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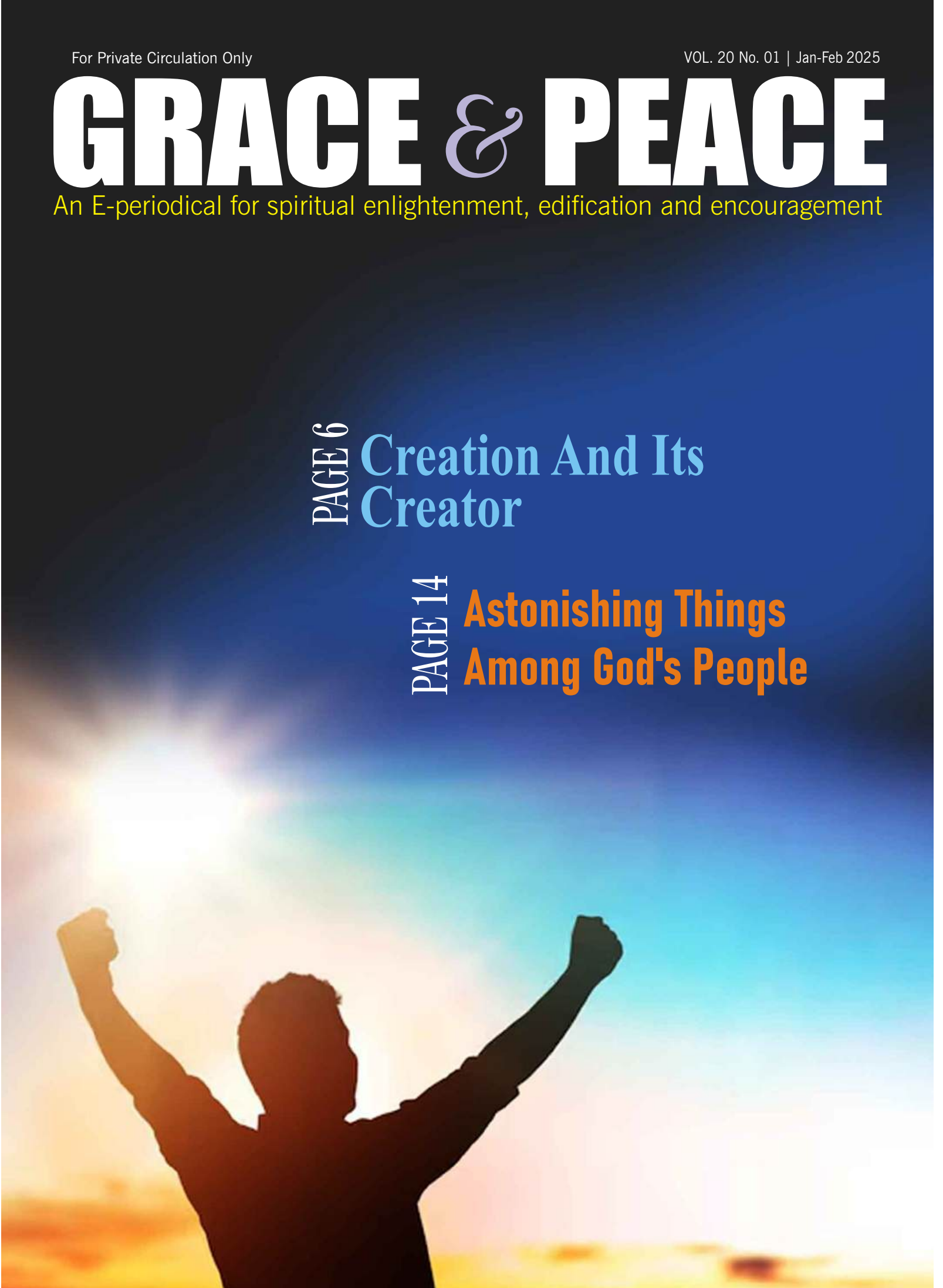
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GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical for spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement

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EDITORIAL

Truth amid Fake Stories

It's a well-known fact that today society is flooded with fake news and false narratives more than at any other time in history. The advent of social media made it easy to disseminate such bogus stories faster, far and wide. People from every walk of life face the repercussions of these deceitful stories in one form or the other.

It is in this context we have to look at the opinion and response of the general public towards the Lord Jesus Christ and His followers. Even the many so-called Christians are ignorant of the truth behind Biblical conversion and Christian ministry.



Apostle Paul makes it very clear, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one” (1Cor 2:14, 15 ESV).

An unbeliever will never fully comprehend the many precious truths a believer dearly holds. In this issue, our main article is such a topic entitled, ‘The Secret of True Christian Life’.

Also, a new series of studies on ‘Victorious Christian Life’ and a series of reflections on ‘Creation and its Creator’ will be a blessing to our readers. Finally, a sermon entitled, ‘Astonishing Things among God’s People’ is an analysis of the times of Jeremiah in view of the present day Christendom.

Thank you so much beloved for your continued support and encouragement to ‘Grace & Peace’. From this issue we are making some changes in terms of the content as well as the publishing, which we hope will be beneficial to all. Kindly feel free to share your questions and views.

Yours in Christ Jesus

NTK

THE SECRET OF TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE

What actually is the most important factor that determines the quality of our spiritual life according to the New Testament? In other words, how can one lead a true Christian life as the Word of God expects? Of course, many spiritual exercises are involved in the beginning and progress of Christian life like confession of our sins, repentance towards God, faith in the saving work of Christ, wholehearted consecration to Christ, etc. All these are the result of the gracious intervention of God Himself (John 6: 44, 65). These are definitely important aspects of personal salvation. Nevertheless, we ought to remember that it is the indwelling divine nature in consequence of our regeneration that transforms our life (Eph 2:1, 5; John 1:13; 1 John 3:9).



This indwelling has been referred to in the New Testament repeatedly and in various ways. For example:

- ▶ Joh 14:20: “I am in My Father and you in Me, and I in you.”
- ▶ Rom 8:9: “The Spirit of God dwells in you.” ? Rom 8:10: “Christ is in you, ... the Spirit is life” ? 2Cori 13:5: “Jesus Christ is in you?”
- ▶ Gal 2:20: “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”
- ▶ Col 1:27c: “....Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
- ▶ 2Peter 1:4: “partakers of the divine nature”.
- ▶ 1John 3:9: “His seed remains in him ... Because he has been born of God.”

Most believers are conscious of the wonderful things God did in the past like forgiveness of their sins and salvation from eternal condemnation, and even they rejoice in the blessed future ahead but seldom consider the present work of Christ especially within and through a believer.

But actually it is the indwelling of Christ through the Holy Spirit that makes all the difference in a believer's life. The effectiveness of our daily practical Christian life depends upon the awareness and enjoyment of this reality. Unity among the saints and their testimony in the world also affected by this mystical union, (John 17:23).

Glorious Mystery

Apostle Paul says it is a rich and glorious mystery hidden under the old covenant but revealed today under the new covenant (Colo. 1:26, 27). We, who were not only sinners by birth but Gentiles who had no relationship with the promises made to the children of Abraham, are today indwelt by the triune God from the moment of our conversion. It is this mystical union with Christ that energizes and equips us to lead a successful Christian life. Paul says it is "Treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2Cor 4:7). It's not by our effort that we can live a godly and righteous life, but Christ Himself lives in and through us. Not only He teaches and strengthens us, but changes us from the inside. What a blessed privilege indeed!

Ongoing Experience

However, this indwelling of divine nature and internal transformation is not just a once-for-all event but an ongoing practical experience. **"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2Cor 3:18 ESV).**

The more we experience an intimate communion with the Lord, not only do we learn from Him, but also we are being transformed into His image.

In the parable of the vine and the branches in John 15, the Lord Jesus illustrated this truth. As a branch in the vine, a believer must stay close to the Lord Jesus drawing His life and resources so that he will continue to live and be fruitful. When the life of Christ is flowing through a believer, he can reproduce the Christ-like qualities mentioned in Gal 5:22, as the fruit of the Holy Spirit (John 15:1–11). This wonderful mutual intimacy between Christ and the believer must continue and progress for sustained growth and fruitfulness.

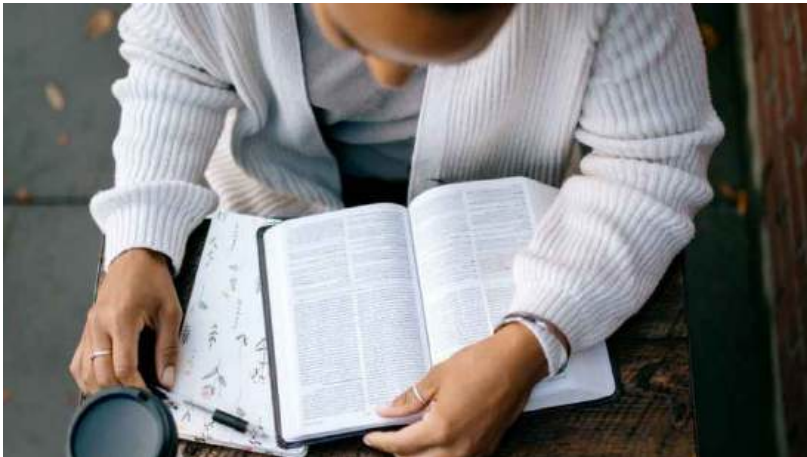
Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers is significant in this aspect;

"Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love... to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3: 17, 19).

Remember, they were already believers hence the Lord Jesus indwells them through the Holy Spirit as we have seen earlier, yet Paul's prayer for them is that they may experience this intimacy with Christ on a higher level so that they will be filled with all the divine goodness as intended for them.

Similarly, he wrote to Galatians, "I am suffering a mother's birth pangs for you again until Christ is formed in you" (Gala 4:19 Williams). He is not referring to their salvation but to a Christ-like matured spiritual life.

Continuous Learning



How can we abide in the Lord and progress in our intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ? One of the basic methods is found in the final words of Christ's intercessory prayer for His people. "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26).

We know His prayer for the disciples applies to believers today as well (John 17:9, 20). Notice carefully, the Lord makes it very clear that not only He revealed the Father during His public ministry, but even in future also He will continue to teach His disciples. That is, through the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:14, 15).

What is the ultimate purpose of this ongoing teaching programme? "The love with which You love Me may be in them, and I in them". In other words, the indwelling of divine nature and even Christ Himself in a believer depends upon their understanding of God the Father as revealed by the Lord Jesus. That is exactly what He said on another occasion, "...I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me"; "...The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:57, 63).

No wonder He calls upon every follower of Christ to take His yoke upon them and learn from Him (Matt 11:29). The more we experience an intimate communion with the Lord, not only do we learn from Him, but also we are being transformed into His image. Similarly, the more we read and meditate upon His Word, the more we enjoy His intimacy and grow in the knowledge of Christ. Apart from that our Lord also promises to all who love and obey Him a special fellowship of the triune God (John 14:23). We should never forget that just as understanding of the Word of God is essential for the initiation of new life in Christ, we need to continue feeding on the Word of God to sustain and succeed in spiritual life (John 17:3, 26; 1Peter 1:23; 2:1)

Fruitfulness



So beloved, this is the secret of true Christian life. Lord Jesus Christ living in and through us by His Spirit as we continue to abide in Him. That is possible only by regular meditation of the Word of God along with all other spiritual exercises like prayer, worship, fellowship and other spiritual services.

As we cultivate and maintain a deep love for Christ and His Word, our thoughts and attitudes are being transformed. Thus we begin to experience and reflect His peace, love, and joy, (John 14:27; 15:10, 11). Such should be the life pattern of every child of God. Any failure in exhibiting the Christ-like qualities amply speaks of the lack of intimacy with Christ. No wonder John the apostle repeatedly warns against anyone who claims to be of God yet fails in their social and moral obligations (1 John 1:6; 2:4; 4:20; 5:18).

Conclusion

The true Christian life is not just a religious life. To be a religious person one only needs to follow their ideology and observe their traditions. But to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, one needs to know the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and receive Him as the only Saviour and Lord to dwell within them to control and transform from within. It's not just a teaching but a true practical experience affecting our moral, social and spiritual life by the working of the indwelling Christ.

This is the power and wonder behind the life of a true follower of Christ, which the world will never fully comprehend (1 Cor 2:9, 14, 15). Praise be to God, 'We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us' and indwells in us. 'Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. If God is for us, who can be against us' (Rom 8:31–39).

G&P

OUTLINE

GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO HIS PEOPLE

1. Father and Children, Matt 6:9; John 1:12.
2. King and His subjects, Matt 25:34.
3. Creator and His creatures, Psa 21:1; 100:3; Eph 2:10.
4. Shepherd and His sheep, Psa 23:1; 1Pet 2:27.
5. Builder and the building, Eph 2: 20 –m22; Heb 3:4.
6. Master and His slaves, Matt 10: 24, 25; Eph 6:9.

CREATION AND ITS CREATOR

One of the greatest reformers of the 15th century by the name John Calvin, made this profound statement,

“The sacred Scriptures are the God-given eyeglasses or (contact lenses) to put it in ultra-modern terms, which correct our spiritual vision and our human perception and enables our sin-darkened minds to see aright God’s revelation of Himself in the world which He has created”



The question is sometimes asked, ‘Does the Bible confirm what science says?’ No, science confirms the validity of what the Bible has said thousands of years ago. While there are many conflicts between interpretations of Scripture and theories of science, obviously there can be no clash between the plenary, inerrant and unadulterated, infallible Word of God and the proven facts of science.

A futile attempt has been made by fallible interpreters to interpret the infallible Word of God.

“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual: the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2.13-14).

Science does give credence and credulity to the veracity of the Scriptures. God is the creator of all things visible and invisible, things in heaven and things on the earth,

Creation commands our attention and the Creator (God) demands our response.

“For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible and He is before all things and by Him all things consist” (Col. 1:16 & 17).

God is invisible as Spirit yet His attributes and character can be seen in the things He has created. Creation commands our attention and the Creator (God) demands our response as His voice thunders in marvelous ways (Job 37:5). Creation declares God's transcendent glory, His intrinsic beauty and extravagant provision. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiworks"



(Ps. 19:1). The beauties of the universe are a mirror of God's infinite wisdom.

The Book of Genesis is doctrinal, historical and poetical. It's doctrinal in the sense that it deals with the truth of Sovereign Election. It is historical, in the sense that it deals with nations of the earth in the post-Noahic period. Its linguistic and literary features make it poetical, especially chapters 1 through to chapter 3 concerning creation.

This Book records four great events:

- The Fall – involving Adam;
- The Flood – involving Noah;
- The Fire - - involving Lot and
- The Famine – involving Joseph.

The word 'Genesis' means origin or beginning. The names of the first five books of the Bible (The Pentateuch, i.e., Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) were given when the Hebrew Bible was translated into the Greek language. The entire Greek Bible known as the Septuagint, also known as the LXX (Roman numeral) was translated by 70 Jewish scholars and later on, came the Latin Vulgate Bible by Jerome of Stridon.

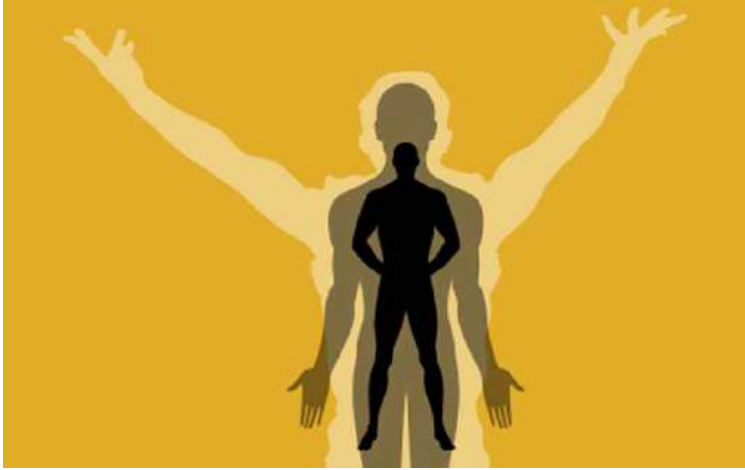
The Trinity



The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning, God" (Gen. 1:1). There is, therefore, no need to 're-interpret' that verse. Just the word 'God' opens up a whole vista on theology, which is the doctrine of God (God, 'theos' in Greek, hence theology, doctrine of God) and a kaleidoscope on creationism.

The word 'doctrine' simply means, teaching. The word 'God' in verse one is given in the plural 'Elohim' and is indicative of the union of the triune God-head as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 'Elohim', the name of God stresses His majesty and power.

Triune God and Tripartite Nature



When God said ‘Let us’ in verse 26 of Genesis chapter 1, He was speaking in one voice with the Son and the Holy Spirit. The name ‘Elohim’ in the plural form is also called a uni-plural noun. A uni-plural noun means that a word appears in the plural form but is also used in the singular. For example; words such as sheep, fish, fruit, dice, clothing etc.; are

same in the singular and plural.

So, ‘Elohim’ plural and singular, three in one - not three gods but one God in three persons; the uni-plurality of the God-head; tri-unity or blessed trinity, (Matt. 28:19). God as one, created the universe.

The Holy Bible teaches us that the Father is God, the Son (Jesus Christ) is God and the Holy Spirit is God. God is one being equally and eternally existent in three distinct persons. As distinct persons each one functions in His own unique manner.

The Father is the Originator, the Son is the Agent and the Holy Spirit is the Applicator. Each person in the Trinity is self-conscious and self-directing. Yet one person never acts independently or in opposition to the others.

God is love but love does not exist in a vacuum. Love needs to be directed to something or someone. Thus, if God is love He cannot exist as a singular entity. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit existing as a plurality of persons mean that love is possible. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Spirit, and the Spirit loves both Father and Son and round and round it goes.

***The Father is the Originator,
the Son is the Agent and the
Holy Spirit is the Applicator.***

In the triune God-head the Father loved us and sent His Son to die for our sins. Christ became the God incarnate and the express image of the Father (Hebrews 1:3). He condescended to the low estate of mankind, taking upon Himself the form of a servant.

So, God as one, created the universe. The word ‘Eloi’ in the New Testament; when the Lord Jesus cried out unto God the Father, is given in the singular, a cry of the Son to the Father, “Eloi, Eloi, (Aramaic - singular) lama sabachthani” (Mk. 15:34 & Ps. 22:1). The names ‘El’ (Strong One) and ‘Eloah’ (Mighty One) are singular nouns.

It is also of interest to note, that names which start or end with 'El' has something to do with God. For example, Jo-el (Jehovah is God), Samu-el (Heard of God), Dani-el (God is my judge), Ezeki-el (God strengthens) and Emmanu-el (God with us). Then there is El-ijah (God of Jehovah), El-isha (God of supplication), El-iezer (God of help), El-imelech (God of the king) and so on.

We learn that man also is tripartite; meaning that he is body, soul and spirit, sometimes referred to as the trichotomy: simply put, man is three-part. In the spiritual realm, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are invisible; the Son of God was made visible.

In the earthly realm man's soul and spirit are invisible - man's body is visible. Just a little digression; the words of the Lord Jesus to the lawyer who tempted Him with the question, 'what is the greatest commandment in the law?' to which the Lord Jesus replied, 'thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind', throws some light onto this deliberation.

The heart, the soul and the mind are invisible. The heart is the seat of our emotions and appetites; the soul is the embodiment of the spirit and is the seat of our convictions, and the mind is the seat of our conscience.

As the body (visible) envelopes the soul (invisible), the soul envelopes the spirit (invisible). We know that the whole universe was brought into existence by the creative act of God. We learn that the Spirit of God, which moved upon the face of the waters, brought the whole of creation out of its formless condition into an estate of impeccable perfection.

G&P

(To be continued...)

STUDY

Nelson Thomas Mumbai

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE – A Study (Based on Joshua 1–8)

Many think it's not possible to lead a victorious life as long as we live here on earth in this mortal body. Some others think it may be possible for certain spiritual giants, but for them it's impossible because of their unique situations. They would say melancholically, 'I can live only in this

manner, may the Lord forgive me!'

Such thoughts about victorious Christian living are misleading. Of course, they may be sincere in their perception because of the repeated failures. However, if victorious life is something impossible, then the scripture would not have

exhorted His people to ‘overcome’. It is because of the ignorance of the Biblical teaching on true Christian life we are plagued with thoughts of doubt and helplessness

. So we will try to see this topic in a systematic manner according to the Word of God.



THE MEANING

What does living a ‘victorious Christian life’ mean? We will see the meaning in the negative as well as positive ways.

I. Negative:

a. It is not sinless perfection.

Though perfection should be our goal as long as we live in this mortal body, the sin nature still abides within us. Denial is destructive as well as deceptive, (Cf. Matt 5:48; 2Cor 7:1 cf. 1Jn 1:8; Rom 7:15, 17).

b. It is not attaining and enjoying more material blessings.

When our desires are fulfilled like getting the best education, job, family etc., the world may consider it as success. Nevertheless, such earthly things are not linked to a successful Christian life. Material blessings cannot be taken as proof of divine pleasure. On the contrary, often the wicked get more material benefits than the saints (Ps 73:3–7).

c. It’s not a trouble free, easy life.

Nowhere in the New Testament God’s people are offered a trouble free life. Every Christian will have to face

hardships, trial, sufferings even attacks from the evil forces (Cf. Jn 16:33; 1Pete 1:6; Phil 1:29; Eph 6:12).

d. It is not even doing more spiritual activities.

Being very busy with many ministries, more

programs, and more applause does not mean one is spiritual and victorious. Activity is not an evidence of spirituality. In spite of the many exemplary spiritual services in the Ephesian Assembly, the Lord found their lack of love and exhorted them to repent (Rev 2:2-5)

e. It’s not even knowing and holding on to sound doctrine.

The local assembly at Ephesus was also known for a strict stand on doctrine. They even took action against the false teachers. Yet Christ found them failing and warned them of facing a possible disciplinary action (Reve. 2:5, 6).

**The more we know
Christ, we enjoy more life,
more peace, more rest etc.**

II. Positive: Then what it is?

To understand the meaning of victorious Christian life better, it's good to compare it with the victory the people of Israel experienced. Where do we see their victorious life most clearly presented? It's in the book of Joshua. As far as Israel was concerned, what was victory for them? What was victorious life for them?

It was the possession of the land that God had promised for them (Jos. 1:3–6). Once they possessed their land - the land that flows with milk and honey - they also began enjoy many other things like, inheritance, prosperity, fruitfulness, rest, satisfaction, milk & honey, joy, and strength to stand against the enemy, etc. Thus, in the book of Joshua we see the promises of God being fulfilled, (Jos 11: 23; 21: 43–45; 22:4)

It's also good to consider the features of the land that God gave them, like water source, minerals, God's special protection, etc. (Exo 3:5, 18; Deut 8:7–9; 11:9–24; 26:9–15; 27:3; 28: 11).

So, we can summarize Israel's victorious life in this way:

- a. It's going forward.
- b. Possessing and enjoying all that God intended for them.
- c. A life of rest, joy and satisfaction.
- d. Experiencing victory over the enemies, having strength to stand against them. (Canaan is not a picture of heaven – there is fight; Canaan illustrates victorious spiritual life.)

That means, basically victorious spiritual life means to possess and enjoy all what God has promised for us.

For Israel, it was the land and the things connected to it. But for us, New Testament believers no material blessings have been promised. All our blessings are heavenly and spiritual (Eph 1:3; 1Pet 1:5). Just like Israel found their blessings in the Land, we find our blessings in Christ (Eph 1:3). He is our inheritance. In Him alone we find our blessings like life, peace, satisfaction, rest etc. (Jn 17: 5; 16: 33; Eph 1:3; Matt 11: 29). We have everything in Christ.

The more we know Christ, we enjoy more life, more peace, more rest etc. That's why we need to continue to grow in our knowledge of Christ, (2Pet 3: 18; Phil 3: 8).

Finally, what is victorious Christian life?

It is to experience and enjoy all what we have in Christ. It is to grow in our knowledge of Christ – being close to Him – walk with Him, walk like Him. Then experiencing its by-products: peace, rest, overflowing life, strength to stand against the enemy etc. It is then our life becomes useful for the Lord, and God is pleased in us.



THE IMPORTANCE

1. God's commandment. Josh 1:2

"Arise, go over this Jordan" – it is not an option for Joshua. He has to obey. It seems due to the death of Moses their leader they were very much depressed, even Joshua who is supposed to lead the people of Israel. Whatever may be the circumstances he should 'arise and go over'.

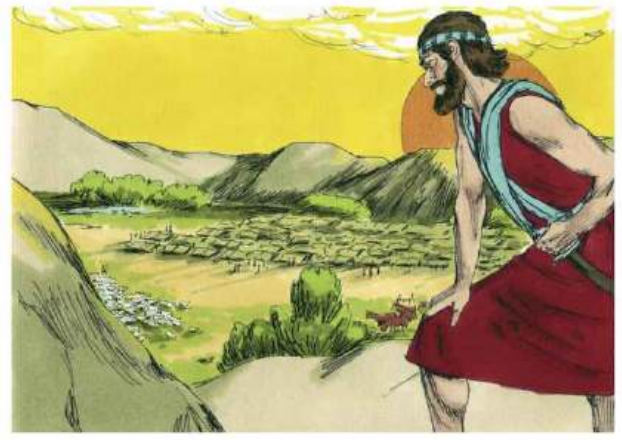
Similar exhortations are found in the New Testament too, (Reve 2:7, 17, 26; 3: 5, 12, 2). Notice the Lord promises reward for those who overcome. That is to encourage them to overcome. If they are not taking these exhortations to overcome seriously but just satisfied with a defeated life, it ends up in rebellion and wilful offence.

God wants His people to be victors so He commands every one. Leading a failed life is an insult to God and of course a pleasure to Satan. Even if unpleasant, when difficult situations arise God's people should move forward, grow in spiritual life enjoying all that He intends for them.

2. God's work for us. Josh 1: 2c, 3

The expressions, "I am giving" and "I have given" refers to God's initiative in taking Israelites to Canaan from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. He has already given the land according to His purposes. But the people have to reach there. Unless they go and occupy the land, God's work will not be completed. People of Israel could have reached Canaan

within two years, but took 38 more years. Why did they wander in the wilderness? It was because of rebellion, unbelief, disobedience and murmuring etc., and as a result wandering – no progress – and even destruction. That was not part of God's plan. The only reason why they took so much time to achieve victory is their own mistake. God redeemed them in order to bring them to Canaan. Exodus cannot be complete without their entrance to Canaan. Long gap between exodus and entrance to Canaan was unnecessary and avoidable if only they had trusted and obeyed Him.



This is true in our life too. God has saved us not for a failed life. Not just to lead an ordinary life - a failed, useless life. He has saved us for abundant life, to give all the blessings of the heavenly places – just like the blessings of Canaan: - inheritance, rest, prosperity, fruitfulness, etc. (Exo. 3:8) - even much more than that - but the difference: their blessings are earthly, ours spiritual.

G&P

(To be continued...)

SUFFERING: NOT THE END

“Does the plowman keep plowing all day to sow?” Isaiah 28:24

Ploughing is an essential aspect of agricultural activities. Before a farmer can sow the seed he has to break up the fallow ground and level it. This is hard work indeed. But the farmer does not keep on doing it without any end. Once his work on the soil is over he will sow the seed. He does his work step by step.



The Lord shows it as an example to Judah about His dealings with them. He may be breaking them at present. That’s not easy; a hardened, barren land needs to be broken and prepared. Similarly, as Judah, even each one of us, before the Lord can make us a fruitful, fertile land, he has to break us and prepare us.

Nevertheless, that work will come to an end. He will not keep on breaking us; He will come to the next step. So, the Lord may allow hardship in life to mould and prepare us for better. He will complete His purposes in us, and make us just like a fruitful field.

Believer, today the Lord may be breaking you, with painful and even shameful events. Be strong and courageous, He will not do it forever. He is working on you to make you better. He will finish it at the right time. Wait patiently and yield to the Lord who knows the best for us.

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you”, (1Pe 5:10).

NTK

GIRL RAISED BY PIGS



United Press International reported some time ago that a nine year old girl was raised by farmyard pigs in the Chinese province of Liaoning. The girl had been suckled and raised from infancy by a peasant family's pigs because her disabled parents could not care for her.

Like a Chinese version of "Believe It or Not", the report indicated that the severely deprived child is now being taught to abandon pig like behaviour in favour of acting human. Her counsellors said that the child had learned to crawl like a pig and imitate other piggish actions. She displayed fluctuating emotions and tended to want to live in solitude.

There is something worse than a nine year old child who behaves like a pig. It is a child of God who thinks and acts like an unbeliever!

ASTONISHING THINGS AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE



"An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end? (Jeremiah 5:30, 31).

Messages from Jeremiah the weeping prophet were challenging as well as touching (9:1; 13:17). He preached in Judah in the last 40 years before she went to captivity. He began his ministry in the 13th year of King Josiah. Zephaniah and Habakkuk were his contemporaries in the early days.

Knowing about the coming captivity, Jeremiah spoke to improve the condition of Judah, but he was persecuted, beaten, and even imprisoned for telling the truth of the coming Babylonian captivity (11:18-23; 12:6; 18:18).

Background

Nebuchadnezzar freed him and allowed him to choose Jerusalem or Babylon; he chose to stay in Jerusalem. However, when the Jews fled to Egypt, they forcibly took him also along. He preached there too, on Jerusalem's restoration and died there. From 3:6—6:30, we have the second sermon of Jeremiah. He describes the wicked state of Judah and Jerusalem and pronounces the coming judgment from the Lord. In 5:30, 31 we see that Jeremiah concludes his message with a statement and a very poignant question:

v. 30:- “An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land”

v.31c:- “But what will you do in the end?”

The answer is obvious. No, you can do nothing in the end. Judgment is inevitable. God's people will reap what they have sown (6:19).

God of love and justice

Many find it difficult to understand that God will punish His own people for their evil ways. They think since God is merciful we can live in any way we want. Even in those days there were false prophets who used to say, ‘No, God will not send us to captivity’ etc., (5:12; 6: 18).

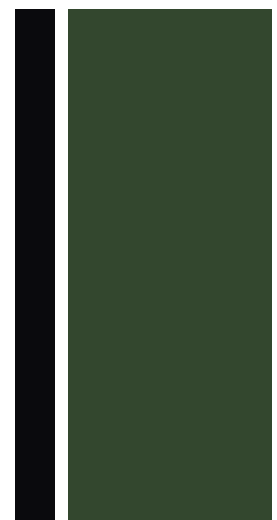
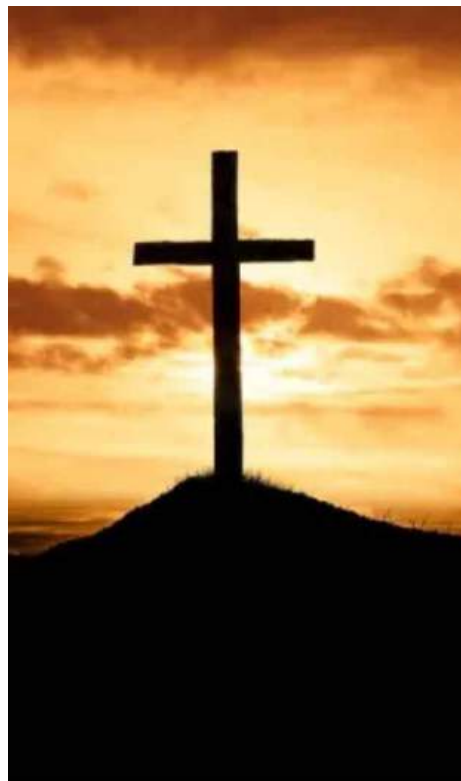
The Word of God reveals that He does not hesitate to severely chasten His people if they rebel and keep on rejecting His word. How He calls upon the people of Benjamin to flee Jerusalem – the beautiful city of God was not at all a safe place (6: 1).

Please remember, eternal security is not a license to live in any manner. God demands a holy, righteous and obedient life. God's chastening hand will fall on us if we rebel (Heb 12; Rev 2, etc.).

Yes, any repentant sinner will be forgiven. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1Jn 1:7, 9). But unrepentant, hard-hearted disobedient rebels will be dealt with. In the past, the Lord has dealt with individual believers as well as local churches. So, be careful, fear God, and be obedient.

What was the condition of Judah then that they had to be disciplined so much? This is good to know so that we may know God's expectations and demands. Then we may

correct our life accordingly and lead a life that is pleasing to Him.



Two kinds of events: ?

- ▶ **'Astonishing'**: – amazing, unusual, surprising, beyond our imagination. ?
- ▶ **'Horrible'**:- terrible, very bad, awful, evil; very shameful and filthy.

Jeremiah lists 7 such things in this chapter. Let us go through the list briefly and see if it applies to us today. Even if it may not be true about us today, but at least we may be aware of such issues and be careful.



1. False spirituality, Jer 5:2.

“Though they say, 'As the LORD lives,' surely they swear falsely." (Jer 5:2). They take the name of the Lord, but not in the right sense, not with the heart. They use His name for their own gain, falsely. It was their normal condition which other prophets also condemned. Cf.

- ▶ **Isa 29:13**:- “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men.” – it is the LORD Jehovah’s words. The Lord Jesus quoted this verse in Mark 7: 6.
- ▶ **Isa 48:1**:- “who swear by the name of the LORD and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right.”
- ▶ **Ezek 33:31**:- “They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain.”
- ▶ **Ezk 33:32**:- “And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it.”

See how clearly and explicitly prophets spoke of the false spirituality of His people. Spiritual services have become just a routine, a mechanism, a show, and an entertainment program. No heart, no sincerity, no obedience to God’s Word. It was the state of Judah then. What about us today?

Riches and position does not guarantee knowledge of the truth of the word of God

2. Insensitivity, Jer 5: 3

“You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock.” Stricken, but not grieved – it’s a serious problem: insensitivity. No pain, no feeling. Their finger is burning, but they’re not aware of it!

Whose condition is such - one who sleeps, is numb or dead? Fail to feel, unable to

respond. God's people became like that – No response to instruction, chastening. They refused to rectify, correct, return, etc., (7:13). They hardened their face like a rock!

Pro. 28: 14:- “Whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.”

Pro. 29:1:- “He who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.”

Such response to God's Word and work is for calamity. He wants us to respond to His Word, and not simply evaluating the preacher or preaching. Cf.

Isa 66: 2b: ‘God will look favorably to those who are humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at His word.’

3. Ignorance, Jer 5:4

“These are only the poor; they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God.”

Jeremiah says about the common people. They know of earthly things like food etc. – but do not know God's requirements. As they are poor, Jeremiah went to the rich and great men like leaders, thinking they may know. Cf. v.5. – But they too are ignorant!

Remember, riches and position does not guarantee knowledge of the truth of the Word of God. The Lord will take up this issue repeatedly in the book of Jeremiah, ‘my people do not know’ (8:7) – migrating birds know the time and seasons, the time creator set for them!



Riches and position does not guarantee knowledge of the truth of the word of God

Some years ago, Israeli air officials said in Mumbai migrating birds in Israel damaged many Air Force planes. They studied these birds and changed their flight timings.

Result of ignorance?

So much: wrong judgment, decisions, failure in fulfilling their obligations and also inability to enjoy their privileges (Is 5:13; Hos 4:6). Self-righteousness, arrogance, un-yielding attitude etc., are the outcomes of ignorance. ‘Seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness’ (Rom 10:3).

Interesting to note, some think they know everything, and about some, others think they know everything, but none knows everything.

What about us today?

Are we uninformed or informed? Sad, many believers today are ignorant of the doctrine and practices their forefathers dearly held, even those who were well-known for their scripture knowledge.

In my childhood, when we went to our assembly hall for worship, we would come across Orthodox Church members returning from

their service. I used to wonder why they don't carry their Bibles, but we used to carry our Bibles everywhere. Today we too follow the same practice! No wonder not only we are ignorant of the truth, but saying, 'forefathers made many mistakes, so let us make changes in name, style etc.'



4. Despising the word of God, Jer 5: 12, 13



“They have spoken falsely of the LORD and have said, ‘He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. The prophets will become wind; the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them!’” (Jer 5:12, 13 ESV) We need to carefully look at these verses. False teachers and common people comment upon the prophetic messages of Jeremiah and others. They deny the Lord

and the message of God about the impending judgment upon Judah. Cf.

- ▶ Jer 6:10b – the Word of God is a reproach to them, no delight in His word.
- ▶ Jer 36: 23 – 26:- Jehoiakim burned the scroll of Jeremiah’s message written by Baruch.

Remember, believer’s response to God’s servants and their message is very important. God takes it seriously. Rejecting them and their message is just like rejecting Him. Cf. 1Sam 8:7.

History shows such rejection of the word always happened. Truth is costly, and bitter too. Anyone who communicated the true Word of God has been despised, rejected even persecuted.

What about today? When you share the true word of God, you get no more opportunity. Speak what people want to hear, entertain them; you get plenty of platforms to do so. Notice carefully, some of those who regularly use certain pulpits are not those who are known for rightly dividing the word of truth. Some others twist the New Testament teachings, trying to re-write history.

This is another astonishing and horrible thing. Respect the word of God. Expect God to speak to us.

5. Absence of the fear of God, Jer 5:22

“Do you not fear Me?’ says the LORD. ‘Will you not tremble at My presence?’”

This is the reason why they behaved in the above manner. Cf. Pro. 9:10 – fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; where there is no fear of God, there is ignorance and all kinds of foolishness practiced.

“I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it”, (Jer 5:22b)



The Lord refers to the fear and obedience of the sea. Nature fears God, respects His law, but man has no fear (Jer 5: 23). Sea does not cross the boundary but man violates every law of God. Had they got such fear, they would have paid attention to His words, obeyed and never violated.

It’s really strange that among the public, believers who claim to be true saints are those who least fear God! It seems they think ‘why should we fear God? He is so loving and merciful; our salvation is secured; we are free, independent; we are brethren, no special men who got any special authority! Then whom shall we fear and why?!’

Dr. Luke depicts the true state a local church in Act 9:31:

“The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.”

There is peace, fear of God, comfort and growth too.

6. Deceitfulness, Jer 5: 27

“As a cage is full of birds, So their houses are full of deceit. Therefore they have become great and grown rich”.

Here the reference is to those people who trap birds in a cage using a decoy bird. Similarly, the prophet says that in the houses of Judah plenty of deception is there. Their wealth may be accumulated by wrong methods. Cf.

- ▶ Jer 6: 13a:- “From the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness.”

“The world has yet to see what God can do with, for, through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.”

- ▶ Isa 3:14b:- “It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses.”
- ▶ Isa 5:8:- “Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land.”

Among the Jewish people also there were men who did anything to get rich, especially to acquire the property of others through fraudulent methods. Thus they become rich, wealthy, and great men.

What about us? Of course most of us work hard, but in certain places there are people who forget such principles when comes to material things. Such attitude is not acceptable to God. Whatever possessions we have, that should never be something we got through illegitimate ways.

7. False leadership. V. 31.

“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction.”

This is something most terrible. On one side true prophets have been ridiculed, despised and even persecuted; at the same time majority of the prophets and priests lead the people of God in the wrong manner. They speak lies; the priests fail to do what is intended for them. Thus the leadership is failed. Jeremiah writes,

“From the prophet even unto the priest, every one deals falsely”, (6:13b). False message, false healing, false ruling etc.! Leadership is not in God’s way. “My people love to have it so” – people like it, nobody bothers.

What about today? Like the absence of the fear of God, in this area also certain believers who claim to follow the New Testament pattern of church life struggle so much. Many view the idea of leadership with suspicion. But do not forget, leadership crisis is not a simple issue. The Lord takes it seriously. Whatever happens in the assembly, the leadership is responsible. Notice the messages to the local churches in Asia, Christ was addressing to the leadership (Rev 1–3).

Seven astonishing and horrible things:

- i. False spirituality. V. 2.
- ii. Insensitivity. V.3
- iii. Ignorance. V. 4
- iv. Despising the Word of God. V.12, 13
- v. Absence of the fear of God. V.22.
- vi. Deceitfulness. V. 27.
- vii. False leadership. V. 31.

Notice what the Lord is asking:

- Jer 5: 7a:- “How shall I pardon you for this?”
- Jer 5: 9a:- “Shall I not punish them for these things?” cf. v. 29a.

Today, as the Lord is examining our hearts and lives what would be His response? Let us examine and yield to the Lord.

Mercy in judgment, Jer 5: 10, 18, 1

Even as the Lord pronounces words of Judgment because of their sin, He reveals rays of hope to His people. Notice verses 10, 18 and 1

- "Go up on her walls and destroy, But do not make a complete end".
- "Nevertheless in those days," says the LORD, "I will not make a complete end of you".
- "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes judgment, Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her."

Not a complete end of His people; even He is ready to cancel the verdict against them. If one man is found who lives in God's way (v. 1). To spare Sodom from Judgment, 10 were needed (Gen 18: 26 – 32). Now, God is looking for just one man, (Cf. Isa 63: 5; Ezek 22:30; 2Ch 16:9).

Need - One man

Never underestimate the value of one man who follows the word - the truth – whom God can use mightily. God does not need a big crowd, just few, even one who loves the word and lives accordingly. Will you be that one? More than a century ago a young man overheard,

"The world has yet to see what God can do with, for, through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him."

It seems one Mr. Henry Varley was talking to somebody as they were walking. This statement touched the heart of that young man; he sought a place to pray. He prayed, 'Lord make me that man'. That young man is D.L. Moody about whom someone said, 'he placed his one foot in America other in Europe and both the continents were shaken by his preaching'.

God found one Man! Cf. Isa 59:16

"He saw there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him."



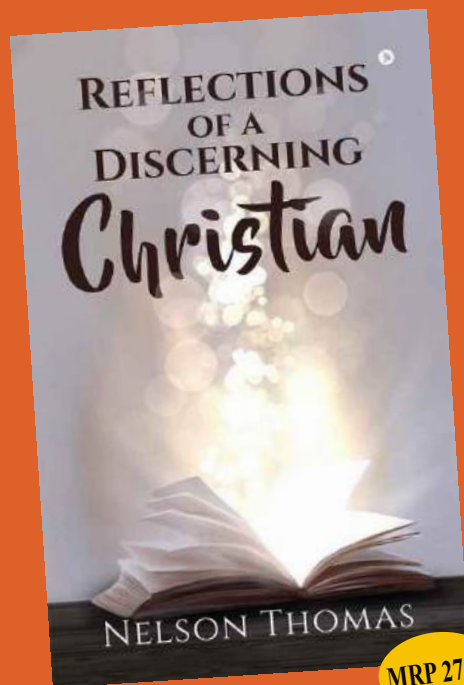
When God was willing to save mankind from sins, He found no one. Then the Son of God Himself took the form of man – the perfect Man – and through Him accomplished the saving work, not only for Israel, for all of us. He was righteous, executed righteousness. He took our place. And because of Him, we can be forgiven and reconciled.

Conclusion

Rebellion and rejection is costly. The Lord asks us to yield and cry. He is merciful, even when judgment is pronounced. Be that one man God is looking for. Christ is God's Man for us – the perfect God – the Man who took our place and penalty. Confess sins and be under His authority. Today the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. Repent, confess, and consecrate.

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