

GRACE & PEACE

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BREVITY OF LIFE AND THE FLEETING TIME

 By Nelson Thomas

A visit to a hospital or a graveyard brings before us certain realities of life we otherwise tend to neglect. In the midst of our busy schedule, such instances exceptionally touch our consciences. It is wise to make use of those rare occasions for our learning and transformation.

After attending half a dozen funerals within a span of one month, this writer is deeply exercised to consider the brevity of human life afresh and ponder upon related truths. No wonder the wise man in the Bible suggested to visit the house of mourning rather than a house of feasting. For it's there the living can think and learn from the depth of their hearts (Ecc. 7:2).

STARTLING STATISTICS

Look around and see the number of deaths that are taking place in India:

- Covid19 pandemic took away 5, 33,295 lives in India.
- In 2021, the number of suicides in India was 1, 64,000 and it rose to 1, 68, 491 in 2022.
- In 2021, the number of deaths due to road accidents in India was 1, 53, 972 but in 2022 this number also rose to 1, 68,000.

Now, add to these figures the number of demises caused by various other factors, like

calamities, diseases, old age-related ailments, etc. You will see that it is innumerable indeed.



When countless lives are leaving this world every moment, never forget it is God's grace and mercy that we are still alive and healthy. It's not because we are better than others, but because God wants to continue to teach, mold, and use us for His glory.

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

Does this mean we should be worried over our death which can happen at any time? As far as born-again believers are concerned, we believe that nothing happens by chance. From the human point of view, certain incidents may look like accidents or unfortunate. Further, we may not have answers to many of the complex issues and events that man faces every day.

Nevertheless, we who believe in the sovereignty of God acknowledge with all humility that our God who is omnipotent

and omniscient knows the best, and He never makes a mistake.

This is true even with the passing away of His people. It is in this sense that the psalmist wrote, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.” (Psa. 116:15). A believer’s death does not take place before God’s intended time, because He values the home call of His beloved child, and our times are in His hand (Psa. 31:15).

THE APPOINTED TIME

Notice the number of times the enemies tried to kill the Lord Jesus Christ, but the scripture says, “no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come” (John 7:30; 8:20). And when the hour had come, the Lord gave Himself to death despite the pain and agony involved (Matt. 26:42; John 19:30).

In connection with the apostle Paul also we find that several tried and even took an oath to kill Paul, but nothing happened till the Lord accomplished His purposes in and through His servant (Acts 14:19; 23: 11, 12, 33; 27: 23–25). When the time came for him to leave, he declared triumphantly, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2Tim. 4:7)

So, believers need not face death dreadfully. Definitely death is inevitable and even painful; however, it is never a devastating and hopeless event for us. Primarily, we believe that only after the Lord accomplishes what He planned for us, does He call us home to be with Him.

An interesting for us to notice here is that certain Old Testament saints even desired to

die, yet God did not allow them to leave this world before their appointed time! (cf. Num. 11:15; 2Kings 19:4; Job 3:21; 7: 15; Jer. 8:3; Jonah 4:3).

DEATH NOT THE END

Another factor that enables a believer to face death courageously and realistically is that death is not an end in itself. Of course, it’s universal and certain. As the scripture says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because all sinned.” (Rom. 5:12). “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” (Heb. 9:27).

The Lord Jesus made it very clear that everyone who died will rise again one day. “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (John 5: 28, 29 cf. Rev. 20:13)

FAR BETTER

A believer’s death has been described in several ways. A detailed study of the pictures associated reveal that a Christian’s death is not a loss but a gain. It’s a transition to a new phase of life, a promotion to a better place (Phil. 1: 21–23).

A. *A Sleep, 1Cor. 15:6; 1The. 4:13*

The most common imagery used for a saint’s death in the scripture is sleep, showing it’s a time to rest from all our labors and to wake up with a glorified body at a later time (Rev. 14:13; Phil. 3:21; 1Thess. 4: 13–17).

B. A departure, 2 Tim. 4:6

Bible scholars find a wide range of implications for the Greek word Paul used here. The major truth here is that at death we conclude our earthly sojourn and depart for the heavenly abode. This means that our mission here is completed, so we return to our Home where we actually belong to. It's a new turn in our pilgrim journey, for we depart from one location to another, where there will be no more pain, sorrow, and tears (Reve. 21:4).

C. A dismantling of a tent, 2Cor. 5:1

Paul compares this body in which we live today with a tent. At death, this earthly tent is dismantled for a heavenly building which is far better.

So, when a believer dies, the fact is that not only does he continue to exist, but also that he is in a far better place and position. This truth must inspire believers to face their death with hope and serenity.

PREPARE FOR DEATH

We have considered three main points:

- ▶ The reality of death – unexpected and increasing.
- ▶ Nothing happens for believers before the appointed time.
- ▶ The truth about a believer's death – it's a gain not loss.

In view of these realities, is it not wise to prepare for this inevitable, sure event? Most people prefer to avoid it thinking such a preparation would speed up their death. But when death knocks at their doors in the most unexpected manner and time, they are shattered for they were unprepared for it. So wisdom demands, that we must be ready as if our turn will come at any moment, even as we make plans for the future anticipating long life in the will of God.

(How do we prepare for death? [Page 11](#))

OUTLINE

SHORTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE

1. *Like a shadow, Psa 102:11*
2. *Like a weaver's shuttle, Job 7:6*
3. *Like a hurrying messenger, Job 9:25*
4. *Like a flower that fades away, Job 14:2*
5. *Like a sigh, Psa 90:9*
6. *Like a shepherd's tent, Isa 38: 12*
7. *Like a weaver's web, Isa 38:12*
8. *Like a vanishing vapour, James 4:14*

THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

 Source Unknown.

One morning in 1888, Alfred Nobel the inventor of dynamite awoke to read his own obituary. The obituary was printed as a result of a simple journalistic error.

It was Alfred's brother that had died, and the reporter carelessly reported the death of the wrong brother.

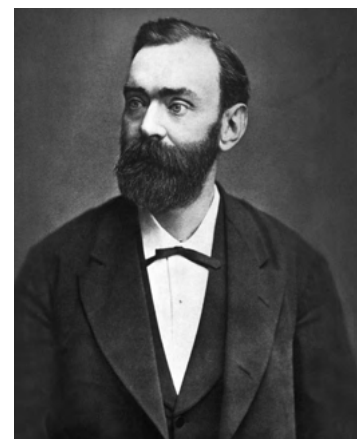
Any man would be disturbed under the circumstances, but to Alfred, the shock was overwhelming because he saw himself as the world saw him: The "Dynamite King," the great industrialist who had made an immense fortune from explosives. This, as far as the general public was concerned, was the entire purpose of Alfred's life.

None of his true intentions to break down the barriers that separated men and ideas for peace were recognized or given serious consideration. He was simply a merchant of death. And for that alone he would be remembered.

As he read the obituary with horror, he

resolved to make clear to the world the true meaning and purpose of his life. This could be done through the final disposition of his fortune.

His last will and testament--an endowment of five annual prizes for outstanding contributions in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, or Medicine, Literature, and Peace (the sixth category of Economics was added later) – would be the expression of his life's ideals and ultimately, this would be why we would remember him.



The result was the most valuable of prizes given to those who had done the most for the cause of world peace. It is called today, the "Nobel Peace Prize."

'GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY'

 Source Unknown.

The story behind this well-known hymn is interesting and inspiring. William Cowper (1731 – 1800) the author of this song had a troublesome childhood particularly as his dear mother passed away when he was only 6 years old.

Due to constant emotional disturbances and even a failed suicide attempt, he was under treatment at a mental home. It was here that God graciously saved him.

Through the benevolence of a Christian family and by the association of another hymn writer, John Newton by name, Cowper enjoyed his spiritual life, and they together wrote many hymns.

Nevertheless, around twelve years later when he was living alone he was struck with severe depression. One night he wrote a letter and left home to commit suicide by jumping into

the River Ouse (North Yorkshire, England). He called a horse-drawn cab and asked to be taken to the bridge over this river.

However, because of the thick fog that night, the cabbie lost the way. After much effort the driver stopped and requested Cowper to get out as he is unable to take him further. 'Standing there alone, Cowper recognized the hitching post directly across from his own house!'

After entering his house he tore up the letter, bowing down before the Lord with a sense of wonder and humility wrote:



*God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break with blessing on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.
Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His work in vain;*

UNCERTAINTY TO CERTAINTY

 By Joy Murickal Issac, Kerala

God has created this universe beautifully and wonderfully. He has done everything properly and in order. This is why man is not ready to leave this world even though their days are numbered.

Moses' prayer is a pattern for all of us, "Teach us God to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalms 90:12).

Moreover, godliness, fear of God, and wisdom equip us to face uncertainty first and then that which is certain. In fact, nothing in this world is permanent; however, God is preparing eternal things for those who wait for Him.

Let's compare certain uncertain and certain things and look closer at them with the help of few examples.

UNCERTAIN THINGS

- i. Physical health and beauty
- ii. Earthly wealth and possessions
- iii. Position, respect, and privileges of this world
- iv. Talent, Abilities, Fame, etc.
- v. Relationships, connections, etc.
- vi. Earthly life

Two living examples

a. Justin Bieber

Here is a rich, famous, young Canadian

pop singer who has millions of fans all over the world; however, he now struggles with a rare disease and is half paralyzed.

b. Michael Schumacher

Here is an astonishing Formula One champion and the renowned racer. Nevertheless, since 2013, he has been bed-ridden due to a head injury happened during his holiday entertainment. He was a unique person in sports world, especially in the racing world.

Therefore, you can see these living examples of uncertainty. We can take hundreds of such examples from around the world.

The Word of God refers to how Job of old faced the unexpected destruction of his earthly belongings and children. At his loss, when his friends became speechless, his own wife turned against him; Job alone, out of all of them, could face the calamities courageously. The secret behind this is that those who put their faith in God become brave and hopeful in amidst adversities

CERTAIN THINGS

Remember, though our earthly life is uncertain, yet there are several things that are certain; and we cannot escape these certain things. Let us consider three of

these:

a. Death

Everyone in the whole world will agree with me that death is certain to all who are born. Infant to old age, any time death approaches and reaches out its hand toward every person. The reason for this is that “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” (Heb. 9:27). The great warrior, King Alexander died at the age of 32. He departed even though he had everything more than enough.

The Bible also tells about different types of death, like spiritual death, physical death, and the second death (Revelation 20:6, 12-13)

b. Judgment

Another certain thing that we have to face is Judgment (refer to Heb. 9:27). Whether you agree or not, judgment is for sure, for it has been confirmed through the resurrection of Christ (Acts 17:31).

Apostle Peter wrote about this judgment and eternal life in 1Peter 1: 17: “And if you call on the father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work conduct yourself throughout the time of your stay here in fear.” We can enjoy all the goodness of God and provisions; however, we must have the fear of God and love in our lives.

c. Eternity

Science can’t say anything about eternity, for it is beyond human imagination. Nevertheless, God’s Word gives us a clear picture of eternal life. The words of Jesus Christ reveal more about it: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I

would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2).

Furthermore, resurrection is the fundamental truth of gospel. The gospel proclaims the resurrected Jesus. If He is not raised from death our faith, preaching, everything is vain. Apostle Paul beautifully narrated this fact in 1 Corinthians 15:14-58.

When our days are full of suffering and trials, the risen Jesus’s presence give us courage, hope, peace, and grace to pass through every situation.

Let’s now look at what Luke writes: “And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.” (Luke 24:50, 51).

The ascended Christ is blessing us at many instances and circumstances to be victorious. He has defeated death. Paul writes in this connection, “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Colo. 2:15).

In summary, our responsibility is to know God personally and understand His purposes and time for us. Because He lives and triumphs, let’s lead a faithful, fruitful life that is rewarding in the eternal life.

I have no more word than this exhortation. May God bless us all to lead a glorious Christian life in our days. May God bless all of us to have a beautiful blessed year 2024. Signing off, wishing everyone a happy and fruitful 2024 with prayers.

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SANDS OF TIME OR FOOTHOLDS IN THE ROCK ETERNAL?

 By Biju Itty, Surat

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain”. (1 Cor. 15:58 [NIV])

Henry W. Longfellow, an American poet of the 1800s, wrote the following lines in his immensely popular poem, *A Psalm of Life*:

*“Lives of great men all remind us, We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us, Footprints on the sands of time;*

*Footprints, that perhaps another, Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother, Seeing, shall take heart again.”*

However, one wonders how those dissolving footprints in the sands of time would help a forlorn and shipwrecked person to see and take heart. Lives of great men of the world do leave footprints, albeit, on the sands of time. And when the great waters flow over them, the place remembers them no more.

The Preacher says in Eccl. 2:15, 16, “As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise?... This is also vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now is, will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool!”

The worldly-wise-man is not different from the fool because he has made terms with the world in a good way! This citizen from the City of Carnal Policy attacks the Scriptures, and he tries to renounce the Bible totally by pointing toward human morality and goodness as a viable way to salvation instead of the atoning that took place at the Cross of Christ.

☒ Let us not be so foolish, beloved, rather let’s build on what Christ did, on what Christ was, on what He is, and what He suffered. Building so, you shall find Him, “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever;” and your hope, and faith, and comfort shall abide with you, since they are founded upon the immovable Rock of Ages☒

SO STAND FIRM IN CHRIST

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you.”

Let’s not look for footprints in the sands of time, but at the footholds in the Rock of Ages cleft for us at Calvary. Those gaping wounds of the Savior are footholds for us, and assuredly neither our feet will stumble nor will our steps slip anymore.

He brought us up out of the miry clay, set our feet upon the Rock, and established our steps. He put a new song in our mouth – praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD. When our time on earth is over, may it be said of us, “Blessed are the dead, who die in the LORD from now on. “Yes”, says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”” Rev. 14:13.



BUSY YOURSELVES IN THE LORD’S WORK

“Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.”

An article in The Times of India dated 23rd Oct. 2023 said, “Risky Business: Geopolitics keeps CEOs up at night”. CEOs are sleepless because geopolitical conflicts could have a negative impact on their organizations’ business growth. Therefore, they are adopting growth strategies to mitigate risks and remain resilient. They are facing challenges and obstacles in the path to growth on multiple fronts including geopolitical uncertainty. Oh, the vanity of building great empires on the shifting sands of time!

I told a dear brother, “Shouldn’t we too lose sleep over our Father’s business? Our Lord

said, “We 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). He responded with a line from a Malayalam song by Mr. M.E. Cherian, which roughly translates to, “While the nations of the world are fighting for some or the other cause, why are we the warriors of the Cross the only ones still sleeping?”

We are not called to mitigate risks and avoid troubles, but to take them head-on. We are required to excel in the work of the Lord, always doing our best and doing more than is needed. We are to give ourselves fully to His work, being as vigorous as we can.

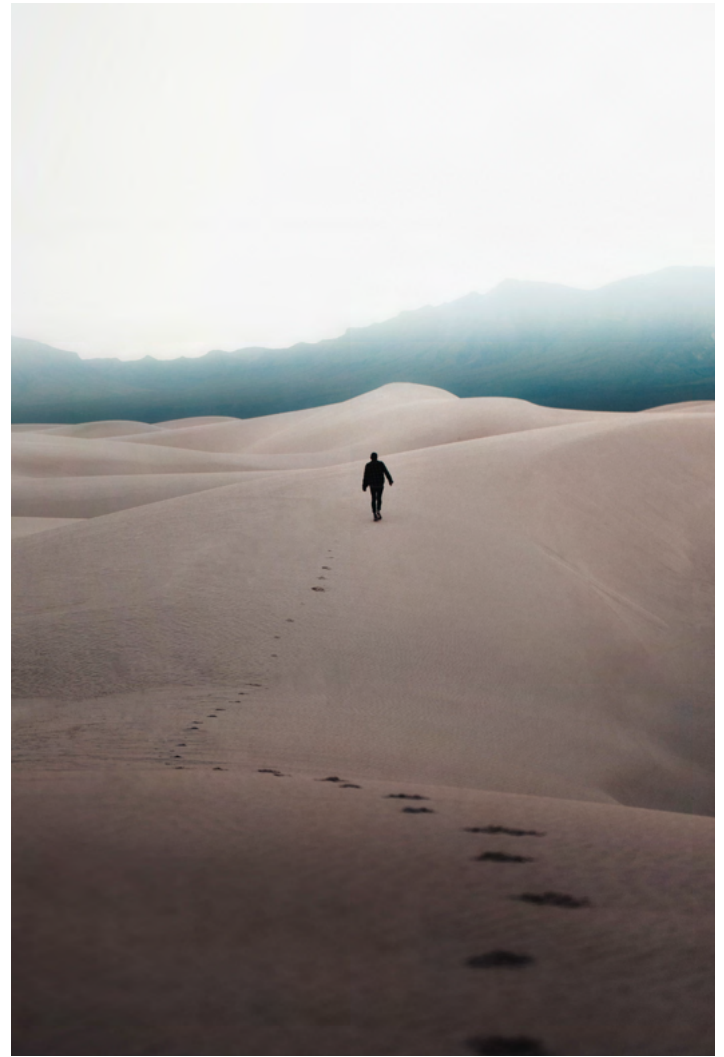
BE CONFIDENT BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION

“Because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain”.

Discouragements and criticisms are bound to come, and every attempt will be made to turn you away from doing the Lord’s will. People might question your motives and may tell you that you have merely wasted your time.

Yet the Word says, “Throw yourselves into the work of your Master, confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort.” 1 Cor. 15:58 [The Message].

So it is not pointless, never worthless, and our travail in the LORD is never idle. We don’t need to look busy or be men-pleasers; but as bondservants of Christ, let’s do the will of God from the heart, because of the Resurrection. That is when we will be repaid for what we have done, and there will be no partiality.



“

“I am so weak. I can’t read my Bible. I can’t even pray. I can only lie still in God’s arms like a little child and trust.”

- Hudson Taylor

”

“

“Death is not extinguishing the light from the Christian; it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.”

- Anon

”

HOW TO PREPARE FOR OUR DEPARTURE?



 By Nelson Thomas

We had discussed earlier (in perspective: Brevity of Life and the Fleeting Time) the following points: -

- The reality of death – unexpected and increasing,
- Nothing happens for believers before the appointed time,
- For a believer death is a gain not loss; it's a promotion -

So, the question now before us regarding death is this:

How do we prepare for this unavoidable occasion?

1. Value life and live in its fullness.

Never underestimate the life and privileges that we enjoy today, which are the gracious provisions from God. The health, resources, and favorable circumstances at our disposal today may disappear within no time. The wise man put it poignantly, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going." (Ecc. 9:10). So, make use of each moment sensibly and zealously trusting in the Lord.

2. Be sure of God's purposes and fulfill them.

This is the most important part of this preparation. We are here with a definite purpose; it's our responsibility to be aware of it and accomplish it in time.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the best example in this aspect. He was always conscious of His Father's will during His earthly sojourn (refer to Luke 2:29; John 4:34; 6:38; 8:29; Matt. 26:42 etc.) He was also aware of the duration in which He had to complete His task. He said, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work." (John 9:4).

The Lord Jesus underscores the fact that there is an appropriate time for everything. (Ecc. 3: 1–8). We don't know what is in store for us tomorrow. It may be a change of circumstances or even our own inability due to various reasons, including death. We all need the same attitude of Christ in fulfilling our responsibilities before our departure.

The Lord Jesus Himself said that the foremost aspect of God's will for man is that we trust the Lord Jesus as our Savior and Lord to have a right relationship with Him (John 6:28, 29; 2Cor. 6:2).

In Acts 13:36 we see a remarkable testimonial regarding David, "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption.." This means that before his departure, David accomplished the ministry assigned to him. What a blessing it would be to serve our generation faithfully and enter into our rest!

3. Stay Close to the Lord. (Heb. 5:7)

As a perfect man, our Lord Jesus felt the pain of the cruel death He was anticipating. How did He face it? The writer to the Hebrews refers to our Lord's prayers on that occasion. In the gospels, we read about His repeated prayer at Gethsemane just before His arrest. Luke writes that in response to that prayer, God the Father sent an angel to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43).

To be calm and composed in the midst of pain, sorrow, and even the shadow of death there is only one option, which is to experience an intimate communion with the Lord (Psa. 18: 4-6; 116: 3, 4).

4. Look ahead and focus on our hope. Heb. 12:2

The writer of Hebrews further refers to what exactly caused Christ to endure the agony of the cross without any shame or wavering. It was the joy that was set before Him. That included everything post crucifixion; the resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, etc., and the thought of redeeming many sons to glory.

We also may look ahead and see by faith all that God has promised for us in Christ. In other words, live life in view of eternity like the heroes of faith who saw the promises by faith, 'assured of them and embraced them' (Heb. 11: 13) This telescopic vision of the unseen is possible only by having an intimate walk with the Lord on a regular basis as mentioned earlier.

Even as we continue our pilgrim journey, let us be gripped by the hope of the soon coming Savior; all the subsequent events are going to

unfold thereafter (Rom. 15:13; 1Peter 1:13).

5. Set our house in order. (2 Kings 20:1)

Isaiah's words to Hezekiah are noteworthy in this regard: "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.'" Apart from our spiritual responsibilities, we have certain earthly obligations too. We ought to put those things in order so that our dear ones will not be in trouble once we leave the scene.

In this aspect also, Christ is an example. Just before His departure, the Lord entrusted the responsibility of His mother to John, His beloved disciple (John 19:26, 27).

Hezekiah failed in this aspect miserably, for he was satisfied that no harm would come to him during his lifetime (2Kings 20:19). We know how the following generation of Judah paid dearly for his folly. Even as we depart in time, never leave behind any trouble for the survivors.

The Fleeting Time

As we are coming to the end of another year let us examine how prepared are we in view of both these realities; life is too short and time is running fast.

Are we conscious of these realities and take appropriate steps to make use of the opportunities before us? It should be our lifelong endeavor to redeem the time, not just at the far end of life, but even from today when we are healthy.

Any failure in this area shows that we neither value life nor do we respect God's will for us.

Someone has rightly observed, 'Failure to prepare for our departure shows that we are not even prepared to live'.

Let us number our days literally, considering each day as the last day and looking forward

to our eternal home. Being motivated by these realities let us eagerly wait for the coming of our Lord, leading a holy life and serving God faithfully.

STUDY

THE GOLDEN ALTAR -3

 By Charles E. Wigg, TASMANIA.

The priests were also to burn incense there, and are warned not to ever offer strange incense. The composition of the incense that was acceptable to God is given to us in Exo 30: 34 - 38 and each ingredient speaks of some different aspect of the glory of Christ.

We live in a day when both strange incense and strange fire are very common, when what is pleasing to God, as set out for us in His word is ignored, and what is popular in the world, and pleasing and entertaining to men is substituted for biblical worship.

People are often moved by powers or spirits, other than the Holy Spirit, who alone can prompt and move the redeemed heart of man in true worship.



IN THE HOLY PLACE

The golden altar stood in the Holy place so is not a reference to the prayers or worship that we offer to God in our homes. It is important to notice this, because from the very beginning of the Church's testimony, it was the practice of the believers to gather together for collective prayer.

It is sad, today, the assembly prayer meeting has been almost completely neglected, and because of this there is a great lack of power, and blessing. It has been proved that where believers are so concerned to experience the power and blessing of God, that they are willing to gather together in the Lord's name, to beseech the throne of God, that God does honour the promises of His word. However, incense does not only represent prayer, but especially adoration and worship.

Do all good things have to end?

 By Tom Jacob, Mumbai

Another year-end (of 2023) is fast approaching. We are awaiting the dawn of a brand new year (2024), hoping that things might get better with regard to our finances, careers, education, health, relationships, etc.

This is also a time when some of us wish to pause a bit, introspect, and reflect on what went wrong, where, when, why and how? We like to determine what we should have done differently so that we didn't have to face the outcomes of our failures and avoid repeating it in the year ahead as we did this year. All this helps us to come up with certain resolutions for the year ahead.

On the other hand, for some of us, this year, 2023, was really good as we could experience success and see progress in several spheres of life, while this may not be the case for others. However, without any exception we all desire that only good things should happen in our lives, and this trend should keep continuing. Nevertheless, the world says, "All good things come to an end"! Sadly, we tend to think this to be true, and refuse to hope for any good to last for long.

THE ONLY GOOD THAT EVER EXISTED

Contrary to common thinking, the Holy Bible talks about certain good things that have no end, rather they literally last for an

eternity! For instance, God, in the Bible, is described as good; and about His goodness it is written that it is everlasting - no end to it! Isn't this a comforting thought? There is Someone who is infinitely good and continues to be so always!

Yes dear reader, you can always trust Him, and He will never fail you. Regarding the time when the Lord Jesus Christ was on the earth it is written that He went about doing good. Also, it is written that God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. When God is good, even what He does and gives is only good.

James in his epistle says in 1:17, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." Not only is He a giver of all good and perfect gifts, but He also does not ever change in His character. He is the same yesterday, today and forever!

The best part of God's goodness is that He intends to share His goodness with all who relate with Him. However, when seen from God's righteous perspective, no human is eligible to be rightly related with Him. The reason for this impossibility is the presence of an in-born tendency in every person to rebel against the goodness of God.

Therefore, the greatest good that can happen in any person's life is to experience the deliverance from the power of evil in them. All our lives we struggle to get rid of the inherent evil within us, which the Bible calls as sin or the sinful nature. This sinful nature is what forces us to think, speak, and do the evil which we do not want to do, and it prevents us from doing the good we so much wish to do.

Listen to the helpless cry of a great man of God in the Bible. He cries out in desperation like this.

“For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled and bewildered by them]. I do not practice what I want to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate [and yielding to my human nature, my worldliness—my sinful capacity]. Now if I habitually do what I do not want to do, [that means] I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good (morally excellent). So now [if that is the case, then] it is no longer I who do it [the disobedient thing which I despise], but the sin [nature] which lives in me. For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh [my human nature, my worldliness—my sinful capacity]. For the willingness [to do good] is present in me, but the doing of good is not. For the good that I want to do, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want to do, I am no longer the one doing it [that is, it is not me that acts], but the sin [nature] which lives in me. So I find it to be the law [of my inner self], that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do

good. For I joyfully delight in the law of God in my inner self [with my new nature], but I see a different law and rule of action in the members of my body [in its appetites and desires], waging war against the law of my mind and subduing me and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is within my members. Wretched and miserable man that I am! Who will [rescue me and] set me free from this body of death [this corrupt, mortal existence]?” (Romans 7:15-24 [AMP]).

YOU CAN ALSO OWN IT

The best part of all this is that he is not left without hope in this wretched condition. Deliverance from the sinful nature is possible and available right now. He goes on to say, “Thanks be to God [for my deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Yes, dear one, if you are really seeking to be delivered from this sinful nature, you don't have to go anywhere else or doing anything for that. Christ has done what we could not do, for the forgiveness of our sin and to grant us deliverance from the sinful nature. He sacrificed Himself for the sins of the whole world, was buried, and rose from the dead.

Today He is willing and able to forgive all your sins and grant you divine power to say no to sin, if you but cry out to Him in faith.

Will you not do so to enjoy God's eternal goodness? He has promised God's (eternal) life to all who trust in Christ's substitutionary death and vicarious resurrection. Please don't refuse this good that does not have an end. May God help you also to do so.

A GAZE INTO THE BIBLICAL GAZA

 By Bro. David Manchala, Hyderabad

The Israel-Gaza conflict began on 7th October 2023 when militants invaded Israel from the Gaza Strip. The attack was met with an Israeli counter-offensive, and Israel formally declared war on Hamas a day later. The war is part of the decades-long Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

There are a lot of discussions and debates happening about the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip territory occupies 140 square miles along the Mediterranean Sea just northeast of the Sinai Peninsula.

The Gaza Strip is unusual in being a densely settled area not recognized as any other country. Not only in secular history, surprisingly, the Gaza city is also mentioned several times in the Bible. The Gaza that is in the news today is the same Gaza that was mentioned in the Bible, nothing has changed! At least in 13 Old Testament books, Gaza is mentioned and 1 time even in the New Testament.

We will consider 7 things about Gaza based on some of those references

1. Place and location

Gaza is first mentioned in the Bible in Gen. 10:19, and the last reference is in Acts 8:26. Geographical boundaries are also mentioned in the Bible. This location is included in the promise given to Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21).

2. Plan of God for the city

This city was conquered and claimed by the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua

(Joshua 10:41, 11:22).

3. Priority

Interestingly, the land of Gaza was allotted to the tribe of Judah during the distribution of the land by Joshua (Joshua 15:47).

4. Problems and Battles

Although God gave the city of Gaza to his people, enemies remained there and fought with them till today (Joshua 11:22; Judges 1:18; 2 Kings 18:8; 1 Samuel 6:17). Wars between Israel and Gaza happened then and are happening now also.

5. People of Gaza and their Brutality

In biblical times, the Gazites captured Samson and put out his eyes, and they brought him to Gaza and bound him with fetters of brass; he was then made to grind in their prison house. Surprisingly, just as they treated Samson cruelly, Hamas does the same to the Israelites even today (Judges 16:2, 21).

6. Prophecies about Gaza

We not only read about Gaza in Historical books of the Bible but also in prophetic books. Prophecies regarding Gaza were partially fulfilled during the times of the prophets. Those prophecies are being fulfilled before our eyes today.

- Amos 1:7 – Fire on the wall of Gaza
- Zephaniah 2:4 - Gaza shall be forsaken
- Zechariah 9:5 – The king shall perish from Gaza

- Jeremiah 47:5 - Baldness is come upon Gaza, etc.

The rapture is near than ever!



2 Peter 1:19 “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

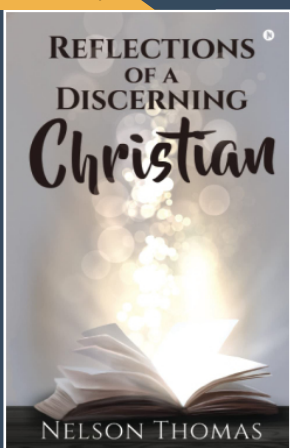
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“It is a poor thing to fear that which is inevitable.”

- Tertullian,

”

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