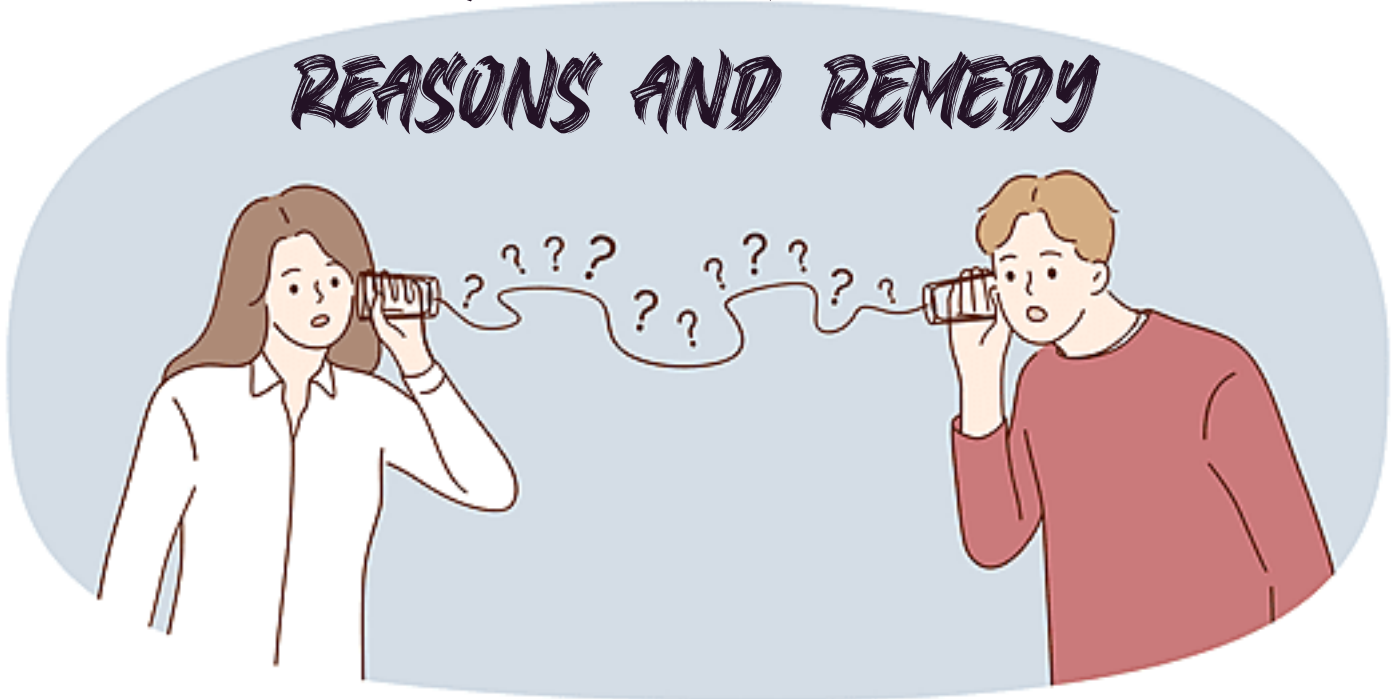


# GRACE & PEACE

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



## MISUNDERSTANDINGS: REASONS AND REMEDY



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# MISUNDERSTANDINGS: REASONS AND REMEDY

 By Nelson Thomas

**O**ne of the major reasons behind conflicts among individuals, families and even communities is misunderstanding. Not only does it affect interpersonal relationships, misunderstanding also affects our spiritual life. Wrong interpretation of God's word causes one to have a wrong idea about God and His plan. This results in unbelief, disobedience and rebellion which in turn lead to divine displeasure and judgement.

Christ's words to the Sadducees who questioned Him on resurrection is poignant, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22: 29). One of the reasons behind the betrayal and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was actually the failure to comprehend

the scripture well (Luke 23: 34; Acts 3: 17; 1Cor. 2:8).

In this brief note let us explore misunderstanding which disturbs peace and harmony between one another. We cannot just assume that everyone will understand us right. Godly men and women have always been misjudged and maligned.

Consider the pain of Job when his own friends misunderstood him. Joseph was misunderstood for no reason and the subsequent cost was heavy. Eli's comment to prayerful Hanna was humiliating. Apostle Paul's actions were misinterpreted by his own converts in Corinth.

## CAUSES

What are the reasons why others even our own dear ones misunderstand us easily? In spite of our sincere efforts we are misunderstood and our motive is questioned. Remember, it is not the problem of one side only. For example, Mr. A misunderstands Mr. B. It is easy to blame Mr. A for misjudging Mr. B. But the truth could be that Mr. B also had something in him that made Mr. A to come to a wrong conclusion.

So, if we are serious to understand the cause, consequences, and the cure for such interpersonal issues, we need to have an open mind and an unbiased attitude.

Let us consider only 3 major factors that cause misunderstanding among each other.

# 1 INCOMPATIBILITY

Cultural, linguistic and educational differences may hinder people to understand one another. Even among the same culture and language we see differences in each localities and people group. Also, differences in age, profession, experience etc., may hinder people to appreciate the thoughts and convictions of others.

# 2 ASSUMPTION

Each one of us has a unique thinking pattern and value system that is based on our background. If we look at people and hear them with a preconceived notion that is unique to our personality, our conclusion may be wrong. Because, before we carefully listen and observe, we will never understand what another person feels or thinks.

# 3 SELF-CENTREDNESS

When one is occupied with himself, he will only see his own point of view. He will keep on narrating his thoughts and feelings, but would be least interested to pay attention to someone's side. Such people tend to feel what they say is absolutely right and view all others with disregard and doubt.

There could be few more factors that hinder mutual understanding and respect. A personal effort to discover more of such elements would definitely revolutionize our personal relationships.

We should not forget that the moment we make one wrong conclusion against our dear ones, it does not end there. One after another we may begin to 'see' things the other may have never even imagined. If not dealt with in time, it may snowball into serious issues and turmoil.



*“How seldom we weigh our neighbor in the same balance with ourselves.”*

*-Thomas A Kempis*

## CURE

When we are misunderstood and even maligned what should be our response? How to remove the misjudgement of our fellow brethren to maintain a cordial, harmonious relationship?

We have many examples in the scripture. The response of Apostle Paul when he was misunderstood by the Corinthian believers over his cancelled visits, gives us many lessons (2Cor. 1: 12ff).

We also have a classic passage in the Old Testament where the people of Israel almost went to war against the two and a half tribes in the east of Jordan (Joshua 22). The concern of Israelites in Canaan may seem to be valid, for they heard that the tribes in the east of Jordan have built another altar which is against the command of Moses (Joshua 22: 11 cf. Lev. 17: 8 – 10; Deut. 12: 13, 14). They expected the wrath of God against such a transgression and the whole of Israel will have to bear the consequences. They considered the actions of the eastern tribes as treachery, rebellion and iniquity (Josh. 22: 16, 17). Their immediate response

was to wage war against the rebels and destroy their land (Josh. 22:12, 33).

However, it seems someone suggested to send a fact-finding team before declaring a war. Under the leadership of Phinehas, ten representatives went and shared their concern with the children of Ruben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh (22: 15ff).

They in fact used very strong words against the eastern tribes. Yet they patiently heard them and responded in a very humble and cordial manner. They acknowledged the seriousness of violating the Lord's order but explained their original motive in building an altar. Their concern was unity between the people of Israel who lived in the east as well as west of Jordan. The altar they made was only a replica, as a witness for their children (22:21ff).

The delegation was satisfied with their answer and agreed that there is no treachery or rebellion on their part. Their report pleased all in Israel, and they praised the Lord for averting a battle and subsequent destruction (22:30ff).

## LESSONS

*Don't we have number of lessons on crisis management? Let me classify few without much explanation.*

- i. Zeal for truth and holiness is commendable, but it should be balanced with wisdom.
- ii. Never act on what we hear about someone. Meet them, share your apprehension and listen to their views as well.
- iii. If misunderstood and censured, be patient to hear and understand the critics.
- iv. Humbly and sincerely acknowledge our fault, even if minor, that gave a reason for suspicion.

- v. It's not enough that our motive is right; the method and outcome also must be right. As far as possible, avoid an occasion that creates doubt in others (1Thess. 5:22; 2Cor. 8:21).
- vi. Always be ready to clear up any misunderstanding that arises, to maintain unity and divine blessings among God's people. It's impossible to keep anything under the carpet for long. (Psa. 133).
- vii. A clear conscience before God is definitely our strength, yet do not just trust your own feelings, for our heart could deceive us (Josh. 22:22; 2Cor. 1:12; Jere. 17:9).

*Let me conclude quoting W. Graham Scroggie on this passage.*

“Among Christians perhaps there is nothing more grievous and damaging than misunderstanding. They so easily arise, they so swiftly spread, and the further they go, the worse they get.....It will be vain for us to sing hymns and go in to raptures over addresses, if we have made no effort to end estrangements with our fellow believers in the family, in business and in the church. Are there people at home or abroad who are heavy of spirit, or broken of heart because of your unjust treatment of them because of your false judgements on their justifiable actions? They are not singing as you are...”

Finally brethren, there is no use of blaming someone else. For the sake of harmony among the saints and the favour and glory of God let us bear with one another in love and humility (1Peter 4:8).

NTK

## QUOTES:

“

*“A good many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.”*

*-William James*

”

“

*“I hate to think the worst of others when I might think the best.”*

*-Samuel Chadwick*

”

## STUDY :

# NOTES ON TABERNACLE – 12: THE BRAZEN ALTER

 By Charles E. Wigg, Australia

**A**s mentioned earlier, the brass, or bronze, represents the Lord Jesus as the one who has borne all the wrath of a holy God against our sin, and our sins. Bronze, or copper, is renowned for its ability to stand and to absorb heat; it has a very high melting point.

Though outwardly meek, lowly in heart, yet He had the strength to endure all that men did to Him, but in addition to bear the unmitigated fury, the fire of God's wrath against sin. All that God could righteously demand of lost and guilty sinners, He, the sinless one paid it all.

That is why before He died, He cried in mighty triumph, "It is finished", He died in the full knowledge that nothing remained of the wrath of God. Blessed be His Holy Name!

## NEVER TO BE REPLACED

The acacia wood was overlaid with bronze, this bronze must have been quite thick, because all of the burnt offerings, all of the peace offerings, the oblations, the trespass offerings, the consecration offerings, were burnt upon this altar, during the 40 years of the wilderness journey of the children of Israel, and also for many years afterwards, when they were in the land, right up to the time of Samuel, were burned upon this altar.

We never read of it being either repaired, or replaced. Thus for so many years the fire burned both night and day in this great altar of bronze, for we are told that the fire was never to go out, Lev. 6 ; 9-13.

This would teach us, that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our "altar", is never to be replaced by another, that as long as we are here in this wilderness – world - , we are to continually offer the sacrifice of praise and worship, to Him, and through Him to God, and our Father.



# WHAT'S IN YOUR BOX?

 By Samuel Shinde, Chiplun

**R**on lived in slums, grew up playing in the streets and living a substandard life. At the same time, his father was passionate about providing Ron the best of education, which he did. And Ron did well, enough for him to get into Merchant Navy. That's when Ron's story took a drastic turn.

He had money, with which he didn't have to continue living in slums. Rather, he bought two lavish houses, one for his parents and one for himself. He owned a couple of cars too. And now, no more substandard clothing, Ron was always seen in branded clothes. In fact, he wore branded stuff from head to toe.

However, all throughout this, the change was only external. From within, Ron hadn't changed. He was still a base-minded person, aggressive and a man of coarse speech. His marriage couldn't do any better, as he did not have a great relationship with his wife.

One fine day, as he was reading the Bible, he read about the Ark of Testimony in Exodus 40:3. Like the king from Esther 6:1, Ron couldn't sleep that night. His spirit was stirred to study the Ark of Testimony, like how Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia in Ezra 1:1. So he picked up the Bible and started studying about the Ark of Testimony.

In Exodus 37: 1-9, we have the description of how the Ark of Testimony was made. Upon reading this scripture portion, Ron concluded that it was a box made out of acacia wood, with four rings attached and two poles going through the rings to carry the ark. And all overlaid with gold, within and without.

He looked up the Hebrew words for Ark and Testimony and found out that Ark was Aron (אָרוֹן) and Testimony was Edut (תְּדוּעָה). Interestingly, he also noticed that this Ark of Testimony was also known as Aron Ha-qodesh (אָרוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ), which means Holy Ark. He understood that the ark was nothing but a big box made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold. However, the only reason it became Aron Ha-qodesh (אָרוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ, i.e. Holy Ark, was because it had Edut (תְּדוּעָה) meaning the Testimony, in it.

Testimony means the very word of God, i.e. the Ten Words on the Tables as a solemn divine charge, as per Abridge BDB (Abridge Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of Old Testament). And as per Easton's Bible Dictionary, the Testimony in the ark is translated as the Scriptures (Ps. 19:7; 119:88; Isa. 8:16,20).

This fact opened Ron's eyes. The ark, though overlaid with gold from within and

without, is just a box made of wood. It had value because of the Word of God. A quick thought ran through Ron's mind- It's so true that the box is valued only when something valuable is kept in it. Otherwise, regardless of how much we decorate it or if we keep junk in it, the value of the box is worthless. Similarly, no matter how much we wear fine branded clothes, have high-end cars or own big houses, this is external and worthless, unless, we have the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives, who's the Word of God (John 1:1).

The external beauty depends so heavily on what we have within ourselves. Ron wept, repented and acknowledging his fault, pleaded to the Lord to forgive him. He then determined to himself, that from now on he would be the holy ark, i.e. 'Aron Ha-qodesh' and not just 'Aron'. He received the Word in his life and his life truly changed from within.

We are the ark of Testimony. We're overlaid with gold for His glory. This gold would be of no value, if there's no Christ in it.

## ANECDOTE:

# SAYING VS. DOING

 By Em Griffin

A man named La Piere sent out letters to the managers of 256 hotels and restaurants across the southern half of the U.S. He told them that he was planning to tour the south with two Chinese companions and he wanted to know ahead of time whether they would be served.

Ninety-two percent of the businesses replied that they did not serve Chinese and that La Piere could save himself considerable embarrassment by not showing up with such undesirables. He wasn't surprised. Racial prejudice was a part of southern life in the 1930s, and this was long before a ban was placed on discrimination in interstate commerce.

La Piere ignored the managers' advice, however. Accompanied by a Chinese man and his wife, he visited every one of the establishments that said they'd refuse service.

Surprise! Ninety-nine percent of the places admitted the oriental couple, and almost all did so without a hassle.

La Piere's study points up something that's a consistent finding in the field of persuasion that a person may say he feels one thing, and then turn right around and do something completely different.



## OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

 By Tom Johns, Austin, Texas.

### *God Judges Our Motives!*

Perhaps the readers might recognize the name 'M E Cherian' - a pioneer missionary to Tamil Nadu, India. He was from Kerala and was a prolific Malayalam and Tamil hymn writer. He passed on to eternity in 1993. In one of his Malayalam hymns, 'Kaividelle yen karthaave' which means 'do not forsake me, Lord,' he included a few lines of his heartfelt lament about the reality of being misunderstood. It goes like this:

*“Uttavarayalum, uthamarayalum thetti-dharipithe marthiya swabhavamaam.”*

It can be translated as, whether people of close relations or people of exemplary traits, it is merely human nature to fail to understand or to take things in the wrong sense (of someone's motives). Whether we operate in the spiritual, secular or domestic spheres, this reality follows us everywhere since we are flawed humans.

We must make purposeful efforts to avoid making the same mistakes by trusting God as the ultimate Judge. This trust would make us less judgmental and less agitated when others do it against us and prevent us from ever going forward with such destructive behavior.

Romans 14 deals with the code of conduct for Christians in a unique way. If we study and practice this chapter, our lives would be a blessing to others, and we will receive peace and find the purpose for our lives. One of the key verses we find here is vs.4 “Who are you to judge

the servant of another? To his own master, he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”

In the first 11 chapters of Romans, Paul taught the believers the preciousness of this salvation, expounding the doctrinal truths. In chapters 12-16, Paul outlined Christian conduct and how to behave in the church. The church in Rome was then made up of believers from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds.

Their cultural baggage and religious convictions created many conflicts. Paul taught behavioral tolerance without compromising the critical message of the gospel for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. And these are still relevant to us.

### *If you bite and devour one another?*

Satan often works on the human ego to create division and threaten the necessary unity among the believers. Now that we live in the social media age, we all have communication platforms. Such platforms do serve both wonderfully and tragically. We have witnessed exchanges of messages that tickle the carnal senses which often showed utter disregard for these scriptural principles.

Paul was consumed in exuberance when he explained this gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. Often, he burst into much excitement about this glorious gospel and expressed it in the form of hymns or doxology. Some such examples are in Eph. 1:3 and 3:21 and Rom. 11:36. Today, we fail to follow such a pattern and to some level, are interested in finding

fault with fellow believers. This is primarily done in the name of 'removing the leaven' from the holy lump.

When we lose sight of this glorious gospel, we drift into less important things. We need to tap into Paul's excitement when he wrote these epistles. This will lead us to worshipful adoration toward God. We will marvel at the work of the Father in drawing us to His Son [John 6:44], the redemptive work of Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 11:23-26], and the sustaining ministry of the Holy Spirit [John 16:7-8]. When we recognize that each believer carries within the triune God [John 14:23 and John 16:7-8], then we will start enjoying the fellowship of God to a supreme level.

Let's examine the dominating forces that are taking us captive in our Christian journey. Mine can be different from yours. But the Spirit of God can bring us to the point of us becoming conformed to the image of Jesus Christ [Rom. 8:29] by chipping away what is not Christ-like. Then we will be less judgmental and be more compassionate and start recognizing our faults by which we grieve the Holy Spirit.

Also, we will start noticing how far we fall short of the supreme calling that we received when God saved us. We see a strong warning in Matt 7: 3-5. "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." This is a very strong warning to each of us.

'Thettidharipithee Marthiya Swabhavamaam' [It is merely human nature to fail to understand or take things in the wrong sense.]

It is discouraging to see that we are criticized when our heart is right with God, and we are exercising according to the light we received from the Word of God and guided by the Holy

Spirit. Even the Lord Jesus Christ was accused wrongly by the religious elites of His day. 'Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' Luke 7:34.

They did not have the spiritual discernment to comprehend the very purpose of Jesus' advent to this Planet. His mission was misunderstood. He came to save the sinners and not the self-proclaimed righteous ones. Luke 5:27-32.

When we carry this message and remain as the ambassadors of Christ, we cannot expect any better. [Luke 23:31] 'If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?' His followers are asked to march to a different drumbeat than that of the world. 'Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.' (Rom. 12:21) Let me encourage us all with a verse from 1 Cor. 15:58. "Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

When we tear down others, it is like blowing out another's candle thinking that it will make our candle shine brighter. Instead, we are to be united and block against the winds Satan is amassing and protect all our candles to shine brighter. The unadulterated message of the gospel and the unfailing love among and between God's people, united with a common purpose may be what is pleasing to the Lord. How well are we doing in this regard?

If there is room for improvement, which I do believe we do have, let us begin praying earnestly with united hearts. None of the commands of God can be carried out with –our efforts alone. It needs divine help.

The Bible teaches two essential principles in this regard. The blessings are conditioned upon our response to faith, and secondly, God ultimately enables us to achieve faith and obedience. This admission and the subsequent actions would demonstrate our total dependency on our sovereign God.

# OUTLINE

## UNCHANGABLE THINGS

 By HYP

1. ***Unchangeable God, Mala 3:6***

As Creator – Redeemer – Judge. Not to Abram the faithful, Isaac the obedient, but to Jacob the crooked, the worm.

2. ***Unchangeable Saviour, Heb 13:8***

Yesterday He bore our sins on the Cross; today He bears our cares on the throne; tomorrow ourselves into Glory.

3. ***Unchangeable Spirit, John 14: 16***

Another Comforter, paraclete, agent. May grieve, quench but never banish.

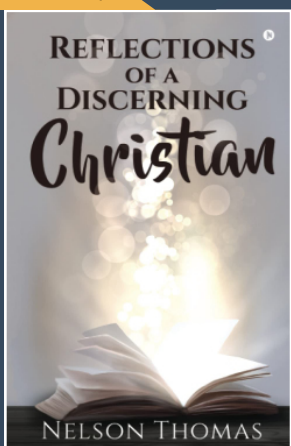
4. ***Unchangeable word, 1Pet 1:25***

Grass, ordinary man, withereth; flower of grass, wise and mighty men, falleth away.

5. ***Unchangeable inheritance, 1Peter 1:4***

No moth to damage from without, no rust to corrode from within, no thief to venture within or without.

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