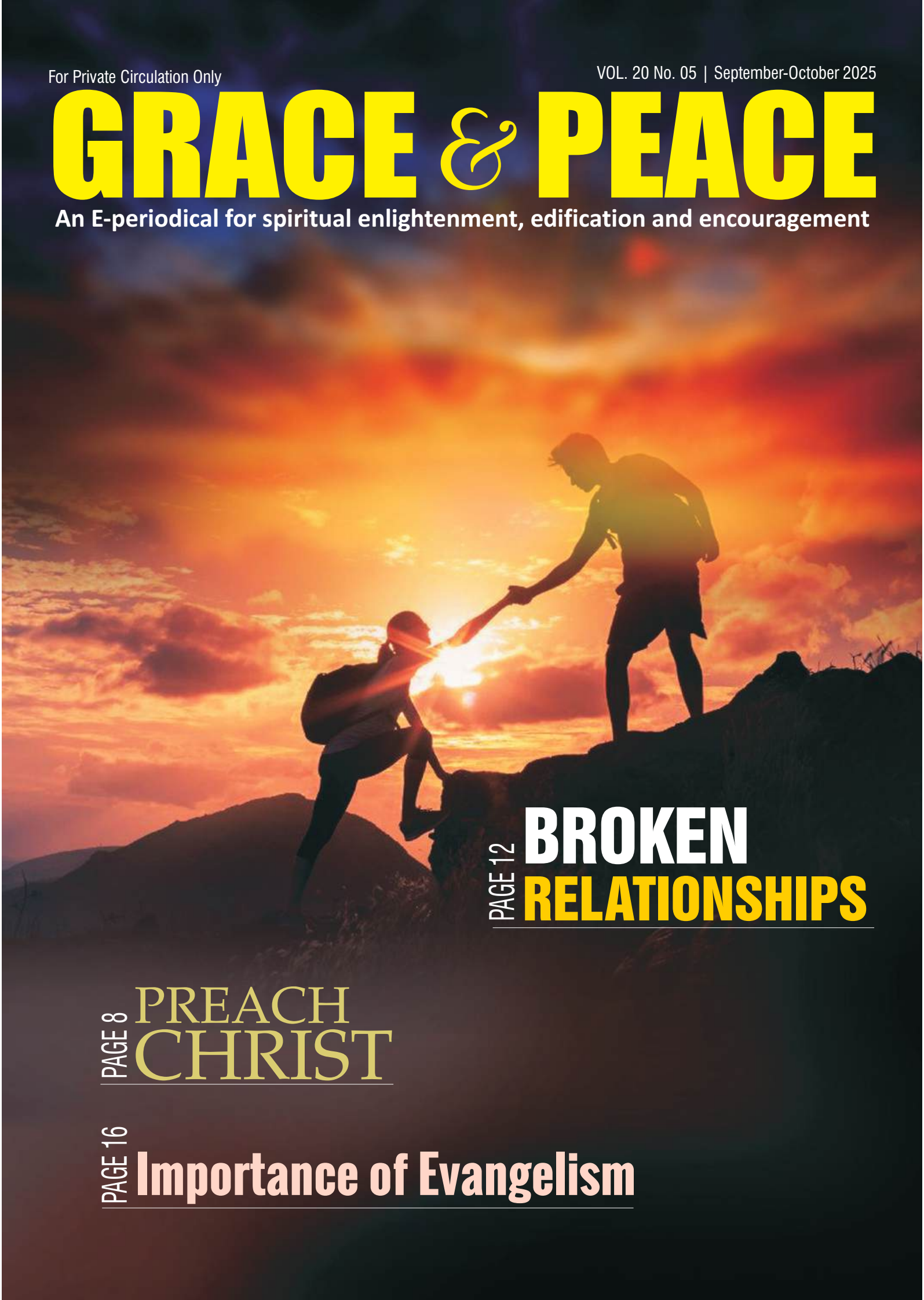


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GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical for spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement



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Importance of Evangelism



Revisiting Evangelism

Evangelism and conversion have become hot topics of discussion in India nowadays. Even certain mainstream T.V. channels have taken this up for their prime-time debate with captivating taglines like, ‘Invasion by conversion,’ ‘Toolkit for conversion against...’ etc. It seems certain people are trying their best to create an impression among the public that preaching the gospel is a hideous thing and even a criminal activity!

As we constantly hear about incidents of atrocities and even legal proceedings against Christians based on fabricated charges, it’s imperative to consider what are the gripping reasons behind the propagation of the gospel of Christ. Consequently, we can prayerfully and passionately continue to communicate the truth of the gospel even in these unfavourable circumstances.

Two Examples

- a. A healed demonic who proclaimed the message of Christ not only at home but throughout the ten cities of his region, Mark 5:19, 20.
- b. Two blind men who spread the news about Christ in the entire area, Matt. 9:30, 31

From the gospel narratives we can observe at least four things that moved them to fervently share the message of Christ.

1. Obedience to Christ’s command, Mark 5:19

As the Lord Jesus was returning from his area, the transformed demonic wanted to be with Him, but the Lord told him to go home

and testify to his family and friends. Obediently and faithfully, he did that even beyond the family circles.

2. Personal experience, Mark 5:20

The transformation he experienced by the miraculous intervention of Christ became another motivation to witness. The amazed public listened to him attentively. A changed life is the greatest witness for Christ, Acts 4:20.

3. Concern for fellow-beings.

He was aware of the many in that area who followed a wretched lifestyle as he once did. He wanted them to experience the same changes in their life just as he had.

4. Appreciation for Christ’s excellencies, Matt. 9:31

The healed blind men were sternly warned against publishing about Him, for obvious reasons. Disregarding the strict instruction of Christ was definitely a sin. Nevertheless, it’s important to pay attention to what prompted them to do so. It was because of their deep appreciation for the greatness of His person and work. They were so captivated by His love and compassion for them that they could not hold it any more (cf. 1Pet. 2:9). Let us explore this topic in detail in this issue and find out the best way possible to present our Lord Jesus to whomever we meet.

May the Lord’s name be glorified.

NTK

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF JESUS CHRIST

Mark 5:1-20

Few years ago, an editor of a British newspaper offered 1000 pounds to anyone who could change a religious leader whose utterances he disliked. We never heard about anyone who could be successful in that challenge, till the death of that leader. Still there are many who wish and try to change others and even themselves. But the truth is, no one can transform another person or even themselves. Of course, some reforms may be possible, but the total and lasting transformation in man is impossible by human efforts. But praise be to God, it is possible through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:15, 20–24)! Let us consider one such story from the New Testament, which all three gospel writers narrate (Matt. 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39). Here we have the healing of a demonic. It illustrates the fallen state of man and the changes Christ brings about and the results thereafter. Let us consider **the need, the way, and the life** after transformation.

I. The Need for Transformation

Dr. Luke writes, “And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did



he live in a house but in the tombs” (8:27). Mark gives further light on him, “he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones” (5:4, 5). Notice the helpless state of this man. Six things are noteworthy:

1. He loved lawlessness, Luke 8:27

He did not live in a house, but lived in tombs. That shows he was not happy with the restrictions of a home, but wanted to move around freely without any boundaries. Apostle John writes, “sin is lawlessness” (1John 3:4b). Whether one breaks the law or rebels against the norms set by the authorities, every form of lawlessness is sin.

2. He enjoyed a shameful lifestyle, Luke 8:27

Living among the dead among the tombs itself was an abnormal, dreadful behaviour, but further, he wore no clothes and never felt any shame. This is exactly as Paul writes, “whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things” (Phil. 3:19). Just look around and see the view point of many; they are unable to distinguish between good and evil. The words of Isaiah are still relevant, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20). Many may not commit such shameful things in public, but they may be doing them in their mind, enjoying it silently.

3. He destroyed himself, Mark 5:5

Mark says ‘he was cutting himself with stones.’ By his strange way of life, he was already harming himself; added to that he used to cut himself with stones. No wonder the Psalmist wrote, “Evil shall slay the wicked” (Psa. 34:21a). Anyone who indulges in lawless and shameful lifestyle is in a destructive path. We can notice it in three aspects:

- a. Destroys one’s own present life. His family and dear ones too would be affected by his senseless deeds.
- b. Society at large will have to bear the consequences of the evil life of the fellow citizen.
- c. Destroys one’s own future with eternal condemnation (Heb. 9:28; Rev. 21:8).



4. He was restless, Mark 5:5

He was always screaming and crying out as he moved between mountains and tombs. That shows his heart was troubled and agitated. That’s exactly what Isaiah wrote, “But there is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked” (Isa 48:22 cf. 59:3–8).

A sinful way of life is a Godless life, void of divine help and favour. That further aggravates his uneasiness.

5. He was uncontrollable, Mark 5:4

Since he was a nuisance to the society, people tried to put chains on his hands and feet but he broke them. No one could control him. Sad to realize that society can only chain and imprison such lawless, helpless souls.

Notice the above-mentioned characteristics of this man; from lawlessness to uncontrollable damaging life. This is the state of all who follow a life that is away from God.

6. He was aware of Christ and even fell at his feet, Mark 5:6, 7

Notice how this man’s response to Christ as they confront each other. He ran and fell in front of Christ, screaming “Jesus, Son of the Most High God”!

Is it not strange that a person who leads a lawless, shameful life, talks and behaves like a religious man! That's exactly the state of man; on one side he indulges in multiple kinds of evil things, yet hypocritically he calls upon God to achieve his goals.

The driving force

We learn from the conversation that followed, he was possessed with around 6000 unclean spirits (Mark 5:8, 9). Luke says, he was energized by these evil spirits to act wickedly (Luke 8:29, 30). Demons were using him as an instrument.

Apostle John writes, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning" (1John 3:8a ESV). It's true, not all are possessed by demons, but we all have the sin nature within us. Apostle Paul says, "Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Rom. 7:20). So, the root cause of all human troubles is the indwelling sin nature (Eph. 2:3).

It is from such poor state, man needs deliverance and transformation.



II. The Way of Transformation

This story amply demonstrates the futility of self-efforts for true transformation. Man-made systems also are unsuccessful. What the society can do is to chain and isolate such extremely difficult people. But through the Lord Jesus, God graciously regenerates and redeems them.

The Process

We can notice four things in this connection:

a. Lord Jesus came to him purposely, Mark 5:1, 2

A careful reading of the whole story reveals that it was not an accidental encounter, but a purposeful one (cf. Luke 19:10). Christ came and met him in his own place and situation. We also read, he came through a storm, that shows the opposition of the evil forces Christ faced on His way (Mark 4:35–41).

b. He diagnosed the exact cause, Mark 5:8, 9

Nobody would have talked to him like the Lord Jesus, for He knew well of the root cause behind his aggressive behaviour – possession by demons.

c. He commanded the evil spirits to come out, Mark 5:8, 13

What a comfort it is to know that our Lord Jesus Christ is Sovereign, and His words have power and authority. Whether visible or invisible, everything is under the authority of our Lord Jesus. At His command demons departed and immediately we see the man got healed. As

John puts it, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1John 3:8b).

d. He taught him, Mark 5:15

Freed from the demons, we see him sitting at the feet of Christ. That means the Lord Jesus further taught him of various spiritual truths beginning with the way of salvation. For deliverance from evil spirits itself is not enough, he needs spiritual salvation as well.

Much More

The Word of God reveals much more of what the Lord Jesus did for our spiritual transformation. Not only He came down to the place where we are, He became the atoning sacrifice for our sins on the cross. It is this substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus that makes our salvation possible (Isa. 53:4–6; Rom. 3:23–26). Because, before man can be saved, his sins must be dealt with according to God’s own law (Ezek. 18:20; Heb. 9:22).

On the cross, God the Father ‘made His Son who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him’ (2Cor. 5:21). As He spoke earlier, He gave Himself as a ransom and declared, “it is finished” (Mark 10:45; John 19:30). Not only He ‘was delivered up because of our offenses, but also was raised again to give us right standing with God’ (Rom. 4:25). Thus He is the Living Saviour who not only saves us by His death, but secures us by His life (Rom. 5:10).

III. The Life of the Transformed, v. 15

Newness in this man was instant and complete. And also it was permanent and visible as well. People saw him, “sitting and clothed and in his right mind” (Mark 5:15). There were changes internally as well as externally; in the spiritual realm as well as the physical realm.

Not only his mindset was new, his appearance also was new. No more running away but sitting, no more naked but clothed, no more screaming but peacefully sitting at the feet of Christ. No wonder people marvelled and even were afraid, seeing his dramatic change.

Such radical changes must be evident in all who claim to be the followers of Christ. Because it’s not just a life of ‘repairing’ but ‘regeneration’ by the marvellous working of the Holy Spirit.

As Paul writes, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2Cor. 5:17).



Conclusion

When the world finds it difficult to comprehend the true meaning of conversion, let us exhibit the transforming power of Jesus Christ through our changed life. It is high time to examine how evident and real are the newness that we claim. Remember, true Christian life is Christ living in and through us. **G&P**

GOSPEL

Its Various Aspects



- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Gospel of God, | Rom. 1:1 - Planned / initiated |
| 2. Gospel of Christ, | Rom. 1:16; 2Cor.10:14; Gal.1:7-Executed |
| 3. Gospel of Grace, | Acts. 20:24 - the Basis |
| 4. Gospel of Peace, | Eph. 6:15 - the outcome: relationship |
| 5. Gospel of Salvation, | Eph. 1:13 - the outcome: destiny |
| 6. Gospel of Hope, | Col. 1:23 - the outcome: purposeful life |
| 7. Everlasting Gospel, | Rev. 14:16 - Permanence |
| 8. Different Gospel, | 2 Cori. 11:4 - Beware of |

▶ REFLECTIONS

Enoch Reuben Muniah, Johannesburg

CREATION AND ITS CREATOR

(Part 5)

It is fascinating to note, that apart from Genesis 1:1 every verse thereafter begins with the word “and”. This would suggest continuity as far as God’s days of creation are concerned, i.e., 6 days of work and the 7th day of rest.

It is a conjunction that affirms sequential and chronological connection with the verses before and after. What is described in verse 2 follows immediately upon the creative act of verse 1. The argument for or against a 24-hour day/night timeline

has been debated for centuries. However, the argument for 6 literal days has gained extensive support and the length of days could only have been that of a normal solar day.

This means that the earth rotating on its axis received sunlight on one side (12 hours), corresponding to the sun. The ‘day’ was the ‘light’ when God did His work and between the ‘evening’ and the ‘morning’ was darkness when God did no work. The words of the Lord Jesus ring



true when He said, “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work” (Jn. 9:4).

The words in verse 2, ‘form’, ‘void’ and ‘darkness’ implies that God had not yet formed anything. The earth was not yet inhabited and because the sun was not yet created. From day one to day four, no living creatures were created. On day 5 God created all the animals; on day 6 God created man and on day 7 He rested from all His works.

His Kindness and the Kinds

At this point the earth was still ‘void’ of living creatures. It was at first necessary for God to make the environment conducive for living creatures. With this, came every moving creature that creeps upon the earth; every fowl of the air; every marine life in the ocean and every beast of the field; everything ‘after its kind.’

The phrase ‘after its kind’ implies that God created everything with its unique DNA structure. Subsequently, the master architect who is God Himself, designed for the earth to produce herb yielding seed, ‘after its kind.’ There may be variations of the cosmetic or physical

make- up of a certain kind but its genetic composition or DNA is always consistent. That means there would be a constant replicating of that type of organism with its unique structure of DNA.

For example; an apple tree will not bear grapes or an offspring of a lion will not be a dog and so on. This immediately refutes that outlandish and preposterous, ideology of evolution.

Mankind, after his seed produced man. So, man did not evolve from primates such as apes. Someone commented, “My great grand-parents may have swung by their neck for something they did wrong but they most certainly did not swing by their tails.”

Those who subscribe to such trash do not know that “it is either bad zoology or inept biology.” Man is the highest order of God’s creation and the most intelligent. God’s creation then begs the question why and when did the ape stop becoming a man?

Unlike the animals that are dichotomy i.e.: body and soul, man is trichotomy i.e.: he is body, soul, and spirit, tripartite as mentioned earlier. Man’s body makes him world-conscious; man’s soul makes him man-conscious and man’s spirit makes him God- conscious.

While there can be mutation within each ‘kind,’ there can never be transmutation between the ‘kinds’. Notice in 26:1 God says, “Let us make” and in verse 27 it says, ‘God created man’. Is this a contradiction? Certainly, not! The “let us” in verse 26 re-affirms the tri- unity of the God-head.

G&P

(To be continued...)

CHOOSING THE SECOND BEST

D. L Moody was once preaching on the story of the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17—22) and he wanted to make this point quite clear – that it is not enough to know about Jesus, or even believe that Jesus is the Saviour, we must trust Him if we are to have the treasure He offers. To illustrate the point, Mr. Moody called a small boy up to the platform beside him, and offered him two things from which to choose – an orange, and a crumpled piece of paper. The boy chose the orange and went back to his seat by his father. Then Mr. Moody opened the crumpled piece of paper and showed that it was a five pound note! The boy was sorry he had made a wrong and foolish choice. The five pound would have bought him many hundreds of oranges. It was the same with the rich young ruler. He chose what he could see and handle and that looked so nice, he lost what was of such a far greater value.



Source: Unknown

PREACH CHRIST



An American Christian in London went to hear Dr. Parker in the morning and C.H. Spurgeon in the evening. His morning comment was, “Grand preaching, marvellous pulpit oratory.” His evening comment, “Oh what a wonderful saviour was Jesus!” The preacher is in his right place when hidden behind the Cross.

Source: Unknown

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Study: Part 5
(Based on Joshua 1–8)

Know Our Enemy, Joshua 2

In Joshua chapter 1 we see the internal preparations for Israelites to go forward and enter the land. We have seen how God prepares Joshua; Joshua prepares himself and the people.

In chapter 2 we have the external preparation; by faith they do what is to be done further in accordance with the Lord's promise. Notice how the divine promises and human responsibility go hand in hand.

Once again, they sent spies to spy out the land, v.1. Even though the earlier effort 38 years ago was disastrous, Joshua knew the importance of knowing about the wealth, strength, and the weaknesses of the enemy, (v.1 cf. Num.13:18—20).

Today, not only we need to know how great is our wealth in Christ (Eph.1:17-19), we also need to be aware of the nature and the strength of the adversary who would stop us from going forward.

We know, no nation can afford to be ignorant of the strength of their enemies. Every soldier should know what to expect from the enemy side.

Who is our enemy?

Our adversary is no man, no nation, no party or not even an ideology but as Apostle Peter puts it, “Your adversary the

devil” (1Peter 5:8). He is against God, His people, and His purposes. Apostle Paul elaborates it, “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). Fallen angels under the leadership of Lucifer are constantly at war against God's people.



He is moving around seeking an opportunity to trap us (Eph. 4:27; 1 Pet. 5:8. 1Tim. 3:6, 7). The devil reaches even the presence of God to accuse us (Job1:6—10; Zech.3:1). Of course he had to seek permission to sift Peter (Luke 22:31). On another occasion he even used Peter (Mat.16:23). If Peter, one of the prominent among the apostles who

walked with Christ and heard from Him could be attacked by Satan like this, how much more vulnerable are we! We cannot afford to be ignorant of him and his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Let us consider seven things about our enemy based on the report of those two spies in Joshua chapter 2.

Seven things about the enemy

1. Powerful, Jos. 2:15

Jericho was built on a hill. It had double ring walls around- 90ft height and 30ft width. On the top, people used to stay and soldiers used to move around. People also were very strong, Num.13:28.

So is our enemy, Eph. 6:12. Though Satan is not omnipotent, he is very powerful. Similarly, he is not omniscient like God, yet he knows much more than we do, 2Thes. 2:9. He listens to all what we say and reads all what we write.



With such might and knowledge, he is attacking us. Even, he does not hesitate to oppose God's holy angel (Dan.10:13; Exo. 7:11, 12). Egyptian magicians performed miracles like Moses. Yes, there was a

difference; Moses' snake swallowed their snakes!

Yet we should not take our enemy for granted. Consider the satanic activities throughout history and notice his capability, devices, and deceptions.

We should never underestimate our enemy. Take this spiritual fight seriously, determine to win. We need special spiritual strength and preparation to withstand our oppressor.

2. Vigilant

Josh. 2:1a, 2,7c, etc. Notice the closed doors of Jericho and the way they guarded the gate. How secret was their mission yet the people of Jericho knew of their movements! In fact, for the last 38 years, they have been carefully watching the movements of Israelites.

So is our enemy, consistently following us, carefully watching every moment of our life, He is looking for an opportunity to defeat us (Lk. 4:13; Eph. 4:27; 1Pet. 5:8).

3. Tactful. V.2.

Thirty-eight years ago, twelve men travelled throughout their land for forty days but no one knew about that. Now two men reached quietly, immediately the King came to know of it, why? That means, they had learned from the past mistake and changed their tactics.

Satan too is very tactful. Remember, tact may have a use in certain areas of human relationships, but when it comes to satanic tactful dealings, it is cunning craftiness (Gen 3:1). Notice three things about his tactfulness:

a. He works from behind the scene

He approaches without any introduction; he claims no credit. He just wants people to think he does not even exist. So, the devil is working through people, dear ones, circumstances, etc., (Matt. 16: 23).

b. He wears many masks:

- Serpent: to influence, Gen. 3:1
- Lion: to threaten, swallow and destroy, 1Pet. 5:8.
- Angel of light: to deceive, 2Cori. 11: 14.
- Bird: to take away the word/seed, Matt. 13: 41a.

c. He uses many strategies, 2Cori. 2: 11; Eph. 6:11

Not just one method – plenty of schemes and variety of devices. According to people, circumstances and the need, he changes the method and strategy.

4. Organized. V.2

Notice how fast the news reached the palace and the action took place. A systematic intelligence network was in place. Like, one to collect data, another to analyse and interpret and another to act on it!

From Eph.6:12 we can notice that Satanic forces are also highly organized.

“we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

The word “against” before each designations shows that they are four distinct regiments – demonic hierarchies - like our defence forces.

Principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness – refer to different groups of demons to infiltrate and attack various sections of the society.

Why is it needed? Since Satan is not omnipresent and omniscient like God, he needs a net-work of agents to get his work done. He may have a temporary head quarter somewhere, Rev. 2: 13.

Thus, our enemy is well-organized. They have different regiments with different tasks, Mark5:9; Luke 11:24-26. Special task force for difficult people and place. He has a well-planned sophisticated intelligence network.

5. Fearful

Vs.9-11 “Heart melted” v.10 –for 38 years they were living in fear. But Israel never knew of their fearfulness (Num.13.29-31). Israel’s advance had troubled them.

Often, we too are not aware in our unbelief that devil is a defeated foe and his forces are troubled at our advancement in spiritual warfare to possess our possession. Someone put it rightly “he mocks at our wisdom, laughs at our toil but trembles when we pray”(Dan. 11.32: James4.7). Our Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated him by His life and death, (Col.2:15; Heb.2:14; 1Jn.3:8; Rev. 20: 3, 10). He may roar or threaten but he has already lost his teeth.

6. Rebellious. V.3

Expressions like, ‘bring out the men,’ v.7 ‘men perused’ etc., shows that though they were frightened and sure of defeat, they had no plan to yield as Rahab did. Their effort was to withstand Israel.

So is Satan, though he is aware of his defeat and the soon coming judgment, he is carefully planning various schemes to fight against the Lord's people (Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:12; 20:10). He has no shame nor gets bored at repeated defeat (Luke 4:13).

We should never suppose that the fight is over when we feel everything is good. He is waiting for the best opportunity. He may return with a new device or even more demons (Luke 11:24).

7. Defeatable. V. 24

"And they said to Joshua, 'Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.'"

The spies made it very clear that they can conquer Jericho. Rahab too said it (V.9). Earlier twelve spies in unbelief saw impossibilities, (Num13:33) but now though the enemy is more hardened and tactful, faith sees possibilities.

It's not enough to have an awareness of our enemy and their 'modus operandi,' we need to see them in God's perspective. We should believe that victory belongs to us



and claim it, (Rom. 8:33ff). As the efforts of the King of Jericho proved to be futile, our enemy too will be ashamed. Our Lord Jesus will lead us to victory. (Rom. 16:20; 1Jn.4: 4).

Satan can never stand against us when we dare to believe God and claim the power of God for us.

Conclusion

Are we aware of the fact that there is an enemy constantly trying to keep us away from victorious Christian life? He tells us 'You cannot be victorious.' Let us be aware of him, his methods of work. Knowing and taking the God-given resources will help us to move forward and enjoy victory in spiritual life.

G&P

(To be continued...)



Bro. Ger de Koning, Netherlands

BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

Lessons from the story of Good Samaritan



Human beings are creatures who live through relationships. God has placed this within us. At the very beginning of the Bible, on the first pages of the book of Genesis, God Himself said: "It is not good for man to be

alone” (Genesis 2:18). That is exactly what Ecclesiastes observed: “Two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

When God had created Adam and Eve, He came to them in the cool of the evening in the garden, paradise, to interact with them (Genesis 3:8-9). Here you can clearly see that God wants to have an intimate relationship with man.

THE REASON

If you read Genesis 3 from the beginning, you can also see that this relationship is radically broken because man valued the words of the devil more than the words of God.

Man - not God—is therefore responsible for breaking the relationship that existed between God and man through disobedience. Genesis 3 describes how God went in search of man after their fall. It does not say that God hid Himself from man, but that man hid himself from God. Just as God went in search of Adam, He is still searching for people who hide themselves from Him. He is looking for you. He wants to connect with you.

THE RESULT

As you continue reading Genesis 4, you meet Cain, the eldest son of Adam and Eve. He turns his back on God and becomes the murderer of his brother. Suddenly, you see the cause of all misery, all loneliness, all broken relationships: man has no relationship with God. One of the most important things we as humans must learn is that we can only

treat each other well if we have a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we can only function properly and treat each other well if our relationship with God is in order.

THE HELPER

We read in the book of Ecclesiastes about "the one" who helps his companion stand upright (Ecclesiastes 4:10). That One is first and foremost God, who wants to help us and is able to help us. He wants to help us in our relationships with others, but we must be willing to be helped.



That is what we see in the story of the Good Samaritan we read in Luke 10: 29 - 37. There you learn that if you do not first recognize yourself in the man who fell into the hands of robbers, you will never be able to fulfill the command of the Lord Jesus: “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37). What the Lord Jesus means by this is that He commands you to be a neighbor to others. What can you do for others?

Man has turned his back on God

Before I answer that question, something else must first be made clear. We must recognize ourselves in the man about whom the Lord Jesus tells us. What happened to that man? He was going

down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem was the place of blessing, the place where God dwelt. If we think back to paradise, that is the place where God had placed man in a blessed position. Now man has left that place and turned his back on God. Man has run away from God.

Recognize yourself

The story that the Lord Jesus tells is also called "the parable of the Good Samaritan." The story has an important message for everyone who reads it, whether you are a Christian or not. That message is that each of us must recognize ourselves in the man who fell into the hands of robbers.

Perhaps, even though you call yourself a Christian, you have never truly come to Him. Perhaps you sit obediently in church on Sundays or attend a congregation where you feel at home and where you feel a sense of security. You can sing along and pray along, but at the same time you may be far from God in your heart. There may be an enormous distance between you and God. Then you are away from the place of blessing and on your way to the place of curse: Jericho. Everyone who turns their back on God is on their way to the place of curse, whether you are a Christian or not.



Robbers on the way

On your way to Jericho, you are guaranteed to fall into the hands of robbers. These robbers represent evil forces, demonic forces. These forces can express themselves through other people. In any case, they are spiritual forces that will rule your life. The robbers are out to control your thinking so that you are drawn away from God. The question is whether you will allow this to happen.

One of the ways you can allow this to happen and let the robbers do their work is by seeking happiness in the nightlife of the world. You can party with other young people until the early hours of the morning. Perhaps you do things that cannot bear the light of day. What you don't realize, however, is that you are being drawn further and further away from God.

Other sources of bad influences are the media. Movies and TV shows can mess with your mind and pollute it. Again, the choice is yours: will you let this happen?

And then there's the internet. With Wi-Fi available everywhere and anytime on your phone, the internet offers you the opportunity to visit websites, incognito or otherwise, that also negatively influence and pollute your mind. People share videos via WhatsApp that are not suitable for public viewing. Apart from all this, you may ask yourself how much time you spend online each day—smartphone addiction has become a socially recognized problem.

As you can see, thieves operate in different ways. The end result, after a shorter or

longer period of time, is that they rob and strip you, beat you up, and leave you half dead on the side of the road. They certainly don't give you what you were looking for. You are on the wrong path; you have turned your back on God.

Why don't you allow God into your life?

There could be several reasons why you don't allow God into your life. I will mention just one: perhaps you have turned your back on God as a result of a broken relationship, for example in your family. Many young people go out into the world and seek entertainment there because they don't find security or authenticity with their parents. As a result of their parents' broken relationship, many young people get stuck in the world.

The robbers are tough

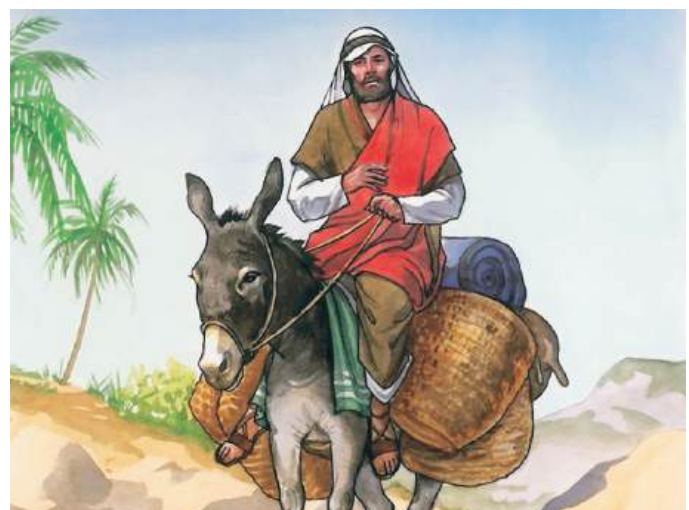
This man falls into the hands of robbers. It is necessary that you recognize yourself in that man. You will have to admit that the world has given you nothing but hard knocks, merciless treatment. Don't be fooled; the world is harsh and knows no mercy. When people of the world have used or even abused you, they leave you by the wayside. With what prospect? Only death. When you are half dead and have no strength left, you have nothing to expect but death. You are in a hopeless situation. What now? You are alone and there is no one around to help you.

Help arrives

But wait, someone is coming! In the parable, the Lord Jesus has a priest come by. He also happens to be on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. A priest belongs in

the temple. There is no mention of a command from God to go to Jericho. He just happens to be passing by. The man who has fallen into the hands of the robbers hears footsteps. Could salvation be coming? With great effort, he lifts his head and sees the priest. He must have breathed a sigh of relief when he discovered that it was a priest. Fortunately, it was not the robbers again.

A priest, surely, he could expect something from him. But what does the priest do? The man can't believe his eyes. The priest sees him and crosses the street to the other side. You can hear the priest thinking: "This man is a hopeless case; you don't want anything to do with someone like that. Besides, he shouldn't have been so stupid. What's more, I might become unclean if I touch him." The priest disappears from the half-dead man's sight. With that, his hope also vanishes. He had thought that a servant of God would certainly help him. But how ashamed he is now.



Help arrives once again

But listen, footsteps are approaching again! This time, a Levite appears. New hope dawns. The Levite is a servant of the

priest. He is also someone who knows the will of God. He had to teach this to the people of God. He knows God's will to show mercy. But just like the priest, the Levite has no desire to encounter such a filthy man. He turns his head and also gives him a wide berth. Once again, the half-dead man's expectations are dashed. After all the misery he has suffered, he has to swallow yet another disappointment.

Disappointed in the assistance

Perhaps there are also people in your environment from whom you might expect help. If they are people who know a lot about God and perhaps have also completed training in social work, then you might indeed expect something from them. However, if your expectations of people are based purely on the fact that they have completed a certain training program, you will be disappointed. It is not about someone's background or high social or church position. To be truly helped, more is needed.



The Good Samaritan

What really matters is genuine compassion, genuine concern for the misery you are experiencing. The only thing that really helps is that you recognize yourself in the man who has fallen into the hands of robbers.

You can then be brought into a direct, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. The man who comes to the unfortunate man after the priest and the Levite is the Good Samaritan. In him you recognize the Person of the Lord Jesus. **G&P**

PRACTICAL
Nelson Thomas

IMPORTANCE OF EVANGELISM

More than two centuries ago, one young pastor in Britain shared his burden for mission work in foreign lands. One of the senior ministers of his local church rebuked him saying, “Young man you sit down, when God is pleased to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help or mine.”



Nevertheless, the young pastor refused to heed his senior, and fervently pursued his passion. It was not easy; not only did the government oppose him, even his own wife stood against him. But the Lord honored his vision, brought him to India, and mightily used him for a multi-faceted ministry for more than forty years. He is William Carey who is known as the Father of Modern Missions.



Even today there are Christians who look at evangelism from the same point of view. Let us consider 13 compelling reasons why God's people must communicate the gospel at any cost.

1. The concern of the triune God, Genesis 3:9

God is the first missionary. He goes after the fallen man seeking Him. Throughout the Bible we see God doing everything possible to bring back man to Himself, John.3:16; 16:8, 11. God the Son and God the Holy Spirit join with God the Father in accomplishing the work of salvation for man. So, when we share the gospel, we are doing something that God is so concerned about.

2. The commandment of Christ, Matthew 28:19—20; Mark 16:15

We can take this in two ways:

- a. The great commission by the One who has all authority in heaven and on earth.
- b. The last desire of our Savior just before leaving this world. Evangelism is something that we need to fulfil in obedience to His commandment just as baptism, Lord's Supper, etc.

3. The purpose of our redemption, 1Pet. 2:9

One of the purposes of God in saving us is to proclaim the greatness of our Savior.

4. The power of the gospel, Rom. 1:15, 16

Paul is ready to preach the gospel in Rome and is not at all ashamed. The reason is its potential. Gospel is God's power ('dunamis') to break the hardened heart of mankind. The dramatic and supernatural transformation in the lives of those who respond to the gospel proves its potential.



5. The value of man, Mark 8:36; Matt. 10:28; Psalms 49:5

Man is precious because of the God-conscious part he has, 1 Thess. 5:23. The Lord Jesus Christ valued man and gave

His life as a ransom to redeem him, Matt.13:44—46; 1Peter1:18, 19. Any effort to share the gospel to the lost is worth because of his value.

6. The need of man, Pro. 24:11, 12; Rom. 3:10—19, 23; Eze. 3:18; 18:4

Step by step everyone is going to the eternal hell fire because of the fall in the Garden of Eden. Not only the future of man is in trouble, even today he is struggling because of sin. There is no peace; wickedness is growing; bad habits, hatred for one another, etc., are increasing manifold. The efforts by the world leaders to bring a solution to man's perils are utter failure. In this hour of turmoil and uncertainty what man needs is the gospel of Christ.



7. The absence of another gospel, Acts 4:12.

There is no other good news that can meet the needs of man. No other person, system or scheme can transform the fallen man as the message of Christ does.

8. The brevity of time, John.9:4

The time is too short in view of the threefold possible changes anytime:

- a. Coming of Christ.
- b. Death – our own or of the people.
- c. Change of circumstances – open doors may be closed (Eph. 5:14—16; Rom. 13:11, 12).

9. Unreached millions of the world, Rom. 15:20, 21; 2 Pet. 3:9

The ever-increasing population makes it hard to reach the whole world if we don't take evangelism seriously.

10. Cry from hades, Luke 16:28

The story of the rich man reveals that from the place of torment their earnest prayer is, none of their dear ones may come to the place where they are today!

General William Booth the founder of Salvation Army used to say that every Christian ought to be sent to Hell for a week, for this would make eternity so real to him. That will force him to seek ways to deliver people from eternal condemnation.



11. Example of the saints, Acts 8:4; 11:20; 1Cori. 9:16, 17, 22, 23

The early church took evangelism seriously, and they were willing to suffer any thing for the propagation of the gospel. Missionary stories from church history also challenge us to share the gospel passionately.



12. Greatness of Christ, Mark 5:20; 1Pet. 2:9

The glory and perfections of Christ should prompt us to introduce Him to others.



13. Natural obligation, 2Kings 7:8, 9

If none of the above-mentioned reasons make sense, consider the words of these four lepers who found provision during a famine; “we are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us.”

Sharing a good tiding with one’s fellow-being is a natural response by any human being. Even an animal will try to help the other in time of need!

G&P



**Evangelist
Vance Havner**

“Evangelism is to Christianity what veins are to our bodies. You can cut Christianity anywhere and it’ll bleed evangelism.”

“There are two equal and positive errors in to which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence, the other is to believe and feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them”



C. S. Lewis

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