



Thank God, I am free!

"Through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"

This is an independence that will last for all of eternity! Through the death of Jesus on the cross, all three - sin, guilt and death - are gone in one single victorious stroke



Johnson
K. Samuel

As a nation, we will soon be celebrating the Independence Day. We are justifiably proud of being an independent nation - free from domination of another country. We are also proud of the fact that our freedom was achieved through non-violent means and personal sacrifices of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Our political freedom is certainly a matter for celebration. Then how much more we should celebrate our freedom that our Lord Jesus Christ earned for us! It is our freedom from the tyranny and bondage of guilt, sin, fear, and death; an independence won over 2,000 years ago.

Jesus Christ declared: *"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"* (John 8:34-36). Apostle Paul refers to that freedom in the following words: *"Through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death"* (Romans 8:2). This is an independence that will last for all of eternity! Through the death of Jesus on the cross, all three - sin, guilt and death - are gone in one single victorious stroke (1 Corinthians 15:57). Thank God! God's grace is so rich that *we have redemption through the blood of His Son and*

the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7). When we are freed by Christ, we do not have to carry our guilt around.

The Word of God proclaims that *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). Christ's death was a vicarious - substitutionary - death. Since Christ died in our place, we also gain freedom from the consequence of sin - eternal death. The penalty for our sin has already been paid. Our account has been credited and we are no longer guilty. When Christ called out on the cross, "It is finished", He meant, "It is paid, the debt is paid in full!"

The greatest privilege that we have earned through our freedom in Christ is our reconciliation with God and the confidence to enter into the presence of holy God without any fear of accusation from any quarters. *"But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation"* (Colossians 1:22). Devil is known as an *"accuser of God's children before God day and night"* (Rev. 12:10). But now we are blameless - free of guilt, not subject to blame - because His Son, Jesus is in control of our lives. We can stand before God and our fellow man without any fear!

Thank God, I am free!

Preaching:

Some memories

and

Some hopes!



Dr. Thomson K. Mathew

Dean,
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University

It has been my privilege to preach the Gospel as an ordained minister for nearly four decades. I have been a senior pastor of a local church only for five years of this period, but have had the opportunity to continue to preach the word of God at churches and conferences in several nations. I began preaching before I became a minister. I recall preaching in open air meetings in various parts of Kerala, particularly in and around Mavelikara. I remember preaching at various meetings of the Pentecostal Young People's Association (PYPA) and receiving certificates and awards for winning elocution competitions. I never thought of becoming a full-time minister during those days. I was a physics major in college and expected to have some future career related to science.

Public speaking was never easy for me, but I had a passion for publicly preaching the word of God. I still get nervous when I am standing before a congregation. In some way, I get more nervous now than when I was a youngster. For me, it has not become easier through the years. In fact, the most difficult place for me to preach is the chapel at Oral Roberts University, may be because nearly two hundred Ph.D.'s are sitting among the thousands of students in the chapel and the services are often aired live on national television.

My first public speeches were made in the 6th and 7th grades at St. Thomas High School in Vechoochira. I remember my whole body shaking so visibly when I spoke in front of a class for the first time until finally the paper in my hands tore into two pieces. The speech was written with significant help from my mother who was a teacher at another school. I kept reading and folding the paper all day as I prepared for the class meeting,

it was almost torn when I started to speak. The speech certainly did not last long. I later learned that the topic my mother helped me with was based on a speech her own brother, Pastor C. T. Varughese, wrote for her when she was a young girl.

I was elected the class speaker in Standard IX at St. Mary's High School, Niranam, when my family moved back to my father's native place. That is

where Pastor Babu Abraham (Kozhikodu) became my schoolmate and we engaged in various evangelistic activities together which included noon prayer meetings in the cemetery of the ancient Niranam Orthodox church. My public speaking improved during this period, but the stage fright remained a challenge.

I grew up in parsonages. My father

and grandfather were pastors. I heard sermons all my life, and remember many of them and the delivery styles of my father, grandfather, uncles and great uncles, such as, Pastors G. Samuel (Mavelikara) and T. N. Abraham (Kallissery). I recall the great move of God among the people that followed some of their sermons.

As a young person growing up in Kerala, I have repeated the sermons of several well known Malayali preachers in churches and conventions to assist them in the typical Kerala style – from Malayalam to Malayalam. I have done this even for preaching giants like Pastor K. E. Abraham and Pastor P. M. Philip. It was not easy to repeat after these servants of God because their vast biblical vocabulary was mostly alien to me at that stage of my life. The first time I translated someone's sermon from English to Malayalam was at a convention held in a primary school building in Vazhuvady. My father's cousin Sam Vargheese of

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Salem, Tamil Nadu, a graduate of Southern Asia Bible College, was the preacher. My translation was simply bad. The preacher whose primary tongue was Tamil had to assist me several times during the message.

I have been fortunate to receive ministerial education in America and to get to know and listen to some outstanding American preachers. I have been edified and educated by these preachers; however, my preaching is still deeply influenced by the preachers I encountered early in my life in India.

This brief autobiographical review is in preparation to say the following about true preaching. Preaching of the Gospel is not about the oratory skills of the preacher. In fact, it is not about the preacher at all. God has decided to save the world through the foolishness of preaching. This simple exercise of telling the story of Jesus and inviting people to follow Him is an amazingly powerful exercise. This is the way God has designed to invite humanity into His kingdom. I'm sure that most of my readers will join me in testifying that they came to know Christ and experienced the power of the Holy Spirit

because someone preached to them. Imagine! Inspired words spoken by feeble tongues changed our destinies! Preaching is more than simple oratory and it requires more than communication skills. Paul the Apostle testified to this

truth (1 Cor. 2: 4). Preaching in effect is a supernatural act. The preachers and listeners are accountable to God for it.

The preacher must be a vessel for God's use. It requires hard work and devotion to be a good preacher. Listening to God for a word for the hour is the key to good preaching. It is not man's ideas we are called to preach. We must preach the word of God. God's word is a powerful word. God's word is a living word. God's word is a life giving word. The written word of God must be rightly interpreted. In modern seminaries, we exhort students to (1) exegete (interpret) the word, (2) exegete their world and then (3) connect the two in their preaching. Some are good at one or the

other of these exercises, but all three are required for good preaching.

Good preaching requires Spirit-empowered imagination. A sermon is effective only when it is prepared under divine guidance and delivered in the power

of the Holy Spirit. I have been fortunate to be raised in a context where such sermons were preached, especially by men and some women who were not highly educated in the art and science of preaching, but they knew their God and His word.

Good preaching is in short supply today. Advanced technology and increased means of communication have not improved the quality of preaching in our churches and gatherings. A new generation of faithful and effective preachers is badly needed. God is still waiting to finish the work of saving the world through the foolishness of preaching. ■

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The next time you feel like GOD can't use you, just remember...

- * Abraham was too old
- * Isaac was a daydreamer
- * Jacob was a liar
- * Leah was ugly
- * Joseph was abused
- * Moses had a stuttering problem
- * Gideon was afraid
- * Rahab was a prostitute
- * Jeremiah and Timothy were too young
- * David was a murderer

- * Elijah was suicidal
- * Jonah ran from God
- * Naomi was a widow
- * Job went bankrupt
- * Peter denied Christ
- * The disciples fell asleep while praying
- * Martha worried about everything
- * The Samaritan woman was divorced, more than once
- * Zaccheus was too small

- Contributed

"I reap where I have not sown"!

*"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. -----
"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed'".
(Matt. 25:14-30)*

In the passage, *Matt. 25:14-30*, we have one of the most quoted scriptures in the Bible. In fact, of the 17 years I have been in the church and of the 1000 or so messages I have either preached or heard preached in those 17 years, nearly every time the speaker was trying to inspire the saints of the church to become soul winners or to work harder for the kingdom of God. However, I wish to emphasize the message of the parable as a message from our Lord specially directed to the Pastors / Leaders of the churches. And a warning about the consequences of burying the potential that is in the people whom our Lord would place within our grasp and ministry.

Jesus' example to us is incredible. He was a person who believed in people who are at their very worst. He saw potential in people whom other men would easily write off as reprobate or unteachable. He went after the proverbial lost coin of society and placed on their shoulder, the kingdom of God. There is no better example than the fisherman named Simon whom the Lord knew to be a rough character. Yet our Lord says to Simon, "I will make you a fisher of men".

As ministers we should realize that our Lord has delivered unto us His goods. These people whom the Lord has placed within the grasp of the church are not ours. They are not our people. They are not our saints. They are not our church. They belong to Jesus. He suffered and died for them, not us. It was He who purchased their salvation not us.

Notice in verse 15, our Lord disperses people/talents to the servants / Pastors according to their

several ability. He does not give according to a man's desire to see his church grow. He places within the church the number and the quality of people according to the Pastor's ability to keep and cause increase of those goods. We would want to force God's hand in church growth.

We would want to blame those people / goods for the lack of growth. The slothful / lazy servant buried the talent his Lord had placed in his care and he actually thought he would receive a reward for it. After all, he didn't lose any body, it just didn't

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grow. The church kept the same numbers ---. It didn't decrease --- It didn't fold up --- Same old people --- Nobody left --- And yet that servant thought he was being faithful with the Lord's goods.

When I Pastored one church, I would get so frustrated with the people the Lord had given me. I would say, "If God would just give me something to work with here." What I did not realize was that he does not give us the advantage. He does not stack the deck in our favor. He only gives us potential. He places in our care people who are not perfect and will never have potential unless we work with them. He gives us people with the potential of becoming a Peter, yet they are currently a Simon.

Once I realized the Lord was requiring me to invest in the people he had already given me, I then turned my focus on enabling them instead of lording over them. As a result, one of the

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Rev. Dr. Shibu Samuel

Rev. Shibu has earned doctorate as "Doctor of Science in Counseling Psychology" and is a Professional Chaplain and Counsellor. He pastored an American Church in Canton, Michigan for 8 years and is currently Senior Pastor of Philadelphia Pentecostal Church of Dallas (IPC).

Notice that the man who had received five talents, went and traded the same - he put to use all five of the talents. For this, His Lord calls him "good and faithful". Revival will happen when the Pastor cause every member to become invested.

The best witnesses are new converts. Why is that? Why do they bring all the visitors? Why are they the ones telling everyone about Jesus? And more importantly why are the people who have been around a while, involved very little if at all?

men of that church is now doing a fantastic job of Pastoring that congregation. Had I sat on him and never expected him to rise to the occasion, he may never have, but I offered to him my confidence and now he is in a position to do great things for the kingdom.

Notice in verse 16, the man who had received five talents, went and traded the same. He did not trade only a small portion of the talents. Nor did he trade most of the talents. No, he traded or put to use all five of the talents. For this, His Lord calls him "good and faithful". When will revival come to a church? When will growth begin to happen? What is the magnetism that will take place that

will cause our church to grow? According to this parable that Jesus Himself told, it will not happen until a Pastor has caused every single member of the local church to become invested. Not a single person was left sitting on a pew in these men's churches. They all had the understanding that

they were to work for God. They had found a ministry in the church. They had found a work to do for the kingdom. People with little value to the Kingdom were given the opportunity to do great things, and increase came as a result of it. All five talents came back with increase.

But how do you cause someone to get involved if they don't want to? You preach to them until they do. These are usually people who have given up on the idea that they too have a gift or talent to offer for the kingdom. How do you cause someone who has very little to offer by way of personal ministry to become fruitful? You teach them and train them to become fruitful. You help them find their talent. You take them by the hand and show them how. You forgive them of their worldliness as Jesus did Peter and offer them faith and trust. You give them opportunity to succeed. And when they do, you celebrate their success and send them out again to do something greater. You constantly challenge them to do more and by doing so, you invest them into the Kingdom which pays great dividends.

I have noticed in Pentecostal churches that some Pastors seem to be afraid of developing people and ministers in their church. The fear is that if they are brought up too much, they will leave and go off on their own. This is a very dangerous mind-set as it is one that promotes our own kingdom and not God's Kingdom.

A person only loses what he fears he will lose. A person who fears he will lose his mind will probably someday lose it. A person who fears he will lose his money will probably lose it. A Pastor who fears he will lose certain people may very well lose them.

As humans we often become self destructive in an attempt to hold onto something God intends for us to enjoy the use of or to give away. For example, a man who gets out and enjoys his good health will probably be a healthier person because of his attitude and use of his good health. A person who is fearful he will lose his money will not invest his money in places which might give to him great

gain. So he hides it only to allow inflation to diminish the value of what he has. And a Pastor who sits on people to keep them from increasing their personal value to the kingdom will lose them to bitterness or complacency. If they stay in the church, they will become useless

as the attitudes they develop will become destructive to the body and valueless to the work of the Kingdom.

We all know the best witnesses are new converts. Why is that? Why do they bring all the visitors? Why are they the ones telling everyone about Jesus? And more importantly why are the people who have been around a while, involved very little if at all? Frankly, they have been buried. They started out all excited, but their zeal was quenched by a ministry which did not have room for or a way to develop that New-Convert-Zeal.

A great servant of God from India, Pastor D. Mohan, told me once that he gets excited when he sees a visitor walk into his church. He said, "I look at that visitor and say to myself, Yes, they are going to be a great group leader". Many of us would not look at the potential in that person until they've attended our church for the first year, but he sees that potential the moment they walk into the doors of the church. Is it any wonder his church is a growing revival church?

We all want revival for our churches. We are all looking in every direction trying to find the program or ministry which will cause it to happen. But no program or ministry will have a lasting and definite impact until we begin to trust and enable all the people God has given us to do the work of the ministry.

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Are we 'MISERABLE COMFORTERS' to others in their DISTRESS?

*Then Job answered and said: "I have heard many such things;
miserable comforters are you all!" (Job 16:1-2)*

Job's three friends had travelled from their home town, from a long distance, to be with Job when they had heard of his adversities. In fact, they had made appointments together to come and mourn with him,

and to comfort him (Job 2:11). When they met Job, they could not recognize him due to the physical infirmity that had afflicted him. They wept aloud in sorrow, tore their clothes and sprinkled dust upon themselves as an outward expression of grief (v. 12). They sat down on the ground with Job for

seven days and seven nights without speaking a word, seeing that Job's grief was too intensive to be expressed aloud (v. 13).

However, when each of Job's friends started speaking – Eliphaz (Job 4:1-5:27; 15:1-35), Bildad (Job 8:1-22), and Zophar (Job 11:1-20) – the words that came out of their mouths were words of condemnation and not of comfort. Instead of providing relief to Job, they were like inflicting pain to his wounds. To all the previous allegations from his three 'friends' Job simply responded, in essence, "I've heard it all before - you are all miserable comforters" (Job 16:2).

In his book 'How to Get Along with Almost Anyone', H. Norman Wright has categorized four different kinds of people who express various forms of destructive criticism:

1. First, there are the 'blamers'. They avoid accepting responsibility for their actions by criticizing other people or blaming past experiences which cannot be changed or undone.

2. Next, there are the 'hurtful jokers'. Humor is a positive method of relating with others, but hurtful jokers make others the butt of their humor. They specialize in laughing at people instead of laughing with them.

3. Then, there are the 'fault-finders'. These people have the insatiable need to point out others' defects, but usually do that with a smile and the words, "I'm just trying to be helpful..."

4. Finally, there are the 'cannibals'.

These people do not criticize in a joking manner or settle for mere nitpicking. They go for the jugular - they attack through the most severe forms of personal criticism and put others down with complete disregard of their feelings. These destructive critics are intent in

tearing down and manipulating the hurting person.

As children of God, we should never engage in destructive criticism or turn out to be 'miserable comforters' like Job's friends. In fact, Satan engages in these activities, and he is referred to as a thief by our Lord Jesus Christ. "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." (John 10:10). Satan is the "accuser of God's children" who accuses them before God day and night (Rev 12:10).

If we are engaged in destructive criticism, let us detest from this activity once and for all. This is what God's word counsels us to do: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal 6:1-2)

Let us never be 'miserable comforters' to others in their distress!



**Dr. Shibu
Cherian**

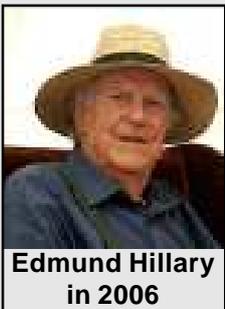
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"Greatness" - Redefined!

Greatness is typically understood as the quality of being distinguished or eminent, e.g. a great leader. The word implies superiority in quality or influence over others of the same kind. Jesus, however, reverses the meaning of greatness: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave" (Matt. 20:26-27). This is a difficult teaching in a context where servants and slaves were the lowest positions in society; a time when the pursuit of public honor and serving one's own desires was admired. The religious leaders of the time loved seats of honor, salutations in the marketplace and being called Teacher. "Not so with you", Jesus taught his disciples. Greatness in Christ's kingdom is antithetical to worldly greatness: Worldly greatness is about power, whereas kingdom greatness is about service. Worldly greatness is about self, whereas kingdom greatness is about others.

In his book 'Humilitas', John Dickson demonstrates that true greatness comes from humility. He defines humility as "the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself." To illustrate the meaning of humility, he tells many modern day life-stories, one of which is about Sir Edmund Hillary, the first person to climb the Mt. Everest along with Nepalese Tenzing Norgay. On one of his trips back to Mt. Everest after his achievement, he was spotted by some



**Edmund Hillary
in 2006**

Everyone stood amazed as Edmund thanked this

The radical teaching on kingdom greatness was lived out by Jesus. He says in the subsequent verse, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

man, let him fix his ice-pick and took the group picture. This attitude of humility characterized Edmund's entire life. The Encyclopedia Britannica writes about him: "Hillary never anticipated the acclaim that would follow the historic ascent ... Throughout his life, he maintained a high level of humility, and his main interest came to be the welfare of the Himalayan peoples of Nepal." He spent much of his time helping the local people, Sherpas, by building schools, hospitals, and

airfields. He deployed his resources and used his influence for the good of others. One interesting detail about Edmund's ascent is that when he climbed Mt. Everest, he marked his achievement by leaving a small crucifix on the summit of the Everest. Perhaps, he did that to honor a

higher power at the moment of his triumph, we do not know. What is noteworthy though is that the cross, which was a symbol of shame and humiliation in the ancient culture, has shaped our idea of greatness.

The Cross redefines greatness:

The radical teaching on kingdom greatness was lived out by Jesus. He says in the subsequent verse, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). He demonstrated his humility by riding on a donkey, instead of a warhorse, on Palm Sunday, though the people gave him a reception befitting a king. He exemplified it by washing his disciples' feet at the Passover meal/Last supper, though He was their Lord and Teacher. And ultimately, He gave his life in place of others. And here is the great reversal: Jesus, who was in the place of ultimate

Jesus' selfless act of "giving his life" is the very definition of servanthood. Citing the self-emptying act of Jesus, Paul urges his readers to quit selfish ambition, to regard others as better than themselves and to be concerned for the interests of others



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Have You Lost Your Hope ?

The whole world is in a mad quest for security and happiness and lots of hope.

All of us begin the journey of life with many dreams, goals, ambitions, aspirations and with a great sense of excitement. We make plans about future with hope and later on our heart are troubled when our hopes are not fulfilled. We worry about :-

- What to do ?
- What to have ?
- Where to go ?
- What to put on ?
- What we want to become in life and where we are?

With all these things our heart is troubled, but the word of God in Job 14:1 says: "Let not your heart be troubled".

And Luke 12 says: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on, life is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap which have neither storehouse, nor barns and god worrying can add one cubit to his stature".



Bincy Robin Varghese

Along the journey of life in this world somewhere, sometimes we are sure to run into some stormy weather where life is not easy, we face unexpected challenges, difficulties and circumstances. It is during such times that our goals and dreams seem to slip away and we even seem to be almost hopeless. As we read in Luke 8: "The disciples came to him and awoke him saying, Master, we are perishing. Then he arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water and they ceased and there was a calm". We believers never seem to awake the Master and never try to know what His will is.

Instead we ourselves try to calm the wind and the water. Always we have to commit ourselves and submit ourselves into Master's hands for His will to happen in our life.

Sometimes life takes unexpected twists and circumstances that we are totally unprepared to face, we may feel alone at the end of the road with nowhere to turn. It could be sometimes our job, career, education, home, marriage or family. So many things in life could go wrong but let me remind you that we have a Master, Almighty One, who can give life to the dead - to situations and circumstances that seem dead and hopeless and with that Almighty on our side we can hope for things beyond expectations.

By hope, I mean expectation or something we look forward to, a dream or aspiration. If we loose hope in our life and day to day situations, we would even loose the happiness of life.

Dear believers, if we have hope beyond expectation in God, you can lead a happy and prosperous life in this world.

Greatness - Redefined Continuation from previous page

power and glory as God, left the throne, and took the place of the marginalized and the suffering, so that they might be lifted up.

Jesus' selfless act of "giving his life" is the very definition of servanthood. Citing the self-emptying act of Jesus, Paul urges his readers to quit selfish ambition, to regard others as better than themselves and to be concerned for the interests of others (Phil. 2:3-4). The giving up of our self/ego and being there for the joy or advancement of others, is the very essence of service. Christians are to look at money as something to give away, and power as something to use strictly for service. Greatness comes from giving.

How we define greatness defines us

The disciples did not fully understand Jesus' teaching until after his death. They often had squabbles about who the greatest among them was. Just prior to his teaching on servanthood, John and James were requesting Jesus to let them sit at His right and left in His kingdom, the two most important positions of power. The other disciples were no less ambitious, evident from their jealous anger over the brothers' request (Matt. 20:20-24). The disciples coveted power and honor, because they defined greatness in terms of power and honor, much like the culture around them.

If we define greatness by achievements, wealth, titles, education etc., those things will define our life and we will be chasing after them. Instead, Christ beckons His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. When we lay our lives for others, as Christ did, we become like Christ. You may be thinking - it is easier said than done; that humility and self-giving sacrifice do not come naturally. But, perhaps the very recognition of our inherent self-centeredness and inadequacy is the first (and the right) step towards humility. When we reflect deeply on the fact that despite our sinfulness, Jesus loves us so much that He gave himself up for us, it makes us humble.

Caution: *Intrusion detected!*

(Part I)

Intrusion: A risk faced by all the systems on earth. Intrusive attacks can result in severe loss and damage which can be greater than the ones caused by external attacks. This has been one of Satan's most powerful strategy to destroy Church, which is a system formed by God to save mankind. Understanding God's will about Church as well as your own life is the only key to identify these hidden attacks and the word of God is the tool that leads you to God's heart.

Right from the start of the church movement in the first century, Satan has been trying to stop the movement from spreading. His attempt to eradicate church from earth through persecution faced a catastrophic failure as the church being an institution which derives its life from the love of its founder who laid the foundation through persecution, multiplied at an explosive level with persecution. So he changed his strategy. Just like Delilah sneaked into the secret behind Samson's strength, Satan sneaked into the secret of the growth of Church. What Paul feared came to pass. Paul said, *"However, I'm afraid that as the snake deceived Eve by its tricks, so your minds may somehow be lured away from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ"* (2 Cor. 11:3).

Also take a look at the verses below:

"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love" (Eph. 4:15-16).

"As all of us reflect the Lord's glory with faces that are not covered with veils, we are being changed into his image with ever-increasing glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

The secret formula of the growth of



Lijo P. Johnson, U.K.

Church and its mission is revealed in the three verses above. Through his death, Christ has opened a way for our perfection through his righteousness. We are growing into that perfection through devotion to him and acknowledging his righteousness in our life day by day and finally, one day we will be transformed to his image. This is the journey of the Church. Satan understanding this secret sneaked into the church and injected his ideas which corrupted the doctrine and introduced strategies that deflected the growth of Church from growing into Christ's image into the image of world,

Satan sneaked into the church and injected his ideas which corrupted the doctrine and introduced strategies that deflected the growth of Church from growing into Christ's image into the image of world, which is a dangerous journey away from God!

which is a dangerous journey away from God! We will be trapped and lead astray if we are not careful. That is why Jesus said in Matt. 22:29, *"Jesus answered, 'You're mistaken because you don't know the Scriptures or God's power'".*

The only way to detect Satan's ideas is by knowing the word of God. My intention through this article is to bring to your attention into two great strategies of

Satan which was injected into the Church which we have left unnoticed.

One of the topics I would like to discuss is regarding the election and the democratic movement happening amongst us. What is this democracy all about? Democracy is the system where majority wins. Where in the Bible has majority stood for God? It was always minority that chose to be on God's side. If you look at the present time, of the total Christian population, how many are real followers of Christ? If your answer is minority, how come we allow majority to appoint our leaders? Do you think that we can force the Lord to accept what we like?

While speaking to the Church of Pergamom, Holy Spirit says,

"But I have a few things against you: You have among you those who follow what Balaam taught Balak. Balak trapped the people of Israel by encouraging them to eat food sacrificed to idols and to sin sexually. You also have some who follow what the Nicolaitans teach" (Revelation 2:14-15).

There are two things here to which I would like to draw your attention.

1. The way of Baalam.

We all know the strategy of Baalam. The way he chose to bring the holy people into destruction was introducing the principles of the world into the closed community of Israel. Each Moabite woman that stepped into Israel Camp carried two things - principles of Moabite culture (World) and the beauty that was appreciated by the world.

How were they allowed into the well protected camp in the first place? The beauty of these women attracted the men within the camp. They didn't see any mistake in adopting this Moabite beauty, as they believed that once these women enter the camp, they would become a part of the Israelite culture. But slowly Israel started losing their identity. The

foreign subjects started injecting their culture into the Israelite camp. The purpose of your life is engraved in your original identity, so if you lose that identity, life will slowly turn out to be meaningless and you will never fulfill the Divine purpose on your life.

Now let us see how the democracy relates to the above. First of all, democracy is purely a **WORLDLY** concept which evolved when people rejected submission to a central authority as everyone wanted to be a leader and People wanted to do what they wanted by making rules for themselves, creating a constitution that keeps changing according to people's interests. The power of democracy is majority. Now, if you are working in a company, have you ever seen a manager being elected through casting of votes? No. The company appoints him if he possesses the right skills for the job as well as ability to enforce the company law within his team. Those laws are not public opinions, but are rather formed by the directors who own the company, who did that to drive to company into success. This is exactly the same thing when

it comes to church. Church is not a public property. It is God's property and it is His interests that are to be entertained. How dare we try to make the church framework into a public owned social club? Church is the body of Christ. Satan has always gathered vast population against God. If majority can fulfill Satan's will, as it did in the court of Pilate, and in many other instances throughout history, are we right in seeking opinion of majority rather than asking God? Democracy is a worldly custom. It is attached to the other aspects of the culture such as competition, envy, hatred, disintegration etc... It totally contradicts the word of God. Bible asks us to consider another person better than yourself, democracy demands to prove yourself better than

another, Bible speaks about listening to God than people and society, whereas in democracy, public opinion will overtake God's word. As a result of that, doctrine will be twisted and bent to preserve public interests.

Let us see what the word of God has got to say about this: *"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions..."* (2 Timothy 4:3)

It shows a scenario where people select their own leaders. If people select leaders, they select those who please them, not God necessarily. For a leader selected by people, his primary objective is to meet the people's interest. If he has

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to compromise doctrine for that, he has no other choice. This is where democracy has taken us. It forces the leaders to please people than God. We need to understand this strategy of devil behind this. Right from escape from slavery in Egypt, God had been leading the people of Israel, through God-appointed judges. These judges just obeyed what God asked them to do. But later they demanded for a King. They felt this need as they were looking at the world around them and wanted to adopt the worldly system. This is how God felt when they asked for a king:

"Do everything they say to you," the LORD replied, "for it is me they are rejecting, not you. They don't want me to be their king any longer. Ever since I

brought them from Egypt they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment" (1 Samuel 8:7-8).

Obviously, God was not happy about it, as he knew that these people are stepping away from God by having a King in between them and God. God appointed the first king, but later on self-appointed kings took over and they led the people away from God into sin and slavery. Once these people were redeemed from slavery and were in a journey towards God. God disciplined them every now and then using the judges that he appointed. But from the time they had a king, they started travelling backwards and ended up in slavery again.

The first century churches flourished under the apostles anointed and appointed by God. Holy Spirit had the full authority over the church, just like Israel before having a king. But we have now rejected God and his anointed men and have chosen our own leaders who please us, because of our evil selfishness that prompt us to see things being done the way we wanted.

The leaders we have chosen may be anointed men, but we have put them in a situation where they have to please the multitude. Listen to what Paul has got to say about this matter, *"Am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant"* (Gal. 1:10). When Paul says "people" he is not talking about gentiles, whereas he is addressing the "people" within the Church borders. Holy Spirit can no longer discipline the church governed by men. Democracy is not from God, it is from man. What we need is theocracy. True spiritual leaders never compete with each other, but are rather interested in serving each other and serving the church. ■

- To be continued

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Egyptian Christians face increased scrutiny & persecution

Tens of thousands of Christians have left post-revolution Egypt due to rising Muslim conservatism and a general instability. Quite recently a crowd attacked Christian mourners when they emerged from a funeral in Egypt's main Coptic Christian cathedral. The state of instability, decaying economy and rise in crime have scared many Egyptians into leaving. Christians say they are easy targets when trouble erupts and there is no system in place to protect them.

Christian minorities are soft targets everywhere because they do not resort to violent tactics in the face of persecution.

Writing out the Bible in four years

63 year old Philip Patterson began copying the complete King James Bible in his neat, looping handwriting in 2009. He finished the final lines of the Book of Revelation before a crowd of about 125



Patterson writing the final verses



people at St. Peter's Presbyterian Church in New York on a Sunday last month. Patterson said, he started the project to learn about the Bible and the project has helped him become more patient, confident and loving. He added, "I'm going to miss the writing. I will just have to get used to this new life without holding a Pigma Micron pen every day". He worked as much as 14 hours a day on his project. He will spend about another year working on the book's binding and covers before donating the fully completed Bible - more than 2,400 pages - to St. Peter's as a gift.

Great effort by a person who loves writing!

Air Force removes painting with Biblical reference

The U.S. Air Force has removed an "inspirational" painting because it contained a Bible reference, WORLD reports. The painting was in the dining hall of an Air Force Base. In bold letters was the word "INTEGRITY," and in smaller letters was a biblical reference, Matthew 5:9, which reads, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." The Military Religious Freedom Foundation said the painting was "repugnant" and an "overt display of Christian nationalism".

Anything Christian has become "repugnant" for quite a number of people in USA which used to be known as a Christian country!

Parents clueless about kids' online behavior

According to a new survey by the online security firm McAfee, there is an "Online Disconnect" between parents and kids. Eighty-eight percent of teens said their parents trust them to be safe online, but most acknowledged abusing

that trust by posting intimate details about themselves online (including phone numbers, email addresses, the name of their schools and home addresses). McAfee also found about 30 percent of teens and young adults sought out information online on depression, but only 6 percent of their parents were aware of it. A quarter looked up information on drugs without their parents' knowledge. Most teens and young adults said they hid their online activities from parents by clearing browser histories, hiding or deleting videos, or creating email or social media accounts their parents know nothing about. More than 70 percent of parents surveyed said they don't have the time or energy to keep up with their kids' online activities, nor do they know how to monitor them.

This is certainly an alarming situation. There is the real danger of our young people coming under the evil influence of so much of dirt easily available on the internet. It is nearly impossible for the parents or elders to monitor their activities. The need for instilling discipline and Christian values into their minds at a young age is clearly evident. Their minds should be saturated with the Word of God which will guide them in their activities when there is no parental supervision. As the wise Solomon said: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

People turn to God after disaster!

According to the findings of a 'LifeWay Research' study conducted immediately after the deadly tornado in Oklahoma in May, natural disasters make most Americans to take more interest in God and donate to relief agencies. In response to the question "How do you

feel about God when suffering occurs?", 33 percent people responded: "I trust God more". Twenty-five percent said "I am confused about God". 34 percent believe prayer can avert natural disasters. 60 percent of Americans donate to relief agencies in the wake of natural disasters.

It is quite evident people turn to God at the time of disasters. It is a sad truth that God is forgotten in good times when everything is going well. Let us join with King David to declare: "I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips" (Psalm 34:1).

Evangelicals rally for marriage in Brazil

'WORLD' reports that more than 40,000 people were present at a rally in Brazil to support marriage and against abortion. It highlights the growing presence of evangelicals in Brazil. There are 44 million mainly Pentecostal evangelicals in that country. After the last national election in 2010, evangelicals now have 68 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and three in the Senate.

It is a fact that Pentecostals are multiplying in South American countries and Christian influence is waning in North America and Europe.

Christianity in the Middle East on brink of extinction!

From the beginning of the church in 1st century to the 20th century, Christians were a powerful force from Africa to central Asia. Long before Christianity entered Europe, it was thriving in the Middle East and Asia. But the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reports that the flight of Christians out of the region (Middle East) is unprecedented and it's increasing year by year and in our lifetime alone "Christians might disappear altogether from Iraq, Egypt and Afghanistan". Late last year we saw the extinction of Christians from towns and cities in Syria where churches had worshiped for two thousand years. Egypt is witnessing a surge of blasphemy-related allegations since the coming to power of the Muslim Brotherhood regime. Also, many Christians are leaving the country due to the increase in persecution and the poor economy. Sectarian violence following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein caused more than half of Iraqi Christians to flee. 'Open Doors International' estimates that only 330,000 to 350,000 Christians are left in Iraq. There were more than 1.2 million Christians 20 years ago.

Christians have served as witnesses to Jesus Christ among people. The church has served as a witness for Jesus through its growth and through centuries of persecution. As the church dwindles, sharing the message of Jesus will become more difficult.

All Christians can pray for their brothers and sisters who are suffering. If one part of the Body of Christ suffers, every part suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Pope's comment on atheists receiving salvation

Pope Francis commented in Rome that "God redeems nonbelievers". Then Vatican issued an explanatory note on the meaning to salvation, according to a report in CNN. A spokesman said that people who are aware of the Catholic Church "cannot be saved" if they "refuse to enter her or remain in her". At the same time, the spokesman said, "every man or woman, whatever their situation, can be saved. Even non-Christians can respond to this saving action of the Spirit. No person is excluded from salvation".

So Pope has admitted that a person outside Roman Catholic church can also receive salvation! It is, indeed, a great generous concession!!

Poem

"I shall not want"

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalms 23:1)

Jesus exclaimed, I am the good Shepherd.
 David expressed, The Lord is my Shepherd,
 This is the declaration of our faith, on the Good Shepherd.
 "I shall not want" REST for he maketh me lie down,
 "I shall not want" REFRESHMENT for he leadeth me beside still waters,
 "I shall not want" PRESERVATION for he restoreth my soul,
 "I shall not want" GUIDANCE for he leadeth me to righteousness.
 "I shall not want" PEACE for I will fear no evil,
 "I shall not want" COMFORT because of thy rod & staff,
 "I shall not want" SUSTEANANCE for thou Prepareth a table,
 "I shall not want" BLESSING for thou anionteth my head,
 "I shall not want" ANYTHING for my cup runneth over,
 "I shall not want" JOY now for goodness and mercy shall follw me,
 "I shall not want" GLORY hereafter I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
 "I shall not want "is David's expression of experience, richness and mark of maturity
 So let us confess, 'THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD'



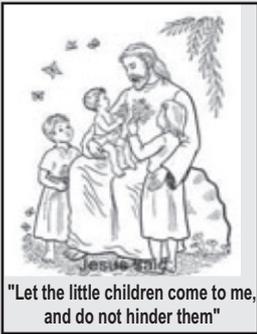
D.G. Martin
 Mulund, Mumbai

Children's

CORNER



Bad company corrupts good character !



Ryan and Renosh were best of friends. They studied in the same school and attended the same church. Both of them had godly parents who nurtured them in the Biblical perspective. They were very active in the church programs. Later on Ryan had to go to a different city for his further studies and Renosh befriended another friend named Sanil who also was from the same college that Renosh attended. But Sanil had many other friends who were into bad habits. Over a period of time Renosh also fell into those habits in their company. He lost interest in studies and spent more

time in the company of those friends. Only after a long time did his parents realize the problem with Renosh. He had become rebellious and disoriented in studies. And it took a lot of prayer and counselling for Renosh to become a responsible person.

Dear children, you need to be

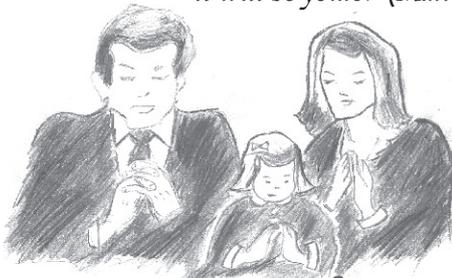
careful whom you befriend. It is good to have friends who are God-fearing and virtuous in character. You should keep away from those who may lead you to wrong ways and bad habits. 1 Cor. 15:33 says "Do not be misled, bad company corrupts good character." Our friends can influence us to become better or worse. Therefore choose friends who will influence you to have good ideals and virtues. Prov. 13:20 says "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm".

May God bless you. ■



Shiny Aunty

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (Mark 11 :124)



Janice Thomas
USA

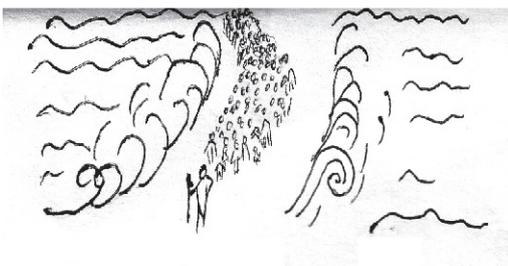


Holy kiss of Christian love



Pheba Susan Sam
Kerala

Crossing the Red Sea



Jeff Sam Scariah
Kerala

Praying for the sick



Rufos Roymon
Bahrain