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GRACE & PEACE

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PERSPECTIVE**

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Heavenly Perspective**



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SHARPENING OUR SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

According to a report published by WHO, more than 2.2 billion people worldwide suffer from some form of vision impairment; most of these could have been prevented with proper eye care. Medical experts say that there are hundreds of eye ailments, but many do not pay enough attention in time.

The same situation is found in connection with a believer's spiritual eyesight. Even though the Word of God repeatedly speaks of the significance of spiritual insight, we often neglect it.

VISION DOMINATES

The Lord said, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matt 6:22, 23 ESV). Verse 24 makes it very clear that Christ was speaking about healthy spiritual eyesight that can brighten every aspect of our life.

Many believers neglect the fact that it is a spiritual vision that controls our entire spiritual life. Without vision, a leader in any sphere of life is disastrous. The wise man says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish"; the best example for this is Eli (Pro. 29:18 cf. 1Sam. 3:1).

Whether it is in the family, assembly, or society, most troubles are caused by men and women who have poor or no spiritual vision. They think and act from a worldly point of view. Their worldview is governed by fulfilment of their carnal desires and earthly benefits. Sadly, this imitation of possessing a worldly standpoint is more visible in certain spiritual services where event managers control the programme, instead of godly men.

VISION ANALYSED

Understanding its importance, we are considering the various aspects of a believer's spiritual outlook in this issue.

After a general analysis by this writer, **Bro. Tom Jacob** discusses the various consequences of not having a spiritual perspective and cautions the readers to seriously examine their spiritual eyes. **Bro. David Manchala** as usual, attractively outlines Colossians chapter 3 in the context of our topic. Serious Bible students can further dig deeper and find out precious truths about true Christian mindset.

Bro. Biju Itty deals with the practical benefit of spiritual vision based on the life of the heroes of faith and exhorts the readers to long for an advanced level of spiritual life to view the Lord in all His glory.

Bro. Aby Kuruvilla makes a comparison of the viewpoints held by a natural man as well as a spiritual man. While a believer values the things of God, appreciates Christ, and even longs to be conformed to Christ, for the natural man all these are futile. Finally, on the heavenly perspective, we have added a brief study from Psalm 73 by **Bro. Garry McBride** for its practical value. He looks into various aspects of Asaph's outlook and encourages readers to focus on Christ instead of present circumstances.

'Fellowship in the Triune God' by **Bro. James Nair** and a meditation on 'Christ the fruit of David' by **Bro. Michael Browne** also help the readers to sharpen their spiritual perspective.

A HIGHER PLANE

It is our sincere prayer that this issue focusing on the believer's spiritual vision may challenge all of us to take a fresh look at our spiritual outlook. Just like we experience a better and more beautiful view of a landscape from a hilltop or an aeroplane, let us long to be on a higher level of spiritual life to have an unhindered, flawless divine point of view. **G&P**

NTK

PERSPECTIVE

Nelson Thomas

John C. Maxwell, the well-known leadership expert, narrates the story of two footwear salesmen. Many years ago, their respective companies from the UK sent them to Africa to market their products. One sent back the message, 'Here nobody wears footwear, I am returning'. But the message of the other was interesting, 'Here nobody wears footwear, a vast market is open, send bundles of all products immediately'!

Both saw the same situation but their conclusion was different. That is vision, the ability to see what many others could not. Many management gurus consider vision to be one of the outstanding features of a successful leader. It is true in spiritual life also, albeit at a different level and point of view.

NATURAL VERSUS SPIRITUAL

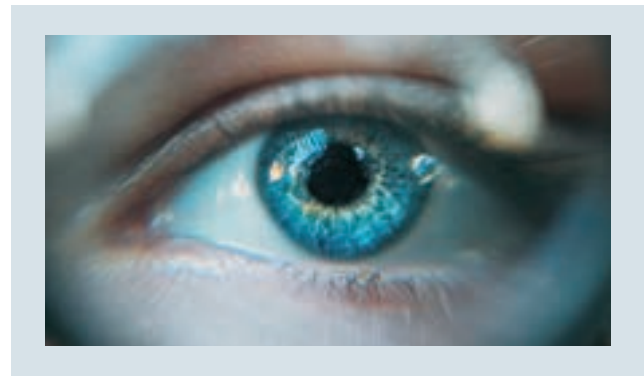
Just as there is sight and insight, there is natural eyesight and spiritual eyesight. With our physical eyes, we see things around us, but with spiritual eyes, we see divine things that are beyond the natural realm.

Insight is the ability to perceive what is deep inside or beyond a given scenario. It is often said that 'men have sight but women have insight'. This ability of perception varies from person to person.

SPIRITUAL VISION

However, apart from this human ability of intuition, there is a spiritual ability to see and comprehend the things of God which are vital for our spiritual life.

Throughout the Bible we see godly men who had this special capability to see life from God's point of view. It was this divine perspective that made them different from others and even successful. By faith, they saw that which was invisible, impossible, and even beyond the grave.



SEEING AFAR OFF

Noah by faith saw the great flood coming, which no man then could ever imagine. Abraham saw a better city by faith and left the homeland at the call of God. Joseph saw the day of deliverance for Israel from Egypt and so instructed his brethren to carry his bones to Canaan. By faith, Moses' parents saw the divine plan for the child at his birth and so took the risk of keeping him, ignoring the strict decree of the king to kill every male child (Heb. 11, 8, 23, 27).

The writer of Hebrews sums it up poignantly, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Heb. 11:13).

Notice carefully, referring to these spiritual giants of the Old Testament, the writer says that till death, they did not obtain the promises. But they saw them afar off, were assured, embraced and confessed their conviction, all through the eyes of faith. That’s the true faith life of all who sincerely follow the Lord and His Word.

THREE THINGS ABOUT THIS SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

a. It’s an essential mark of a believer

Remember, all those heroes of faith had this experience of ‘seeing afar off’. That means a telescopic spiritual vision is an essential characteristic of a true believer. They see life through the eyes of God. Whatever may be the circumstances, they view it through the viewpoint of God. It is this divine, heavenly perspective that makes all the difference in their lives.

Such perception helps one to be calm and composed in the most complicated situations. It takes away all fears and helps one to face life’s challenges with boldness. A clear and firm understanding of the purposes of God makes a believer even forsake the earthly things, knowing they are temporary (2 Cori. 4:18; Heb. 11:24). Then, they can take steps according to God’s plan, and this in turn assures blessings and success as the days go by. Yes, the outcomes of having a divine outlook are far-reaching and numerous.

b. It’s a privilege of a born-again Christian

We should not underestimate this spiritual ability to see through God’s plan. Sadly, it’s a blessing that many do not experience. The Word of God reveals that man by nature is alienated from God; his understanding is darkened, and his heart is blind to the things of God, (Eph. 4:18; 2Cor. 4:4).

One of the purposes of the incarnation of Christ was for ‘recovering of sight to the blind’, (Luke 4:18; John 9:39). This happens in a believer at the time of conversion, when we are regenerated by the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit. How grateful and humble we ought to be for this gracious work of God! The Lord says, “Blessed are your eyes for they see,” (Matt. 13:16).

c. It is only a beginning, and needs to be worked upon.

Paul’s prayer for the enlightenment of the Ephesian believers implies that we need to sharpen the eyes of our understanding so that we will comprehend all that God has prepared for us, (Eph. 1:18). Apostle Peter says that if there is no sustained growth in a believer’s faith life, he may lack many spiritual virtues. And such become short-sighted and even blind, 2 Peter 1:9.

We cannot afford to neglect these exhortations to refine our vision. The Lord Himself warned, “If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23b). We have the example from the ‘church of the Laodiceans’. They were spiritually ‘wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked’ yet ignorant of this hard reality. (Reve. 3: 17).

EVALUATION ESSENTIAL

Yes, the salvation of every individual who has trusted in the saving work of Christ is secured, (John 10:28). Nonetheless, the above-mentioned passages speak of possible variations in our spiritual insight. This in turn affects our enjoyment of true Christian life and the fulfilment of divine purposes in our earthly sojourn.

Hence, it's imperative for us to seriously examine the quality of our spiritual perspective. The consequence of losing the divine point of view is disastrous. We have many examples in the scripture.

When Peter wrote about becoming short-sighted and blind, he might have remembered his failure.

Once he started to walk on the sea looking at the Lord but later lost his focus, got frightened and eventually began to sink into the sea. On another occasion, he even denied Him three times, (Matt. 14:30; Luke 22:54–62).

The ten spies who failed to see the providence of God and Eli the priest who lost sight of the real state of the house of God then etc., brought untold misery to the people of Israel. Even today the result will be the same when God's people, particularly the leadership fail in their vision.

RESULT OF RIGHT PERCEPTION

As referred to already, it is the spiritual insight that determines the quality of a believer. The blessing and usefulness of one's Christian life are entirely based on his perception of the things of God. Without much elaboration, let me point out few effects of a higher level of spiritual outlook.

- a. Courage and confidence (Numbers 14: 6-9; 2Kings 6:16, 17).
- b. Obedience and sacrifice (Heb. 11:7, 8, 19).
- c. Hope and consolation (Acts 7:55, 56).
- d. Radiance and glory (Psa. 34:5).
- e. Inspiration and encouragement (Acts 27:23-25).
- f. Deliverance to household (Heb. 11:7).
- g. Fulfilment of divine purposes (Heb. 11:23-27), etc.

THE COST

Do not forget the cost of committing to live by God's point of view. Since not all have the same level of spiritual outlook, one will find disagreement and even opposition from many. For example, Apostle Peter had a special vision from the Lord and his outlook towards the Gentiles changed. In obedience to God's direction, he visited a gentile home, shared the gospel and won them for the Lord, (Acts 10:9–48). But his fellow brethren in Jerusalem criticized him. Nevertheless, the good thing was that Peter explained the whole story in order, and the critics gladly accepted him and even glorified God (Acts 11:1-18).

Another example is from Apostle Paul. During his second missionary journey, Paul and his team went to Europe in obedience to God's perfect will (Acts 16:6-10). Yet in Philippi, the first city where they preached, along with blessings they had to face much opposition. They were flogged beyond measure,

imprisoned, and even got their feet fastened in stocks (Acts 16:22-24 cf. 2Cor. 11:23). A scriptural world-view is costly, but God will honour His people at the right time. By faith we have to see this divine working in and through His people (Rom. 8:28; 2Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1-7).

THE BASE: SCRIPTURE ALONE

So, living because of the heavenly perspective is certainly risky yet rewarding. But there is another danger that we need to be aware of: the possibility of faulty vision. David had a desire to build a temple in the place of the Tabernacle. Even Nathan the prophet endorsed it. But later the Lord Himself corrected Nathan, for it was a faulty perception (1Chro. 17:1-4).

Our convictions and perceptions must be based on the inspired word of God which is settled in heaven forever. Many who claim to have special visions and divine revelations today are proved to be false in the light of the scripture.

HOW TO SHARPEN OUR SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE?

Finally, let us consider briefly, how to enhance our spiritual perception. We can take many cues from the way we care for our physical eyes.

a. A healthy growth

We progress in our ability to understand and perceive as we mature spiritually, (1Cor. 3:1, 2; Heb. 5:12-14; 1Peter 2:1)

b. Constant cleansing

Anything that impairs our vision must be dealt with like dust or even a 'beam' as the Lord says, (Matt. 7:3-5)

c. A spiritual mindset

When our thoughts and affections are of things above, a heavenly viewpoint becomes easy and even natural, just like a view from a high place (Colo. 3:1, 2; 1 John 2:15).

d. Prayerful attitude

Like Paul and Elisha, we can intercede for the enlightenment of others, (2Kings 6:17; Eph. 1:18). Similarly, we can pray with the Psalmist, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law", (Psa. 119:18). e. Ministry of gifted brethren.

When the wall-builders had lost vision and were disheartened, the efforts of Nehemiah restored it (Neh. 4:10, 14).



Ultimately, let's listen to the words of our Lord Jesus Himself. After sharply rebuking the Laodecians for their spiritual blindness and bankruptcy, He counsels them to buy ointment from Him to put on their eyes that they may be able to see (Reve. 3:17, 18).

Notice, how gracious and merciful our Lord is! He does not want us to be in the dark. He wants to open our eyes and sharpen our vision. What shall we do? The Lord further advises the Laodecians lovingly, to take His word seriously, repent, and turn to Him (Rev. 3:19, 20). Even today, we need to do so to have a heavenly viewpoint that can turn around our entire Christian life and service. **G&P**

STUDY-1

Bro. Tom Jacob, Mumbai

REPERCUSSIONS OF LACKING A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

Those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation are bound for Heaven (Phil. 3:20). They have been “raised us up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” by God who is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:5, 6). However, to make this positional truth practical in our daily lives, we need to keep transforming our perspective (Rom. 12:2) according to God’s Word. It will be disastrous if we lose or fail to have a spiritual perspective. Let’s look at several consequences of not having a spiritual perspective.

1. DOUBTING GOD’S FORGIVENESS 2 Peter 1:9

Peter in his second epistle chapter 1 verse 5-7 lists out seven qualities that we need to add to our faith. Then in verse 8 he says that these qualities will make us always fruitful for God. However, the warning that he gives in verse 9 cannot be ignored, “he who lacks these qualities is **blind or short-sighted**, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.” As believers, we should beware that there is a possibility for us to lose our spiritual vision (sight) partially or completely. Such a loss is so disastrous that it would even invite doubts within us regarding God’s cleansing work in us. Therefore, brethren, let’s be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing us.

2. HINDERING GOD’S PLANS

In Matt. 16 we read about the incident where Lord was foretelling to His disciples the way He would be captured, crucified, and resurrected. Peter immediately forbids the Lord from this (v. 22). The Lord’s rebuke to Peter is worth noting for us as well, “But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! **You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.**’ (Matt. 16:23). Peter, who proclaimed the truth about the identity of the Lord Jesus as Christ the Son of the living God in verse 16, seems to have quickly misplaced his perspective from the eternal to the temporal. Such a change in his perspective would cost him dearly. So, the Lord made it clear to him that he was now a stumbling block to the Lord Himself! Unless Peter puts God’s interests above his own interests, he would fail to see things in God’s perspective, thereby hindering God’s plans to be accomplished. May we never lose our spiritual perspective and hinder God from doing His work.



3. BECOMING LEGALISTIC BELIEVERS Gal. 4:9-11

The believers in the churches of Galatia began their spiritual journey well, but when few Judaizers introduced teachings that wanted them to seek justification by works, they lost their spiritual perspective. They turned aside from the truth of seeking justification by faith in Christ to trying to fulfil the demands of the law by their own efforts. The apostle does not mince words when he rebukes them for their folly, “Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?** (Gal. 3:3). Legalism took away their zeal to obey the Lord (5:7) and spoiled their inter-personal relationships as well (5:15). Let’s look out that we never become legalistic, despising justification by faith in Christ and His finished work on the cross for us.

4. BECOMING ENEMIES OF THE CROSS Phil. 3:19

While exhorting the Philippian believers, Paul encourages them to follow his example and those who walk according to the pattern you have in us (Phil.3:17). Then he goes on to say in verses 18 and 19 about many who set their minds on earthly things. These believers by losing their spiritual perspective have not only become a cause of grief to the apostle but it also made them enemies of the cross rather than being its proponents. Let us be

wary of such disloyalty and never neglect the caution to “set our minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2).

5. BECOME UNPROFITABLE FOR GOD 2 Kings 5:20-27

We read about Gehazi who was servant to the man of God, Elisha in 2 Kings 5. As long as he was in tune with his master’s vision, he was involved in God’s work with Elisha. However, when he saw that his master was not keen on making use of an opportunity to gain material prosperity (2 Kings 5:15, 16), his misplaced perspective was evident. He ran after the wealth of the world (v. 20, 21); consequently, the leprosy of which Naaman was cleansed off, stuck to him and his descendants (v.27), thereby, Gehazi could no longer continue in the work of God. How detrimental it is dear ones to lose our perspective while we serve God!

Let’s who bear the name of Christ, take these consequences of losing our spiritual perspective cautiously. “Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.” (Heb. 12:1, 2) Let’s never take our eyes off Him no matter what circumstances we might be in, till we shall see Him face to face. **G&P**

“Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather it is telling the difference between right and almost right.”

Charles Spurgeon

OUTLINE-1

THREE STAGES OF KNOWLEDGE

1. The knowledge of God's grace. Col 1:6
2. The knowledge of God's will. Col 1:9
3. The knowledge of God Himself. Col 1:10

DWC

OUTLINE-2

Prayer: That which I see not, teach thou me, Job 34:32.

Precept: Grow in.... knowledge....Jesus Christ, 2Pet 3:18.

Promise: The meek will He teach, Psa 25:9.

W.T.R

Christian
progress

ANECDOTE-1

FAILED DISCERNMENT

The story is told about the father of a vacationing family who came across a large sign that read, "Road Closed. Do Not Enter." The man proceeded around the sign because he was confident it would save them time. His wife was resistant to the adventure, but there was no turning back for this persistent road warrior.



After a few miles of successful navigation, he began to boast about his gift of discernment. His proud smile was quickly replaced with humble sweat when the road led to a washed-out bridge. He turned the car around and retraced his tracks to the main road.

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ANECDOTE-2

Eyesight: So Amazing

For 51 years Bob Edens was blind. He couldn't see anything. His world was a black hall of sounds and smells. He felt his way through five decades of darkness. And then, he could see. A skilled surgeon performed a complicated operation and, for the first time, Bob Edens had sight. He found it overwhelming. "I never would have dreamed that yellow is so...yellow," he exclaimed. "I don't have the words. I am amazed by yellow. But red is my favorite color. I just can't believe red. I can see the shape of the moon—and I like nothing better than seeing a jet plane flying across the sky leaving a vapor trail. And of course, sunrises and sunsets. And at night I look at the stars in the sky and the flashing light. You could never know how wonderful everything is."

Max Lucado

OUTLINE-3

Bro. David Manchala, Hyderabad

Spiritual Perspective of a Model Christian Colossians 3

The church at Colosse was established around 62 AD during Paul's third missionary journey, when he spent three years in Ephesus. Paul himself didn't plant the church, but rather a Colossian named Epaphras who returned to Colossae after hearing Paul's message in Ephesus. This book can be studied in

Chapter 1- Complete Christian and his Lord

Chapter 2 - Complete Christian and his Liberty

Chapter 3 - Complete Christian and his Life

Chapter 4 - Complete Christian and his Labours

The theme of Colossians is Complete Christian Life. Though we are complete in Christ positionally, (2:10), we should be complete practically, (4: 12). Between ch. 2 & ch. 4 in ch.3 we have instructions on a life in spiritual viewpoint.

- Practical spirited life - Heavenly mind, Colo 3:1,2
- Personal life – Hopeful Mind, Colo 3: 3, 4
- Physical Life – Holy mind, Colo 3: 5,6,7
- Social Life – Healthy mind, Colo 3: 8,9,10
- Assembly life- Humble mind, Colo 3: 11 – 14
- Devotional life - Happy mind, Colo 3: V16,17
- Family life- Harmonious mind, Colo 3: 18,19,20,21
- Professional life- Helping mind, Colo 3: 22 – 25

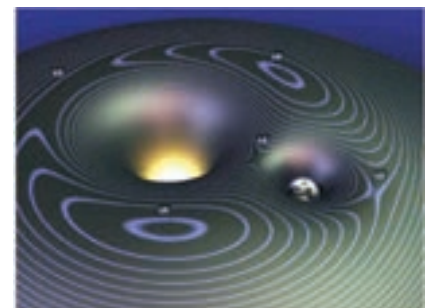
G&P

PRACTICAL-1

Bro. Biju Itty, Surat

MARKS OF A MAN WITH A HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE

Lagrange Points are positions in space where the gravitational forces of a two-body system like the Sun and the Earth produce enhanced regions of attraction and repulsion. Spacecraft can 'hover' there, with little fuel consumption. Satellites at Lagrange Point (L1) are able to continuously observe the sun and solar activities without any occultation, eclipse, or obstruction, unlike from any place on earth. They can report violent solar storms that could damage communication and navigation satellites orbiting the earth.



In contrast, satellites at L2 are in a ‘sweet-spot’, being perpetually in the earth’s shadow. Always looking away from the sun, into the dark deep space and distant past. Their extremely sensitive optics and instruments cannot tolerate the slightest heat of the sun. These satellites need regular course and altitude correction, and are eventually deorbited after the end of their useful life. This illustrates an interesting spiritual reality. Apostle Paul says in Phil.1:23,24 - “But I am hard-pressed from (pulled in / torn between) both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sakes” [NASB]. Johnson Oatman Jr. sang of this spiritual vantage point:

“I want to live above the world,
Though Satan’s darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.”
“Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven’s tableland,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground”

By grace the elders stood on this higher plane, and obtained a good testimony. Heb.11:13 describe those who have a heavenly perspective. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”, Heb 11:13.

1. They are able to see afar off

They get an unhindered view of the promises of God from a higher plane of increased faith. Lot left Abraham and moved his tent closer and closer to Sodom, to the low-lying plains of Jordan, for worldly gain. He chose to be in the cold shadows of worldlings, free from godly restrictions and the all-consuming holiness of God. But there his righteous soul was oppressed and tormented daily by the filthy conduct and lawless deeds of the wicked. And then he lost all, even his family.

In contrast, Abraham moved his tent to Mamre, in Hebron, a higher place where he built an altar to the LORD. Hebron signifies ‘alliance with God’, and God calls him ‘My friend Abraham’. He walked in the clear sunshine of fellowship with God and was blameless. He passed the ultimate test of obedience to God in offering up his only begotten son Isaac, and gained him back as from the dead.

By faith he saw Jehovah-Jireh, the Great Substitute, God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. "Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." He is the father of the faithful, "who do not see Christ, yet believing, rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."

2. They embrace God's promises

They don't shun the sunlight of God's promises. It's by the sun's heat that "the precious fruits of the sun" or a bountiful harvest are produced. Moses chose to suffer the heat of affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...for he looked to the reward, or harvest of souls. Standing on the top of Mount Pisgah he saw the Promised Land from a distance.

But his eyes looked onward to Calvary where Christ the Passover, would be slain. He saw the One who would give true spiritual rest to the people of God. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. On the mount of Christ's transfiguration, he stood evaluating Christ's upcoming decease at Jerusalem. He thankfully acknowledged the exceeding riches of God's grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

3. They confess their heavenly calling

They know their mission is to forewarn sinners and intercede for them before God. Like Abraham, they risk the Lord's righteous anger, but become successful intercessors. They confess that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth. They focus their attention on the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus. The world hates them, because they are not of the world, just as Christ is not of the world. Christ prays for them to the Father, not that they may be taken from the world, but that they may be preserved from the evil one. So they do not go out of the world to become ascetics or recluses. Rather, they walk by faith with Christ in white, saving sinners with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

4. They all die in faith

They know that "a man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish." So they pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." They all live by faith, and please God by being rich toward Him. By faith, they do fruitful labor for Him. But also they die in faith, because they consider it far better to depart and to be with Christ. As Paul put it, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain". Faith elevates them to heaven's tableland and they see the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in His wings, meaning, and a better resurrection. Let us, like heaven-bound luminaries, reflect the light of God's love to this sin-darkened world, through above-the-average Christian living. For "we have been raised with Christ, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ."**G&P**

STUDY-2

Bro. Aby Kuruvilla, Mumbai

PERCEPTION OF A NATURAL MAN AND A SPIRITUAL MAN

Paul, a scholarly religious Jew, describes his pre-converted life as being a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious (1 Tim. 1:13). This is the working of the unconverted man or unregenerate soul. He opposes the working of the Spirit (Rom. 8:7). He may gladly engage in natural things; a cup of coffee, a football game, or anything that does not involve a spiritual exercise. But if the gospel is shared, or if spiritual matters are discussed, you'll find him becoming uneasy.

The scripture points out that "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14).

Notice the three aspects of the natural man:

- **His appreciation** – he receiveth not
There is no desire or interest in him to partake of the spiritual things. Cain is the earliest example of one who had no interest in the things of God (Gen. 4:16).
- **His valuation** – foolishness
He measures spiritual things with the yardstick of worldly wisdom. To the Greeks, Christ crucified was foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23).
- **His comprehension** – neither can he know them
He cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God using his own mind. Nicodemus struggled to understand what it meant to be born-again (John 3:4).

A Spirit-quicken born-again experience is necessary to truly fellowship with God. If there's no evidence of a regenerated life in us, it is important to examine if we are still in the flesh. They that are (born) after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are (born) after the Spirit the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5).

Then, these are the marks of the Spirit-minded man:

1. **His priorities** – The kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33)
2. **His possessions** – Things which are Jesus Christ's (Phil. 2:21)
3. **His passions** – Things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5)
4. **His perspective** – Things that are above where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God (Col. 3:1)
5. **His preoccupation** – Things that are virtuous and praise-worthy (Phil. 4:8)
6. **His proclamation** – A heavenly country (Heb. 11:16)

This list is but a feeble glimpse into the numerous things the scripture characterizes as traits of the spiritually minded. However, for practical purposes, let us contrast the spiritual man under the same headings we considered earlier for the natural man.

1. His appreciation of Christ

Paul's appreciation of Christ grew manifold as he matured in the faith (see, Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13 – light). It is essential to feed on Christ daily above all the ministry that we can engage in. This is what will truly transform us – “beholding... the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18).

2. His valuation of the things of God

Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God (Heb. 11:25). We all have choices to make. Choices between our own things and the things of God. Valuing the things of God rightly requires our sacrifice, our resolve and our devotion. David said, “neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing” (2 Sam. 24:24).

3. His comprehension of Christ

Paul expresses a great desire for the saints that they may be filled into all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17-19). When the surpassing knowledge of the love of Christ is comprehended with all the saints, it will become practically evident in the child of God being filled into all the fullness of God, i.e., becoming Christ-like.

Notice how the traits of the spiritual man are stated as expectations, unlike the natural man where it was innately exhibited. The spiritual man is enabled to live a Spirit-led life.

That doesn't mean that the natural man ceases to exist. Therefore, though we are in this sinful flesh, let us nurture the spiritual man, through the help of the Spirit, that we may grow up into Christ in all things (Gal. 6:8; Eph. 4:15). **G&P**

“The good is often the enemy of the best”

William MacDonald

*“The Holy Spirit will prompt us in the right direction
as we learn to hear His voice and respond in obedience.”*

Crystal McDowell

PRACTICAL-2

Bro. Garry McBride, Canada

A Heavenly PERSPECTIVE

A suitable outline for Psalm 73 is:

- An outward look (vv.4-11)
- An inward look (vv.2-3,14-16)
- An upward look (vv.17-20)
- A forward look (vv.21-28)



Doctrinally

Asaph had sound theology as seen in his statement “truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.” This is a truth he grew up with and as a worship leader in the temple; he would have often proclaimed and affirmed it.

As a parallel, the believer today also knows that “God is good.” However, we have a fuller revelation. We know God offers His peace to us, that our future is secure, and that God is sovereign over this world. We also know that things will deteriorate morally and spiritually in the last days.

Emotionally

Asaph was torn apart on the inside because he started focusing on the world around him. In his case he was envious of the wealthy people who were also evil in their dealings. He could not understand why these people had few worries and lacked the troubles that plagued other people. They were characterized by pride, violence, abundance, and blasphemy. They went so far as to mock God. They were ungodly, and yet they continued to prosper financially and materially.

Asaph confessed that his feet almost stumbled as these conditions began to affect his outlook on life (v.3). He knew he could not verbalize his doubts and thoughts but had to keep them to himself (v.15). As a result, the situation became too painful for him, in that he was being torn apart emotionally as he was consumed by envy (v.14).

In the Psalms, Asaph is not alone in this predicament. David (Psa. 37) and the Sons of Korah (Psa. 49) also expressed similar thoughts. Some of the prophets expressed the same perspective (ex. Habakkuk). The world around them seemed to contradict their theology, in particular the premise that God was good to His people. The circumstances around them affected their perspective and caused doubts to arise.

Spiritually

Asaph did not have an answer, so he changed his position by going into the presence of God. He realized he needed to have God’s Word as his guide. What a transformation took place in Asaph’s world view. He now recognized the imminent danger these wicked people faced as he came to understand their end.

The wicked were in slippery places and headed for destruction. There was desolation and there were terrors ahead for them. These people were not to be envied but rather, in light of where they were headed, they were to be pitied. They would experience an eternal separation from God. He later said, “For indeed, those who are far from you shall perish” (v.27).

Emotionally

God’s revelation in the sanctuary made Asaph realize his error. He felt a sense of grief and sorrow. He repented by admitting he had been foolish and ignorant to have had such thoughts about the wicked people he was observing.

In light of this revelation, his perspective changed. The world around him and the wealthy wicked were still there but Asaph had changed on the inside. Time with the Lord and a different perspective radically transformed Asaph’s thinking. He moved from being controlled by feelings to resting on facts and then to responding in faith.

Mentally

Instead of being controlled by his emotions, he now thought rationally and acknowledged that he had an unbreakable relationship with God. The same is true for us as well for we have the assurance of Christ. He is our hope of glory, and He promises us that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Asaph also affirmed God’s direction in his life. God held his hand and guided him with His counsel.

We also have the assurance that the Spirit guides, directs and gives us comfort. Further, he knew his destiny was to be in the presence of God forever (vv.23-24). The same is true for us. Our citizenship is in heaven and so is our future home. I once heard this encouraging outline: “we have the guarantee of His presence, the grasp of His hand, the guidance of His counsel, and His glory to follow.”

With the change of focus, Asaph saw that his relationship with God gave him all he needed and could ever want. The wicked may have riches but Asaph had an eternal relationship and a wealth the world cannot fathom. He could draw near to God (v.28) and proclaim that God is indeed good, thus taking himself back to the start of the Psalm. He put his trust in the Lord and was now determined to declare the works of God.

Application

Many believers today are consumed with what they see, either in the news, on-line, or in their own city. Like Asaph, many wonder that if God is good, then why are all these wicked and immoral things going on around us. Some believers feel that their only hope is a change in government and that perhaps a different person in power would usher in a godlier environment.

For us the answer is the same as Asaph discovered. A focus on circumstances will result in discouragement, whereas a focus on Christ will bring delight to the child of God. We should go to the Word of God for insight and a godly perspective. Our concern should be for the souls of men and women who are headed to a lost eternity.

The world around us is not likely to change or get better, but we can change as we focus on the benefits and beauty of our relationship with the Lord. Instead of feelings being in control, we can focus on facts and respond in faith. When considering Asaph's experience, I am reminded of the following poem by an unknown author:

Three men were walking on a wall,
Feeling, Faith, and Fact.
When Feeling took an awful fall,
And Faith was taken back.
So close was Faith to Feeling,
He stumbled and fell too.
But Fact remained and pulled Faith back,

“—CORNERSTONE MAGAZINE”.

EXHORTATION

Bro. James Nair, Chhattisgarh

Fellowship in the TRIUNE GOD

“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” | Jn 1:3)

It was an ardent desire in the heart of Our Lord before taking on the cruel cross, to intercede for His disciples. The central theme running throughout John 17 was unity among themselves (“that they may be one”).

However, a closer ponder in His intercession reveals that the Saviour desired this unity to be achieved by abiding in the Father and the Son (“they also may one in Us”, Jn 17:21). That is the strongest united entity that has ever been existing.

And we might as well understand that this unity among believers cannot be achieved

without fellowship with and in the Triune God. John the Beloved translates this truth beautifully in his letter, in which we have important takeaways.

TRUE FELLOWSHIP

John invites the readers to enjoy a fellowship, something which he has seen, heard, and touched, a fellowship with the Father and His Son. The invitation is highlighted by the truthfulness of a divine fellowship. Only those who have this divine fellowship can enjoy a spiritual and fulfilling fellowship amongst the believers.

Fellowship with Triune God. In the remaining passage that follows verse 3, it shows how important it is to have fellowship with the Father, the Son as well as the Holy Spirit. We may drive home the following truths from the above two passages:

- (a) God is light. As His children, we must always walk in light, which we cannot because of our sinful nature. Thus, a fellowship with Father is achieved exclusively through the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.
- (b) True, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins. But unless we walk in the light of God, we would not be reprov'd of our darkness (sins). Here comes the fellowship of the Holy Spirit vital, to point out our mistakes and plead for His forgiveness.
- (c) Only two persons who agree among themselves can have fellowship (Amos 3:3). The Holy Spirit reveals to us of the deep things of God and the

mind of God (1 Cor 2:10-12). Thus, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is constantly required for a believer to agree with God.

The fellowship with Father and Son is a virtuous cycle, and it cannot be without an abiding fellowship in the Spirit. An outcome of this fellowship is purity, which helps us walk in the light.

Another outcome what we gain is unity, A believer who hates his brother walks in darkness, or sins (1 Jn 2:9-11). One major cause of this hatred is disunity, and only a true abiding in the Triune God will help him understand the bond of unity and love his brother.

May we be filled in the Spirit, who teaches us the things of God, and may we be cleansed daily in the blood of Christ that we may always walk in light and love, and be in true fellowship with God and man.**G&P**

MEDITATION

Bro. Michael Browne, Bath

CHRIST THE FRUIT OUT OF DAVID

(Psalm 132: 11, 17-18)

The Throne, v 11.

"The LORD has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it:

"I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body".

Here is an elaboration of Jehovah's unchangeable covenant made with King David, 2 Sam. 7. 12-16. It is founded upon the divine oath and points to One who will be the 'fruit of David's body' and sit upon his throne for ever. This covenant finds its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ. It was Jesus, God's Son, who 'was made of the seed of David according to the flesh' Rom. 1. 3 and to whom the Father promised, 'I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession' Ps. 2. 8.

He must reign and of His kingdom there shall be no end. God's word promises it; God's oath guarantees it; and God's power will infallibly fulfil it. Jesus is destined to reign universally over a renewed earth.

THE METROPOLIS

The location of Messiah's throne is Zion, verse 13, "For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place". It is the chosen habitation of Jehovah, the focal centre of the land which the Lord God jealously cares for, and His eye is always upon, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, Deut 11. 12. It is His resting place for ever.

Jerusalem, the present cauldron of Arab-Israeli strife and hatred, will one day be the metropolitan centre of Messiah's glorious kingdom of peace and love. There the poor will be fed, and want banished in the abundance of the divine provision, her priests shall be clothed with salvation, and her people shall sing aloud for joy vv. 15-16.



THE HORN & THE LAMP

"There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed, v. 17. **'The horn of David'** verse 17 is a further Messianic promise of a coming powerful ruler springing from David's line and flourishing in Jerusalem. It is our beloved Lord Jesus Christ.

He will reign for ever as the description, 'a lamp for mine anointed' indicates. His sun will never set and His glory never wanes. David's throne is secure for endless generations in the Person of great David's greater Son. His victory is endless, His enemies doomed to shame, 'But upon himself shall his crown flourish' verse 18. 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun, Does his successive journeys run; His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, Till moons shall wax and wane no more.' **G&P**

READER'S RESPONSE

Rightly divide the Word God

This is in response to the article appeared in the June issue of G&P entitled, '**Need Weepers!**'

We are now in New Testament Church dispensation. The Old Testament prayers, tears, fasting's are no more "necessary" or

conditional on the believers. It is quoted in the said article that Jesus wept for Jerusalem and at the tomb of Lazarus! Jesus came during the dispensation of "Law". He has to invariably obey the "Law" and fulfill it!

In the “Results in the past” - it is quoted all the Old Testament verses! Then they believed God as a great, Superior, terrible, un-approachable God. They never addressed Him as “Father”! They were all (except Hagar) under the “Law- so they prayed like that!

But - when Jesus came and died on the cross- He announced a new relationship between God & believers as “Father & Children”. No child shall pray to his father in fasting, crying, tears! If the child does, it will be a shame on his/her father!

We are simply to pray to God without these emotions - since our emotions never change the will of God. He will give because of His love towards His children but not by our gimmicks - of crying, chain prayers, fastings etc.

The verses in the New Testament in the “Sermon on the Mount” are actually for the Jews at that time - a manifesto of His Kingdom as a Messiah to the Jews. It is nothing to do with the Church doctrine! The Kingdom He announced and preached throughout the Israel country (only for Jews) was kept postponed for future since the Jews rejected Him and His Kingdom. This manifesto may be put in action in His future Kingdom!



So please see the difference between the doctrine of Old Testament and the New Testament. It is not right to quote biblical verses without reference to context!

One example: In Old Testament - the “righteous man” is nothing but declared by works! But in New Testament- the “righteous man” is not by works but by the shedding of His blood on the cross and Jesus Himself declares us “righteous” - we are saved by faith through the “grace” of God. It is not works - that any man should boast! (Though He is a gracious God He never showed “Grace” in Hebrew – Hannun - since the verse John 1:17 shows through Jesus only “grace” was given)

So the quoted verses from Old Testament are not for Church people now. Let us “rightly divide the Word God”!

Jeevaratnam A

“It is easier to prevent ill habits than to break them.”

Thomas Fuller

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