights. It was a divine supply of food through angels. So, we understand that divine supplies are enduring.

In John 6:27, we see: ‘labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth into everlasting life’. It shows that we need spiritual food everyday which will eventually lead us to an enduring and everlasting life. It’s not perishable!

2 Corinthians 4:18 declares that things which are seen are temporal; but things which are not seen are eternal. All pomp and glory of the world that we see around are temporal. Enduring

and eternal things may not be seen by naked eye. It needs vision and faith to see things of eternal value.

In Hebrews 11:10 we notice the story of Abraham, whose faith life was a model for all believers. “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” All manmade foundations are shaky. It will not last long. Abraham and other giants of faith could foresee the eternal city. So they didn’t give much importance to material blessings here.

In short, we see that there is something which is enduring. But that could not be gained by things of the earth. In 1corinthians 3:14, we are given the picture of works that are revealed by fire. Only whose work abide shall receive reward. Let us desire for enduring and eternal things rather than the fleeting glory of the world.

“Seek ye not the earthly pleasures,
Fading joys and failing treasures”

49

Heavenly life

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying. Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his and be their God - (Revelations 21:3).

Heaven and hell may have no meaning for a rationalist. It may be a mystery for ordinary people. Heaven is the hope of a believer, not because of its attractions. God with us is the symbol of perfect fellowship. Heavenly Life is a life of fellowship with God.

Heavenly life is a life of a holiness too. There is no space for darkness there. In Revelation 21:27, we read: “And there shall in no wise enter into anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

Moreover, heaven is a place of worship. Revelation 22:3, tells us “And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.” Yes His servants shall worship him well get exact joy and excitement of worship in heaven. Worship is often misunderstood as making loud sounds always! But worship can also be done in silence sometimes.

Excellence of heavenly life is that it is a life of happiness. Perfect happiness is achieved only in heavenly places in the presence of God the Father. Revelation 21:4 says; “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things passed away.”

Revelation 14:13 promises a place of perfect rest from all labours. All human labour is to find rest and relief in the end. But it will be a mirage on earth. Only heavenly life can offer real rest. Dear friend it is not just an imagination of the human mind! It is a reality which Bible promised.

I think, many believers have a distorted idea about eternity.. What we hear from many preachers is about non -stop worship in heaven! A God, who designed everything beautiful, would have certainly a perfect master plan for eternity, far beyond our comprehension...

50

We are Special

“In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” - (Romans 8:37).

There are different schools of philosophy which tells us that all people are alike. Some thinkers believe that all religion teaches us the same thing and aims at same goal. But Bible explains that those who are selected by God are special. They are more than conquerors. We are called and set apart for something special.

2 Corinthians 5:20, tells us that we are ambassadors for Christ. We know that ambassadors represent their parent country. They have to behave with care and dignity as representatives of a country. Their responsibility is far above ordinary citizens. If we are ambassadors of Christ we are indeed special.

Ephesians 2:7 says that “we are seated in heavenly places” Infact we are already with Christ and seated in heavenly places: as we are cleansed and saved by His precious Blood. It is a mystery that the world and intelligent inhabitation of the earth cannot comprehend that we are special people. We are selected

before foundations of the earth was laid and will be taken up at the time of rapture. - Are we not special?

Colosians 1:3 says that we are redeemed from darkness in to heavenly places. While the whole world is under the shadow of darkness, we were redeemed and that makes all the difference: It is really a mystery that the hope of glory - Christ Himself dwells in us. Moreover we selected a 'less travelled road and that made all the difference!'

This reality and speciality are obviously clear in the spirit world, which may be revealed only for those whose soul and spirit are quickened by a divine touch. It is true that we need to live a life according to our calling acknowledging our speciality. Actually it is not a matter of our self-attempt to live in an exemplary way, it is Christ who lives in us. Special place prepared for special people-that's heaven. Are you in the path towards heaven? Get ready. Be cleansed by the precious Blood of the Lamb. Hold on to eternal Life.