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GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical for spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement

VOL. 19 No. 2 | Feb 2024



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The Divine
Response

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Troubled Minds: The Divine Response

The recent suicide by a Pentecostal Pastor in India sent shockwaves among several born-again Christians. It's disgusting to realize that throughout the world, number of pastors and priests have committed suicide in the recent times.

We used to hear about suicide of distressed students and farmers, but seldom have we heard about spiritual leaders who are supposed to comfort and encourage the depressed ones, end their earthly life.

It's terrible to note that in spite of the best efforts by the authorities, the overall suicide rate is only increasing. According to statistics, worldwide around 8 lakh people die by suicide every year. In India 1.71 lakh took their life in 2022, which is 4.2% more from 2021. Experts say that for more than half of them, the immediate causes were problems in the family and illness.

MEANING

What does this mean? There are so many around us who are troubled and traumatized beyond our imagination. Remember, there are many others who silently suffer various forms of mental agonies.

According to latest data, one out of four suffers from some form of mental disorder. Earlier it was one out of eight! Mind you, this vast number of distressed people may also include some of our own people of the family or fellowship

QUESTIONS:

Definitely, questions such as the following abound:

Can a born again child of God commit suicide?

Will a person who died by suicide go to heaven?

Even questions like, can a born-again child of God be plagued with such mental disorders?

It's good to discuss and debate on such topics to get clarity. However in this article, our intention is to highlight the fact that many of our own dear ones with whom we interact often may be facing untold miseries and concerns. It's primarily important to be compassionate

and considerate to them in their perils.

Yes, a true and healthy believer does not need to experience such emotional breakdowns. We have all the spiritual resources at our disposal to stay strong

and survive such state of affairs. Nonetheless, not all are spiritually healthy, and sadly, even not all are true believers either!

HUMAN FRAILITY

Moreover, just as any healthy body could become sick, anyone can experience changes in the function of their brain too. It may be either due to physiological or medical issues; or adverse circumstances such as failures, various kinds of loss, etc. Add to that the guilt feelings due to unconfessed sins as well as satanic fiery darts could aggravate the situation.

Consequently, when their thought process or thinking habit is disturbed, it affects their attitude and behavior. They may prefer to be alone as they fear to face people in public. Filled with negativity and bitterness, they will find fault with all except themselves. If unchecked, in the course of time, they may be plunged into several other mental disorders affecting their spiritual life as well as interpersonal relationships.

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

What should be our response to such disturbed believers? Sad to notice that the most common response is that we ignore

them. Even the so-called godly and able spiritual leaders prefer to keep mum at such circumstances, leaving the suffering ones to fend for themselves! All these responses are just an effort to escape the reality and save their face from the possible repercussions.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Scripture reveals the gracious dealings of our God toward such troubled hearts. Let us consider few examples:

a The fallen and frightened Adam, Genesis 3:9-11

Here we have the beginning of all human sufferings whether in body or mind. It must be stated unequivocally that the root cause for all the trouble that man is facing today is sin and his rebellion against God. The passage teaches how man had to bear the consequences of his sin.

At the same time, it's important to notice that God came in search of man even as he was experiencing the result of sin. God Himself did whatever could be done to solve the loss and fear Adam was facing then.

Here onwards we see God's patient and merciful effort to help the fallen and troubled man to change and make him a better person. The zenith of this work of salvation is seen on the cross of Calvary when the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for sinful man (Rom. 5:8).

b The burdened and despaired Moses, Numbers 11:11-15

Upset by the complaint of people of Israel for provision, Moses felt so burdened and depressed, and he sought

death! Even some commentators refuse to have any sympathy for Moses; however, we don't see the Lord God almighty rebuking Moses, on the contrary, He makes the arrangement to lessen his burden. Nevertheless, v. 33 shows that the troublemakers had to pay the cost of rebellion.

c The tired and scared Elijah, 1Kings 19:3,4

The man of God who brought fire from heaven is now running away and pleading for death, all at the threat of a woman! The Lord's response to him also brings much comfort to all who face similar situations. The Angel of the Lord brought cake and water for his immediate need, and then, counseling, that too by visiting him twice with all patience (vs. 5-8). How thoughtful is our God, unlike man! He knew the current need of His servant. Therefore, Elijah too was restored.

We see numerous such examples in the Old Testament when God graciously dealt with the saints who were depressed even to the point of hating their life and restored them (cf. Job 3:21; 6:9; 7:15; Jeremiah 20:18; Jonah 4:3). Most of the psalms of David begin with lamentation but end up with praise and worship.

“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.” (Psalm 30:5)

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous; But the LORD delivers him out of them all.” (Psalm 34:19)

THE COMPASSIONATE CHRIST

In the New Testament also we see the same compassion of our Lord for all the broken hearted. Throughout His public ministry, Christ comforted and reassured the troubled minds.

To a trembling woman He says, “Daughter be of good cheer”; to the helpless widow who was on the way to the funeral of her only son, the Lord said, “Do not weep”; to the penitent woman with tears the Lord said, “Your sins are forgiven... go in peace” (Luke 8:48; 7:13, 48, 50). Plenty of such incidents from the public ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ reveal His concern for the troubled minds.

His call to all who labor and are heavy laden continue to challenge many. Similarly, His comforting words to the distressed disciples always bring hope and assurance to His followers (cf. Matthew 11:28; John 14:1 ff).

However, one of the most touching examples of the Lord's compassion to the broken hearted is in connection with Peter. The one who resolved never to deny His Lord did so three times; and this broke Peter's heart, he wept bitterly. Further, though he returned to fishing, yet the risen Lord visits His servant with breakfast and restored him (Matthew 26:33, 75; John 21: 5, 12, 15, 17).

EMULATE THE LORD

This is the attitude we ought to have for the feeble, fallen brethren. In the epistles we see believers have been repeatedly exhorted to do so:

2Corinthians 2:6-8: “This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.”

Galatians 6:2: “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Hebrews 12:12, 13: “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.”

What a blessed privilege we have in the

Lord Jesus Christ! When many around us fail to find any meaning in life and any rays of hope, we have the everlasting consolation and sure hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, the enlightening and encouraging Word of God continues to motivate us.

We are not alone; apart from the ministry of the triune God, the prayerful support of the fellow believers strengthens us to move forward in spite of all the setbacks in life. Let us make use of these divine resources and enjoy the peace and tranquility that is nowhere else available.

Also, let us make sure no one among us would ever say, 'Nobody cared for me'!

OUTLINE

ONE ANOTHER: Believers' Mutual Responsibility

1. **Edify one another, Rom 14:19**
2. **Be like-minded toward one another, Rom 15:5**
3. **Receive one another, Rom 15:7**
4. **Greet one another, Rom 16:16**
5. **Wait for one another, 1Cor 11:33**
6. **Care for one another, 1Cor 12:25**
7. **Bear one another's burdens, Gala 6:2**
8. **Be kind to one another, Eph 4:32.**
9. **Forgive one another, Eph 4:32.**
10. **Submit to one another, Eph 5:21.**
11. **Teach one another, Colo 3:16**
12. **Admonish one another, Colo 3:16.**
13. **Exhort one another, Heb 10:25.**
14. **Comfort one another, 1Thess 4:18.**
15. **Love one another, Rom 13:8.**

THE COST OF FORTUNE AND SUCCESS

Wilfred was a bright and handsome young man who had a brilliant academic career. Soon after his graduation as an architect he was employed in a prestigious firm in Sydney.

AMBITIOUS

Even as a university student, he had one consuming ambition: that of becoming a millionaire, if possible, at the age of 45. This passionate aim instilled in him an unswerving impetus to work hard day and night. After less than three years he managed to start his own architectural company. Wilfred's efficiency, congenial disposition, and drive helped his business to grow exceptionally well.

Wilfred met a stunningly beautiful girl, whose luminous smile was as captivating as her attractive looks. At their marriage, family members and friends praised them as the ideal couple. Jenny, a qualified solicitor, worked for a well-known company of lawyers in Sydney. Within a few years Jenny presented Wilfred with a gorgeous baby girl and a bouncing little boy.

Three months before his 40th birthday, something incredibly exciting happened: he became a millionaire. Wilfred's thrill and joy knew no bounds. Wilfred built his 'dream house' according to the plan he

himself had drawn. It was a six-bedroom mansion built on a small hill on a five-acre property.

JOYFUL

Family members and friends were invited almost every other weekend to share the joy and bounties of Jenny and Wilfred so generously provided. Fortune and success seemed to have smiled on Wilfred and Jenny extraordinarily the delight of their family and friends and the chagrin of some who resented their 'one-up' lifestyle.

One afternoon Jenny took the children for a drive around the Northern Beaches in her brand-new Mercedes Benz. When they returned home, the children were in high spirits. Jenny was admiring the mosaic of beautiful plants and flowers dancing on the neatly manicured lawn in the garden. Her white mansion was nestling smartly like a sparkling jewel on an exquisite crown.

Jenny spotted Wilfred's BMW parked outside the garage and knew he was back from his appointment with a businessman. Clutching the hands of her lovely children, she hastened to the front door of the house. She gently pressed her index finger on the doorbell which triggered a musical sound within. There was no response. Again she rang the bell

on the massive door, and after a brief pause, again. Still no one still no one stirred to open the door.

Fumbling in her handbag, Jenny grabbed her house key and flung open the door, dragging her children with her. “Wil!” she called in her sweet, endearing voice, “Wil, where are you? We had a wonderful time and the children had great fun. And they want to tell you all about it.” “Yeah, Dad,” chimed in little Jasmine, “You’ll guess what we saw!”

HELPLESS

As the children sat on the step to pull off their shoes, Jenny dashed upstairs and weaved through the elegantly furnished lounge, eager to hug and kiss her darling husband. Jenny saw Wilfred's briefcase on the shiny table in his spacious office-cum library. Wilfred was not to be seen there. She darted through the office to the adjacent room which had a large, comfortable sofa where Wilfred and Jenny usually relaxed and chatted away when their children were out playing or attending school. Jenny let out a scream, “Oh, no!” Wilfred lay on the carpet in a little pool of blood with a pistol on the floor. When their children scrambled upstairs and saw their mother weeping aloud, they were confused and started sobbing.

Later, the police came and searched the house for any clue as to what caused Wilfred's death. They found a piece of yellow paper on which Wilfred had written in his excellent writing, **“Sorry, I can't possibly take the pressure. Wilfred Warren.”**

It was such a shocking trauma for poor Jenny that she fainted, while the little ones were crying their hearts out at her side.

Months passed by before Jenny discovered that her husband had been involved in an illicit relationship with a beautiful but criminal girl, who was evidently blackmailing Wilfred and extracting hundreds of thousands of dollars from him every month.

Two agonizing, lingering years had passed, but Jenny had not gotten over her confusion, hurt, and anger.

HOPE AND HEALING

One day a good friend of Jenny's gave her a hand-out which advertised a public lecture, at the Sydney Law College. Susan, Jenny's friend, invited her to attend this



lecture and Jenny did. Dr. Wilson Tang was the speaker and his subject

was “There is Hope”. As Jenny heard this talk with rapt interest, all the scriptures that she was taught as a teenager came alive with new meaning. Jenny was more than convinced that in Jesus Christ alone there was forgiveness, peace, and hope.

That night when she returned home, she found herself kneeling in her bedroom, and with tears rolling down her cheeks; she invited the Lord Jesus to be her personal Savior and Master of her life. And here began the healing for all the hurt that she had been through, which she experiences better each day.

THERE IS HOPE



In a world of pain, sorrow, and hurt, apparently there is no prospect of getting comfort, hope, or peace. However, there is a voice that emerges out of the gloom of helplessness and hopelessness. It is the sweet, gentle voice of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He says with a gleam of certainty and assurance: “Come to me all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give your rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11: 28, 29).

All people are created by God in His own image and are most precious. In God’s perspective, there is no high or low, rich or poor, black or white. He loves them all alike.

God made us for Himself and we belong to Him. Hence there is an innate longing we have for God, unlike animals or birds.

“As a deer pants for the water brooks” groaned the man of God in Psalm 42: 1-2, “so pants my souls for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

CAUSE OF HOPELESSNESS

Without God in his life, man has emptiness, a vacuum, and a blank, which can never be filled with anything else.

We seek satisfaction and peace of mind in money, investment, and our achievements. We trust in the bank, in social security, in the local government, in other people, and ourselves. To our utter disappointment and dismay, we discover the futility of doing this, because all these in the end become like a mirage in the desert.

The instruction of the Bible is clear: “If riches increase, do not set our heart on them” (Psalm 62:10).

“Trust in Him (God) at all times” (Psalm 62:8)

“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trust in the Lord shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25).

Our Lord Jesus Christ comforts His people with these assuring words:

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1)

HOPE IN CHRIST

There is mercy in God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. “Let the wicked forsake his way,” God graciously commands, “and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7). “Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13).

Forgiveness is another blessing that is offered through the meritorious work of Christ accomplished for all the people of the world on the cross. The cross, in this context, represents the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for the sins of all mankind.



“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” declares the Word of God, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jn. 1:8, 9).

HELPLESS RELIGION

There is no forgiveness in religion, but only an endless cycle of paying penances and doing good works to appease the gods. There is no forgiveness in the New Age Movement. As Bertrand Russel said, “Forgiveness is a beggar’s refuge. We must pay our debts.” But how can a bankrupt pay his debts?

God does not condone our guilty actions or sins. He forgives us because He punished His darling Son, Jesus Christ, and gave Him up to die on our behalf. Now on this ground alone, God offers forgiveness to all who are prepared to forsake their foul, despicable ways, and return to Him.

UNSATISFIED MANKIND

People are never satisfied. Tall people wish they were a little shorter! Short people want to be taller: some wear high-heeled shoes to make them look taller! The one who has \$100,000.00 feverishly works hard to get one million dollars, but when he gets that, it does not satisfy him still; he now wants ten million dollars!

Those who have straight hair wish they had curly hair; and others who have curly hair long straight hair! Dark-skinned people wish for fairer skin, and fair-skinned people go to great lengths to have their skin tanned! Many of them lay on sea beaches, exposing themselves to the heat of the sun in the fond hope of getting darker!

Lonely, weary, and empty, the woman of Samaria was confronted by Jesus Christ, who deliberately made a detour, to meet with her. Jesus said to this unnamed woman, "Whoever drinks of this water (in the well) will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4: 13, 14).

SUSTAINING LOVE

There is steadfast and satisfying love in Jesus Christ. He loved us so much that He willingly died for us and all mankind on the shameful, cruel cross. His love was not mere words but was powerfully and eloquently demonstrated to all.

“Greater love has no one than this,” He affirmed, “than to lay down one's life for his friends” (John 15: 13). Of Jesus it was written, “...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1). Jesus declared, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (John 10: 11). Referring to the Lord Jesus, the Apostle Paul testified, “...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of

God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Dear reader, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will never be disappointed. Hand over yourself to Him, and you will never regret it. Believe in Him with all your heart, and you will never be ashamed. Abandon yourself to Jesus Christ in totality, and you will not lose anything except your sin, shame, and damnation.

MEDITATION

James Nair, Barmer



LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED

“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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1-3)

The chapter starts on a comforting tone evidently to a group of troubled hearts. Before we can ponder on those blessed words of our Master, it is worth considering the diverse manner of sorrows, the disciples carried at that moment:-

a. Judas' betrayal

The announcement of Judas' betrayal in the preceding chapter 'perplexed' everyone, and it came as a shocking revelation to all there except Judas (John 13:22). This perhaps shattered the confidence and the unity they had.

The heaviness we might have, when one amongst us leaves us and sells his faith is really a shaking one, which can question one's own faith and trust to Him who taught us what love is.

b. Peter's denial.

The Lord's second revelation that again shook many feeble hearts was Peter's denial. Even though he vehemently countered it by a declaration to go to prison and even death, it is quite understandable the troubled state of the

other ten that if one of Lord's bests three, could deny Him, where would they stand in the hour of trial!

Often our faith gets terribly shaken when someone we esteem to be strong in faith seems to drift away from it, to the extent of even denial of that faith.

c. Who is the greatest?

Luke briefly accounts this (Luke 22:23, 24), and interestingly it sprouts out just after the Lord reveals His betrayer – deriving a certain question in many minds, “if Judas is such and such, am I not far better?”

Apart from the fact that self-proclaimed righteousness breaks harmony, there lies a danger of comparison here, which leads to rivalry and a weak one or two being offended. It may not be a trouble for those who feel they are great, greater, or greatest, but it will cause disharmony and a weak believer to stumble.

Therefore, this was seemingly a trouble the Lord addressed in the opening verses of John 14. And it is not surprising that the Lord emphasized unity the most in His Priestly intercession following this discourse.

d. The Lord's departure

Out of all the troubles that bothered the eleven, this was perhaps the most painful. The questions posed by Thomas, Philip, and Judas (not Iscariot) in that very chapter bring out this pain on their faces.

And when the discourse continues to Chapter 16, the worries deepen as the Lord hints out to them the pain of suffering following His departure. They

would have perhaps not imagined this would be His end, never such a painful death. A sense of hopelessness was evident here.

The Lord having sensed all these worries developed in the hearts of those poor souls in the Upper Room, comforts them beautifully:

I. “BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME”

It is only our strong belief in God that can sustain us when we go through all what the disciples went through – weak in faith, being left alone when all around them drift away, ultimately, deny their faith and sell their Master. Trusting in God is the fulcrum of Christian faith, which wonderfully balances our worries and cares against God's unchanging promises.

Moreover, the Lord emphasized that they should believe in ‘Him’ as this chapter shows clearly that the Lord associates Himself to His Father in every way. When the entire nation rejected Him, the Lord desired that they know Him as the only way to the Father, and that they see the Father through Him! Indeed, the fundamentals of salvation demand that we believe Christ as the Lord, and our Christian life demands a continuing belief that whatever we ask in His name, He will do it, and the Father is glorified in this.

II. “IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS”

There is no dearth in His provisions. He has enough luxuries and in abundance – the disciples need not fight among themselves to determine who will win the race to get there first, there's room for everyone.

A simple trust in the Lord's abundant provisions is enough to meet all our needs and wipe out all our worries, just like His grace in abundance to wipe out all our sins.

III. "I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU"

The Lord was going – yes it emptied their hearts, but now He fills those empty hearts with an assurance that He is going to prepare a place for them.

His going and preparation included His suffering and His death before His resurrection and ascension. He went to that extent, the cruel cross and the grave to prepare a place for us in those heavenly mansions!

The Lord further explains

how His departure is advantageous for us (John 16:7), for we would receive the Holy Spirit, who would guide, teach, remind, comfort us, and abide with us forever (Jn. 14:16, 26; 16:13)!

The Lord's physical absence and tarrying is certainly worrisome to some of us, but be assured, His Holy Spirit is a guarantee in our hearts (2 Cor. 1:22), while the Lord Himself prepares a place for us, those many mansions!



IV. "I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU TO MYSELF; THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YOU MAY BE ALSO."

Herein lies the essence of the finished work of Christ – He goes, He prepares, He comes, He receives, and He positions us where He is! He does not differentiate with us at all in those mansions. He receives all of us to Himself and will keep us where He is.

He has given us His comfort, His peace, and His Holy Spirit to our troubled hearts,

for He knows us that we are feeble as frail. When He understands that our hearts are filled with sorrow, He

urges us to ask in His name, that our joy may be full (John 16:6, 20, 24).

He has chosen us, and even if we might have denied him, He prays for us that our faith may not fail (Luke 22:32). He encourages us to be cheerful in this world of tribulation, for He has overcome the world (John 16:33). Let us wait upon His promises, as His perfect and finished work on the cross is leading us to those mansions!

**"Satan's target is your mind, and his weapons are lies.
So fill your mind with the word of God."**

- Greg Locke



Do Trees Speak?

The “Methuselah” bristlecone pine tree is believed to be nearly 5,000 years old, earning the nickname Methuselah. This hardy tree thrives in harsh wilderness conditions where little else survives. It is found in the remote mountainous region in eastern California. Bristlecone wood is very dense and resinous, and thus resistant to invasion by insects, fungi and other potential pests. It is one of the gnarliest, severely twisted, and ghostly looking trees. Perhaps that’s another reason why this tree has survived so long.

Any sensible wood cutter would just leave it in the woods. Its superabundant knots and crotches would break or blunt even the best tools. Moreover, any experienced woodworker would always choose wood with the least blemishes since the imperfections compromise the structural integrity of the timber, and the knots are hard to paint over. And if used as firewood, splitting and stacking the pieces would be another nightmare. You wouldn’t want to wrestle to fit the pieces in the stove. In plantations, climbers ascend trees and handsaw off the branches. This helps the trees to grow straight and with the least imperfections. Clear pruning creates clear timber, free of knots.

The Speaking TREES

This helps us to understand Psalm 1:3 better which speaks of the person who is like a tree “planted” by the rivers of water. They do not conform to this world. Instead, they delight in and meditate on the law of the LORD day and night. So, their leaves never wither, and they produce fruit in due season for the LORD of the harvest.

Furthermore, Paul writes in 1 Cor. 3:9, “You are God’s garden under cultivation” [AMP]. Think of the trees used extensively in Solomon’s temple. The wall panels, the beams and rafters, the doors, the altar, the furniture, the carts, etc., were of the finest wood of Lebanon. They were all made with the choicest timber that were free of knots. In the inner sanctuary, walls had intricately carved cherubim in olive wood.

Note that olive trees are also hardy, and the oldest living specimen is about 2000 years old! They bear useful fruit even in old age, and in their death, they still **speak** figuratively from the walls.



Also, we read about the wood offering (Neh. 10:34; 13:31), without which no sacrifice is possible. The priests had to ensure that the fire on the altar never went out. Nevertheless, consider this: would God accept any ugly, resinous, gnarly firewood that others have rejected? By the grace of God, let's offer the final remnants of our days to God in His service.

Experience speaks

Aging is quite different in trees than in humans; however, these 'grandpa trees' have many valuable lessons and stories to share.

Physical changes and loss of health can cause us to experience irritability, sadness, and anxiety. We hear of aging gracefully and learning holistic tips that boost our longevity, including optimism, forgiveness, humor, curiosity, and gratitude. But that's like the tree swallowing the stubs of dead branches, which lead to the dead knots.

Let's heed to Christ's words here, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." We need to take all our cares to Him in prayer.

C.H. Spurgeon wrote, "We are not to fear old age. We are to grow graciously, since the LORD Himself is with us in the fullness of grace." Therefore, growing old graciously is not weakness. Rather, it is about being kind, courteous, pleasant, polite, civil, well-mannered, tactful, benevolent, diplomatic, considerate, thoughtful and friendly.

This can happen only if we allow the Husbandman to prune us with the Word of God; "It is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart". (Heb 4:12)

The Nebuchadnezzar Tree

King Nebuchadnezzar saw a dream about himself as a great and mighty tree with lovely leaves and abundant fruit as food for all. Beasts rested in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. However, it was chopped down and destroyed with only its stump and roots left tethered to the ground. It was a picture of his rise, fall, and restoration by God. Nevertheless, the king ignored God's warning against pride and Daniel's advice for repentance in thought and deed. When Nebuchadnezzar boasted about his power and majesty, God struck him with a strange mental disorder; he remained in that condition till he humbled himself and gave praise to God.

I have no doubt that his best human counselor Daniel prayed all along for his restoration and God's glory. Since situations like this have a spiritual root cause and needs a spiritual answer, we need to sympathetically warn and pray for ourselves and others.

God says, "Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been upheld by Me from birth, who have been carried from the womb; even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you". (Is. 46:3, 4). He may use His word directly or other agents to prune

us. "Iron sharpens iron, and friends keep each other sharp".(Pro 27:17)

Anxiety, worry, depression, frustration, pride, arrogance etc., bring harshness and a critical spirit in the long run. Hardiness is essential, but harshness is to be avoided. God's word and good company will help us offer every part of our being as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God.

Let us be transformed by the renewing of our mind and say with the Psalmist, "But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the faithfulness of God forever and ever." (Ps. 52:8 [NASB])

GOSPEL

Aby Kuruvilla, Mumbai

"Come Unto Me"

Consider the words of the Lord Jesus Christ – "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

(Matt. 11.28)

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6.35)

"Come unto me," He says. He sets no demand of riches, religious standing, or regional background. But He wants us to, just as we are, to come to Him.



During the years of His public ministry, there came to Him many that were sick, afflicted, laden with burdens, and hopelessly lost.

Examples

One such was a woman who suffered from an issue of blood for twelve years. She spent all her living for her treatment but found no relief. Her agony was amplified by the social stigma that was associated with her disease. The custom of those times was such that whatever she touched became ceremonially unclean due to her disease. In her trauma, she came to Jesus and found relief.

In another incident, a woman had a daughter who was grievously vexed with a demon. A demon-possessed person had no control of themselves. It would cause hurt to the body which it possessed or even bring about convulsions. The mother was in great agony seeing her child grievously suffer. In her desperation, she travelled a great distance and came to Jesus, and she found relief.

There's one more woman we can consider. This woman was ridiculed as a 'sinner'. It is true that "all have sinned" and therefore all are sinners. But only a public sin would taint a person into being called by society a 'sinner'. She was known by her sin. Oh the burden of regret and remorse she carried! She was grieved by her sin and needed forgiveness. In her sorrow, she came to Jesus and found relief.

Rest Unknown to the World

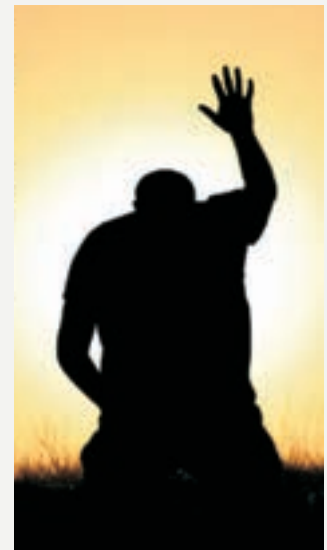
Is your heart burdened with a problem? Have you not as yet come to Jesus to find relief? There is a rest and satisfaction unknown and inexistent in this world that is found only in Jesus.

The burdens of this life are limited to the time we live in this world. But beyond this life, there is a life we have to spend either in heaven or hell. The only burden that we can possibly carry to the next life is the burden of sin. If we do not receive the forgiveness of our sins in this life, we are destined to eternal destruction in the next.

Christ Jesus came to once and for all take away the burden of our sin. "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53.6) He died in our stead taking the punishment of our sins upon Himself so that in His death and resurrection we can receive salvation and the forgiveness of sin.

Confess

Are you burdened about your sin? King David in Psalm 32 speaks of how he was agonized by an unconfessed sin. "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long." But he further explains of how he dealt with his



sin. "I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm 32: 3, 5) He went to the Lord and found relief.

"Come unto me," is the invitation from Christ to us today. Let us go unto Him and find rest and satisfaction for our spirit and soul.

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