

# GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical For spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement.



## A NEW BEGINNING

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# A NEW BEGINNING

 By Nelson Thomas

**F**ew years ago a woman in south India wanted to restart life all over again. She traveled to a hilly area and dropped her car into a gorge. Her intention was to make the world believe that she died in an accident and she is no more. But the investigating officers found her in Chennai with a new identity. She thought that with a new name, new husband, new job and a new house she would have a new beginning.

She is not alone. There are many who hope and long for a new beginning in their life. Due to constant failure and subsequent frustrations they simply look back and melancholically wish, 'if only I could start all over again!' Quite often this remains only as a dream.

Even if one takes a new step, they soon realize the need to change again! Frequent new beginnings and abrupt endings lead to depression and hopelessness.

Don't we have a way out of failures and frustrations in life? Is it possible to experience a New Beginning? Let us consider five things in this connection:-

## 1 GOD ALONE IS THE BEGINNER OF ALL BEGINNINGS

Bible starts with the statement that "In the beginning God created", Genesis.1:1. It was God who began everything that we see today. (cf. John 1:3; Colo. 1:16) And the remarkable reality is that He Himself has neither beginning nor end. He makes no mistake, needs no modification. In His eternal wisdom and plan He began things that never became a failure. Yes, 'He has done all things well'. (Mark 7: 37)

## 2 MAN BY NATURE IS FINITE AND FAILS IN HIS BEGINNINGS

Using the God-given mind, human beings can think and plan many things. (Pro. 19:21) Man has the magnificent capacity to imagine, investigate and scheme things. He also has the ability to implement those designs. But due to sin, often he ends up in breakdown and disappointment. In the beginning everything may seem to be right, productive, but in the end dissatisfaction remains. (Pro. 16:25) However failure doesn't stop a man from scheming new ways. He will try another avenue only to face the same fate. Without yielding to the Creator man continues with the cycle of beginnings and endings.

## 3 GOD IS THE BEGINNER OF NEW BEGINNINGS

The Lord not only begins new, He also renews. (Psalm 104:30) It's true; sin marred the condition of man and the earth. But human failure can never frustrate the eternal purposes of God. In His sovereign will and wisdom He makes everything new again in accordance with His eternal purposes.

We see in the book of Genesis, the increased wickedness of man and the subsequent wrath of God and punishment. But He begins again with Noah and family. (Gen. 6: 7, 8) When that generation also failed to stay faithful to God, He chose Abraham to start afresh. (Gen. 11, 12)

The Lord did not cancel His dealings with man because of the rebellion and disobedience of the Israelites. Instead He declared He will make a new covenant with them and give a new heart with a new Spirit. (Jer. 31:32; Ezk. 36:26)



Thus, we see the Lord allows men to start all over again. Make no mistake; His purposes will never fail. He is more than happy to deal with us again. What a comfort it's for the failed and depressed soul! It's never too late to take a new turn. Of course, any such step should come from God alone, through Him and for Him. (Rom. 11:36)

#### 4 GOD BEGINS WITH THE HEART OF MAN

The basis of all new beginnings as far as man is concerned should begin with his heart. Heart is the emotional and intellectual center of our being. It is the fountain of life. (Pro. 4:23b JND) If the heart is clean and clear, everything else will be alright. (Matt. 15: 18, 19)

That's why the Lord promised to transform our stony heart to a soft fleshy heart. (Ezekiel 36: 26) That's exactly what we experience once we come to Christ for salvation. The Spirit of God begins to indwell within us and everything becomes new. A new creation takes place. As a result, we get a new nature, new direction, new purpose, even a new name. (2Cor. 5:17; 2Pet. 1:4)

However, before such wonderful divine operation, man is required to break his heart open before the Lord. (Ezek. 18:31; Joel2:13) We need to acknowledge our sins and confess it to the Lord with sorrow. Seek forgiveness and cleansing on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1Jn. 1:7, 9)

Everyone has to begin here. Sad, many make a number of resolutions month after month, and year after year. They just try to become better by self-effort. With all the wickedness and hostility in heart, rebellious man will never be able to begin afresh, whatever firm decision he may take.

A new life and renewed relationship with God alone is the right beginning for all new beginnings in our life. That is possible only through the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### 5 SUCCESS DEPENDS UPON MANY NEW BEGINNINGS IN LIFE

True and sustained victory in life demands several new beginnings that touch various aspects of life. Once a believer begins to experience new life in Jesus Christ they also begin to realize the need for new strength and grace on a daily basis. As with our physical body, our inner man also needs nourishment and renewed energy by feeding on the Word of God. (1Peter 2: 1 - 31; Isa. 40:31)

Failure in this area makes one fruitless and carnal. (1Cor. 3:1ff) Being convicted of their poor spiritual state they too would cry in helplessness, 'can I start all over again?'

##### *Path in the waters*

Yes, indeed! That's what the scripture says. Notice these words; "Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43: 18, 19)

What encouraging words were these to the Israelites who were fallen, depressed and demoralized due to prolonged captivity!

Don't judge the future with the past experiences. God will do unprecedented, unexpected things for them. Path in the waters and rivers in the desert were something they never imagined. (Isaiah 43:16, 19) In Isaiah 41:4 the Lord reminds them of His actions from the beginning and exhorts them not to fear the future or dwell on the past. He is able to do exceeding abundantly than we ask or think.

Such a new beginning for Israel will be evident and people will see their newness and enjoy their fruit, even call them by a new name. (Isaiah 62:2; Ezek. 47:12) Their lost glory and status will be restored.

All these are applicable for a believer's spiritual life today. No need to be discouraged and depressed due to the persistent problems and trials. Even now, a new beginning is possible. Refuse to dwell on the past. Look forward. (Phil. 3:13, 14) Come close to Him. Wait upon Him. Be cleansed afresh by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Renew your relationship and grow from strength to strength.

## *Failure not final*

Remember, as someone has rightly observed, ‘victorious life is always a series of new beginnings’. No need to consider the present state to be an end in itself. Any end can be a new beginning. Failure could be a back door to success, stumbling block could be a stepping stone and weakness can be our strength through the amazing grace of the Lord. Hallelujah!

We have plenty of examples. Moses who failed in the first mission, Peter who denied the Lord and John Mark who deserted the Lord’s servants; they all could start all over again and succeed.

Job’s story is more pertinent. A blameless, upright, God fearing man suddenly loses all what he has—wealth, health, family and everything. Every one forsook him, even his wife. They all thought that the story of Job was over.

Yet we read, “The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning.” (Job 42:12) The Lord not only restored all what he lost but gave it double.

A close study of the passage reveals that 4 things took place before he regained his past glory.

- i. He saw the Lord and His greatness, Job 42:1, 2, and 5
- ii. He saw his true self and hated it, Job 42:6
- iii. He repented with sorrow, Job 42:6
- iv. He prayed seriously and selflessly, Job 42:10

Beloved, what are you waiting for? Start afresh now. Any moment can be a new beginning with Christ. Before it’s too late, take the above steps by faith and ask the Lord Almighty to grant a new beginning.

## **6 THE CULMINATION OF ALL THE NEW BEGINNINGS**

It is interesting to notice that Isaiah while explaining the divine programs of new beginnings goes on to explain the future program of God too. There we see the climax of the new beginnings God initiated. Isaiah 65:17 cf. Rev. 21:1

When the world leaders are trying to bring about a new world order and fail miserably, the prophet Isaiah says God will set up a new heaven and a new earth. God will intervene in the affairs of man putting an end to all the uncertainties.

Any beginning will have an end, but the beginning of our life with Christ will have no end. So let’s make sure that we begin with Him.


“

***God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man.***

\_\_\_\_\_ C.S. Lewis

”

# BRIEF NOTES ON TABERNACLE – 7: THE LINEN SHEETS (EXODUS 26)

 By Charles .E. Wigg , Australia

The linen fence would be the first thing that one approaching the tabernacle would see; it formed the mass of material to fill the view.

Linen in the scriptures speaks of righteousness. The Bride - the Lamb's wife is clothed in "Fine linen, pure and white;" "for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints", Rev 19: 8c

This emphasizes the need for practical righteousness and holiness in the life of each believer. Paul said that the Corinthian believers were their letter written in

their hearts, "known and read of all men", 2 Cor.3: 2-3). Any person who seeks to draw near to God, the first thing that they see of Him is what they see in the lives of His people, we are God's love letter to lost men.

It is most important then that our lives commend the Gospel to others, that we "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things", Titus 2: 10. We must let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good (or upright), works and glorify our Father, who is in heaven. (Mat 5: 15) We are

to attract men to Christ, the "gate", not turn them away.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE FENCE:

The fence was there, not to keep people out, but to direct them to the gate; even a blind person could find his way to the gate, by following the fence around.

This demonstrates the purpose of the believer's testimony, both individually, and as members of the local assembly. We are meant by our clean and upright lives, to attract and to guide people to Christ, who is the "gate", the only way by which any person can come to God.



## SERMON OUTLINE:

# A NEW START

1. A New Master, John 13: 13
2. A New Power, Act 1:8
3. A New Object, 2Cor 5:15
4. New Desires, Gala 5:16
5. New Company, Act 4:23

-- W. B. Westcott

# TIME AND TIMING

 By Bro. Joy Murickal Issac, Kerala

**O**ne more year left us with all its beauty and struggles. We have learnt many lessons and experiences in the past one year. Let us be grateful before God and grateful to fellow beings too.

We all know the reducing balance in our bank account but surprisingly we don't care about the balance of time in our lives' account. The Bible explicitly tells us of the importance of time and timing. Both the terms, time and timing are important and co related.

Let me make it clear; suppose the duration of a game is one hour. Either teams or individuals get equal duration. The team or players who use their time wisely and do everything timely gets more points and eventually that lead to victory.

***God does everything in its perfect timing. We can see it in many occasions.***

1. God gives everything in its season for the blessed

and chosen people. Leviticus 26:4; Duet. 28:12

2. God does everything at the right time. Romans 5:6; Isaiah 60: 20

3. God's words also fulfill in their proper time. Luke 1:20

4. God exalts people at the proper time. 1Peter5:6

We know the importance of the right time in exams, sports, share market and certain emergency situations. Blessings in the right time make us glad and teach us many good things, thus enabling us lead a fruitful Christian life.

Dear brethren, let us run and do everything on time. Moreover, we must understand and acknowledge the importance of time and timing. Let us pray and prepare to do everything at the proper time.

May our heavenly Father bless and enlighten us to lead a favorable life before God in the coming days. May His Grace be up on us always.

## ANECDOTE:

### STARTING OVER

**O**nce upon a time a young Greek artist named Timanthes studied under a respected tutor. After several years the teacher's efforts seemed to have paid off when Timanthes painted an exquisite work of art. Unfortunately, he became so enraptured with the painting that he spent days gazing at it. One morning when he arrived to admire his work, he was shocked to find it blotted out with paint.

Angry, Timanthes ran to his teacher, who admitted he had destroyed the painting. "I did it for your own good. That painting was retarding your progress. Start again and see if you can do better." Timanthes took his teacher's advice and produced Sacrifice of Iphigenia, which is regarded as one of the finest paintings of antiquity.

*Source: Today in the Word*

# THE SIGN OF JONAH

## MATTHEW 12:39 - 41

 By James Nair, Hyderabad

It is quite interesting to see why the Lord Jesus parallels the significance of His death and burial to the sign of Jonah, a runaway prophet who desired to run from the presence of the Lord. While most of the prophetic books warn nations of the judgment of the Lord, the book of Jonah successfully completes the mission of transformation of a heathen city, Nineveh – from the beasts to the king! And more surprisingly, not by a string of sermons or oracles, but this transformation was brought about with a mere warning by Jonah – Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

Moreover, this complete book revolves around reforming a disobedient Jonah, rather than Nineveh, through God's obedient creation – the sea, fish, mariners, people of Nineveh, plant and even a worm! However, the miraculous escape of Jonah was significantly important in the transformation of Nineveh, and in respect to the divine sacrifice of our Lord, we can think of it as a three-fold purpose.

### 1. God's Judgment

The messenger has a greater impact than the message here. Jonah silently speaks to us, "If I'm not spared, you won't be either." The recipient of God's judgment deep down in the waters was walking alive on the shore, still fresh with the signs of God's judgment. He spelt fear to those around, and why would not one believe and repent? Here is one who ran away from God, even to the depths of the earth – to die; here is a disobedient messenger of God, reprimanded in the sea.

And now, his presence itself is enough for the city to transform – from the beasts to the king!

But a greater messenger we see in Jesus, an obedient Son, yet punished to bear man's sins on the cross. He takes away the punishment of man, and if man would not believe in this great sign, God's punishment is due upon him.

### 2. God's Presence

Jonah ran away from the presence of the Lord, following the footsteps of his forefathers – Adam, Cain and many before him. And he was about to realise that even if he dwelt in the uttermost parts of the earth, His hand would lead him and hold him. He was alive now because of God's ever-continuing presence.

The Lord prepared a fish for Him – how comforting is that to know, that God cares for us even when He punishes us, His presence is always with us – even in our deepest troubles, our darkest hours.

And where could one find a better example of His presence than in the death of the Saviour – He went further down than Jonah, to the 'heart of the Earth', the centre-most part or the hottest place inside the earth, to catch hold of us who were in the death and despair of sin.

God prepared a body for us – How truly is He our Immanuel, God with us! Jonah silently comforts us here – "Even in my darkest hour, I can feel His unchanging presence."

### 3. God's Love

The most comforting truth of this sign

is the love of God to a wretched man. God prepared a fish to not just keep him alive, but also to remind him of his great love even in the slimiest, smelliest and darkest situation in the belly of the earth, and thereafter redeem him to the light above.

Perhaps, is this not the place he deserved to be, and yet he's hopeful now to look to His holy temple – he sees a ray of hope to live again, through God's love. He not only feels the hand of God holding him, but His love takes him to the shore again. There, as he walks in Nineveh with the sign of God's judgment, he also proclaims God's love, "He gave me life again, I'm redeemed and I'll praise Him".

There's hope even in the deepest of deep that you could ever fathom. How it reminds us of the Lord, who not just went down to the centre of the earth, but he brought our souls up from the grave – alive together with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places, to the praise of His glory – Marvellous Provision, Marvellous Love!

His powerful love catapulted us back to life – eternal life with Him. Let's not be weary of His commandments and His purposes for us in this life. He uses us for His missions, for the praise of His glory, and therefore let us obey Him unflinchingly, going where He wants us to go, speaking what He wants us to speak.

When in fear and dismay, let us remind ourselves of His continuing presence – Lo, I'm with you always. Let's obey Him at any cost and proclaim His love; what greater cost can there be, than His precious blood which He shed for us?



# TIME MANAGEMENT: CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

 By Nelson Thomas, Mumbai

**E**xamine the lifestyle of any successful person from any field; one of their basic qualities would be the ability to manage their time well. Effective management of time not only makes one more productive for the Lord, it makes them satisfied and happy too. Let us consider few lessons from the life and service of the Lord Jesus Christ who can be rightly called the 'Master of Time Management'.

## 1 He was well aware of His mission in the divine time table, Mark 1:15a, 38; Acts 1:7

He began His ministry saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15a). The entire life and service of Christ was in accordance with this eternal plan of God. (cf. Gal. 4:4; Acts 17:26)

## 2 He could easily balance His time between work, family, friends, etc., Luke 5:1; 8:47; John 7:3

Even as Christ was always focused on His ultimate goal of incarnation, He found time for various other duties as well. He had time to teach the crowd and serve the needy individuals who interrupted Him. He did not hesitate to visit various villages and homes of the individuals. Apart from the twelve apostles, He had a seventy men team and also the inner circle of three to interact with. Even in such busy schedule of multi-faceted ministry, the Lord found enough time to be alone with the Father. All these show how carefully the Lord prioritized His daily activities.

## 3 He never allowed anyone to control His time, John 2:4b; 7: 6, 8

His response to Mary is poignant, "My hour has not yet come". (John 2:4b) He knows what should be done at what time, and no one needed to dictate Him. He was not distracted by the pressure of people. (Luke 4: 42, 43) Similarly, no one could stop His work either. (Luke 13: 31 - 33; John 7: 6, 8; 8:20)

## 4 He was conscious of the distinct time table for each individual, John 7: 6, 8

When the Lord said, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready..... My time has not yet fully come." (John 7:6, 8), He was acknowledging this truth.

Just as God's plan and purposes for each one is different, the time also is unique for each one of us. (Ecc. 3: 1 - 8; Psa. 31: 15) Before this divinely designed time, nothing happens irrespective of human efforts. (John 7:30; 8:20)

## 5 He was mindful of the passing time, John 9:4

"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." (John 9:4) The Lord knew that the time to work was limited and soon the opportunity would disappear due to various reasons. As we advance in our age, we realize this truth more personally and seriously that time runs so fast!

Remember, time is the only resources that we cannot store up. We have to use the time wisely and profitably, if not it will be wasted like running water.

If the Lord Jesus was so concerned about this truth, how much more earnestly we mortals need to number our days! (Psalm 89: 47; 90:12)



## 6 All His activities were based on this awareness, John 9:4

Awareness of the brevity of time made the Lord to act upon it. His life and service were affected by this reality. Three things are noteworthy here:

- a. He Worked, John 9:4
- b. He Loved, John 13:1
- c. He Prayed, John 17:1

What a solemn lesson for us. If we are really conscious of the shortness of our available time, how zealous we ought to be in serving the Lord, loving one another and spending time in prayer as our Savior did! (Rom. 13: 11; Eph. 5: 15, 16)

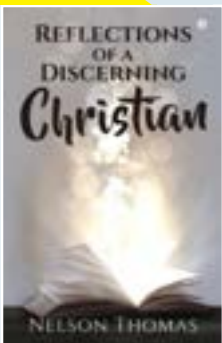
## 7 Christ completed His task triumphantly at the given time, John 19:30

At the 33 1/2 year of His earthly sojourn the Lord Jesus finished His work well, keeping nothing remaining. Even at double of that age if we cannot satisfactorily depart, what a shame it would be!

Yes, Apostle Paul could say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2Timothy 4:7)

Definitely, there are many more lessons we can draw from Christ's life on time management. But the most important thing is to emulate His conviction of mission and zeal to finish the course in time. What a blessing if we can complete God's purposes in this short span of life. May the Lord give us grace to comprehend the seriousness of the brevity of life and fulfil our obligations before too late.

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