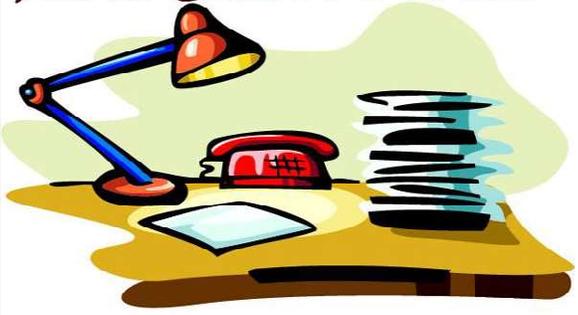


From the Editor's Desk



"When I return ..."

"The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have'"
(Luke 10:35)

No leader in the world has ever promised to return after death but our Master who saved us also said that He will come back.

We have the sure promise of His return and rewards.

Do we have anything to present before Him, anything we have earned by using the gifts that He has entrusted us?



Thomas Nainan

Lord Jesus Christ when he was on the earth was answering a lawyer who wanted to know who his neighbour was. Everyone will have some neighbours who will be staying near to him but Jesus was dealing with a lawyer who was trying to test Him with that question (Luke 10:25). So, instead of giving a direct answer, He narrated the story of the 'Good Samaritan'. A traveller was beaten and stripped by robbers and left bleeding on the roadside. The dying man was ignored by a priest and a Levite who passed by. These respectable men of the community should have shown some kindness and helped the wounded man on the road. But a Samaritan who is looked down upon by the Jewish society, came by and felt compassion on him, bandaged his wounds and poured oil and wine on his wounds. He set him on his beast, took him to the nearest inn and stayed with him for the night. The next day he took out two pence (dinaris) and gave to the innkeeper, saying: *"Look after him and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have"*.

We read that the man on the road was lying half-dead and helpless. We too were once dead in our sins and trespasses. Jesus, the Good Samaritan, took sympathy on us and saved us from the world of robbers and set our feet on the rock of salvation. Now we are not dead but alive. Jesus told the lawyer who tested him: "go and do likewise". Instead of telling the lawyer who his neighbour was, Jesus was instructing him to be a good neighbour to those who were crying for help. If we are really God's children, we have to do like that. When we see so many on the road spiritually dead heading to destruction, we should feel compassion on them and give them life-saving means so that they are restored to a full life in Jesus because He came to save and not to condemn.

The Samaritan not only gave the wounded traveller immediate relief, but also gave the hope that he will come back. No leader in the world has ever promised to return after death but our Master who saved us also said that He will come back. We have the sure promise of His return and rewards. What a blessed hope!

Jesus tells another parable to stress the need of every child of God to make use of His gift of salvation to win souls for the kingdom of God (Luke 19:12-26). This story is about a noble man going to a far country to be appointed king. The noble man called ten of his servants and gave them ten 'minas' (one 'mina' each) to trade with *"until I come back"* (Luke 19:13). His citizens hated him and sent messengers after him saying that they do not want him to reign over them. But he returned having received his kingship and asked the ten servants about the 'mina' that he gave them to trade with. One of them gained ten more, another one gained five more and a third one kept it wrapped up in a napkin. The master was angry with the servant who did not make use of the gift that he was freely given to trade with. This parable is not about the various talents that the Lord has given His children in different measures, but about the free gift of salvation which is equal for every believer. We are expected to make known the good news to others by word and deed in the places where we are kept and gain souls for the kingdom of God.

Dear brethren, we have to hold fast our confidence and hope. Our Lord has repeatedly declared that He is coming back. We have to give account to Him about what He has given to us as His stewards. He is at hand, on the door step. The Lord says: *"I am coming soon, hold fast what you have"* (Rev. 3:11). Do we have anything to present before Him, anything we have earned by using the gifts that He has entrusted us? ■

Is "Pentecostalism" *at Crossroads?*

Is Pentecostalism that originated in the beginning of the twentieth century the same today in its essence? Every movement undergoes changes. Paradigmatic shifts do take place from its inception. The mode of its operation and approach to issues, structure and organizing would undergo transitions in the long run. Some of them have positive changes improvised into a more robust system and some others many not even survive. For instance, many of the charitable organization of the past that evolved due to some urgent need or contingencies have survived and have become stronger in meeting its goal. The Red Cross and Sisters of Charity in India are two examples.

They started in response to urgent human needs and, later on, developed into well-established charities. Marxism that originated in the Soviet Russia has undergone drastic change and evolution. While the ideology is sustained, its influence has been reduced to much smaller regions of the world. When the core values change and only the label remains, the entity becomes something else in essence.

This short article is an inquiry into the evolution of Pentecostalism as a movement and its state today.

Pentecostalism means different things for different people. The insiders' view about the movement often diverges from that of an outsider from the very outset. The movement itself is highly stratified from its inception. As some of the Pentecostal historians rightly observed the movement began without a leader or a specific geographical location. In the west (especially in the UK) they were known as happy clappers. Emotionalism, the spontaneity of worship, speaking in tongues and belief in the supernatural became the most dominant features of the movement. In the early stage of

the movement, the fellow Christians took their theology and practice seriously. The leaders of the movement did not hold any academic credentials. The poorer strata of the society got easily attracted towards the movement in different parts of the world. They relinquished sophisticated life-style. They taught that the children of God must practice modesty and simplicity. At present Pentecostalism is the largest Christian section in the world. The early centers in UK and USA produced several journals and magazines with the aim of propagating the message of Pentecostal revival.

The journals The Apostolic Faith, Bridegroom's Messenger, The Later Rain Evangel and Church of God Evangel, were a few of them published from the USA while Confidence was published and circulated from the UK. Unlike the present Pentecostal magazines and journals, these early Pentecostal journals were full of testimonies and articles about the revival. They described the experience of speaking in tongues, healing, visions and dreams

and testimonies of how they were led into mission through divine guidance. Not later than 1925 Pentecostalism got rooted in the south Asia. Several congregations were planted and the number of believers increased.

It began as a global movement in the beginning of the twentieth century. The movement that began in USA and Europe rapidly grew in the following decades. The key factor that differentiated 'Pentecostals' from other Christians of that time (especially Protestants) was their experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Many Christians who perceived this with suspicion at the beginning of the revival were soon convinced that it is the same experience which the apostles had on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. The early Pentecostals

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Pastor Thomas Samuel
IPC London,
U.K.

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In contrast to the missionary movements led by the evangelical missionaries in the eighteenth century, the early Pentecostals connected baptism in the Spirit with the gift of tongues to mission to foreign lands.

The institutionalization of the movement has reduced spiritual experiences into rituals. One of the distinctive elements of Pentecostalism is the infilling of the Spirit. It is now ritualized

closely followed the book of Acts as their fundamental guide. They began to perceive that everything recorded in the book of Acts was being restored in their lives after a long break of about two thousand years. In contrast to the missionary movements led by the evangelical missionaries in the eighteenth century, the early Pentecostals connected mission with baptism in the Spirit. They believed that the gift of tongues is associated with a mission to foreign lands. More and more people began to experience the baptism of the Spirit even in several nations of Asia and Africa. Genuine signs and wonders occurred in their ministry. Young men saw visions and old men dreamed dreams as Peter quoted from the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28).

The movement has now entered the second century of its existence. The early decades of the movement were marked by prolific growth nourished by these experiences. One of the worst issues of the movement is institutionalization. The term means incorporation into a structured and often highly formalized system. One of the reasons the first leaders opposed and led them to come out of Methodism and Holiness movement was the formalism that crept into the Church. They observed the difference in their worship and missionary activities when they began to experience the Pentecostal revival. They enjoyed dependence on the guidance through the Spirit in the mission. In the early decades, the leadership of the movement was purely based on their charismatic experience and a definite call to ministry. The leaders' gifting was distinguishable from others. The leaders rarely craved for status, authority, power and popularity. Financial gain and prosperity were not on the agenda. They rarely preached prosperity. The focus was on revival and mission. Every message of William J Seymour, the most prominent leader of the movement in the

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USA, had some reference to the book of Acts, mostly to chapter 2. The early Pentecostals debated with their evangelical counterparts about the issue of sanctification, whether the baptism in the Spirit happen as a result of sanctification or the baptism in the Spirit helps in the sanctification process. Salvation experience was seldom associated with material gains as it is propagated in many of the evangelistic campaigns today.

As the movement enters the second century of its being, sadly, the spiritual experience became a doctrine. The present generation identifies themselves as a 'Pentecostal' simply by adhering to the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit. In the institutionalized Pentecostal denominations, one can easily identify as a Pentecostal even though he/she has never experienced the genuine baptism of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis on faith healing has depleted. Passion for the cross-cultural mission has reduced to yearly conventions and other programs. Genuine gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy, interpretation of tongues and other gifts have been professionalized. Strict measures on modest life-style are no more emphasized. On the other hand, interest in church politics is on the rise. Many are obsessed with organizing programs and call it as 'ministry'. Isn't the very core of the movement at stake? The fascination for programs and greed for power and position are, in fact, contrary to the core belief and practices of the Pentecostal tradition.

The institutionalization of the movement has reduced spiritual experiences into rituals. One of the distinctive elements of Pentecostalism is the infilling of the Spirit. It is now ritualized. In the name of manifestation of the Spirit several Pentecostal traditions encourage an emotional outburst in worship services influenced by music. Biblical evidence demonstrates that ecstatic worship is one of the signs of being filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:1-28; 10:45; 1 Cor. 14:26-28). Sadly, the experience of the 'infilling' of the Spirit is highly dependent on the accompaniment of the musical instruments and

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the skills of the so-called worship leaders.

Has the present Pentecostals distorted the Biblical meaning of this paramount spiritual experience? The New Testament clearly teaches about the experience of being filled with the Spirit, its purpose and outcome. There are two predominant perspectives on the experience of being filled with the Spirit in the New Testament. One is the Lukan (according to St. Luke) understanding and the other is the Pauline (according to St. Paul) understanding of the term. Luke has presented Jesus as the one who is 'full of the Spirit' (Luke 4:1,) and ministered in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14; 10:21). In Luke's second volume, the book of Acts, 'infilling' or 'outpouring' of the Spirit is an

endowment of the Spirit on a believer. This manifested on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-20), in Samaria (8:1-28), and in Caesarea (ch. 10). The experience of the Spirit baptism led the apostles into the mission, which resulted in the rapid growth of the church. The movement began to grow and spread beyond the Jewish boundaries into the Gentile world. This growth and spread of the church were not only trans-ethnic and cross-cultural, but also crossed several geographical boundaries. However,

according to the Pauline epistles, every believer has the indwelling presence of the Spirit which produces spiritual gifts (Romans 8:1ff; 1 Cor. 12:1ff; 14:1ff). The indwelling and empowering presence of the Spirit in the believer is the very core of Christian life. One confesses Jesus as the savior by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Those who are in Christ Jesus are led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:1ff).

The question is whether the infilling of the Spirit a repeated endowment of the Spirit or is it a permanent spiritual state in a believer's life. This requires a detailed treatment in comparison with the Old Testamental and Inter-Testamental understanding of the term. A thorough study of the subject is still lacking in most of the churches. Pentecostals are generally known for their obsession with experience and lack of critical engagement with the biblical texts.

Almost all of the popular preachers and teachers from the South Indian Pentecostal tradition are not academicians. As a result, the negation of academic approach to the Pentecostal tradition is still prevalent in the Indian Pentecostal tradition. Our journals and magazines seldom have quality and academic depth even today while Pentecostalism has advanced and has reached a great height in the world. In the academic world, Pentecostal scholars began to make inroads since the 1970s and many of scholarly works from the Pentecostals are now recognized. However, the common believers are yet to recognize and acknowledge the value of theological articulation of Pentecostal distinctions and practices. While on the one

hand, Pentecostalism is growing in a fast pace, on the other hand, it lacks depth and foundation. The experience grounded in the thorough articulation of faith only will sustain.

The new generation of Pentecostals may come back to the Scripture. Understand the meaning and significance of the life led and filled by the Spirit to make a difference in the society. God's only agency to fulfill His mission in the world is the Church and the Church is led by the Spirit, not by human

administration. This is a call to the new generation of Pentecostals to experience the power of the Spirit personally rather than merely identifying as a Pentecostal. The shared spiritual experience of a community without informed articulation of its cause may reduce it to a temporary impulse rather than a concrete reality. The experience of the baptism in the Spirit empowers a person to lead a mature Christian life in the world. The infilling of the Holy Spirit would lead a person to a Christ-centered life. As the movement enters the second century of its existence its distinctive emphasis and doctrines are well established. *Now the time has come to influence the society for a Christ-centered change, which is grounded in the in-depth articulation of the Scripture accompanied by the genuine experience of the Spirit.*

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Nailed to the Cross?*

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)



Joseph Kurian
Houston

The physical aspects of the crucifixion event were excruciating. The cross was laid on the ground and the condemned stretched upon it. Historians believed that the nails nine to twelve inches long were not driven through the palm but rather through the space between the small bones of the wrists. The beating Christ endured made His back raw and tattered exposing the battered flesh to the rough wood of the cross. He had to push himself up and down on the cross to breathe. The physical suffering of crucifixion goes beyond what the civilized mind can grasp. Crucifixion was a vicious death reserved for the most ruthless criminals.

The death of Jesus Christ was a profound declaration of God's love. It was a loving, courageous death-defying mission of rescue. God sacrificed His beloved son to save each one of us from sin and the punishment of death and hell. His death made it possible for us to be reconciled to God and restored to fellowship with Him. Reconciliation, justification, redemption and propitiation are four vital concepts that resulted from what Christ did for us on the cross. We are at peace with God, declared righteous before God, ransomed for our sin and freed from the wrath of God. Thank God for His amazing grace and sacrificial love for each one of us. Thank God for the salvation, joy, peace and eternal hope He has given us. While we are so blessed and thankful to God for His love, let us evaluate our spiritual stand

now. Are we really nailed to the cross and fully in the will of God or just a Christian for the name sake?

Nailed to the cross?

The greatest apostle Paul wrote: “But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14). Following his example, we must first die to self. How close are we to the cross now compared to the first love? How much

have we drifted from the love of Christ? Is Christ just a Savior or is He the real Master of our life? He saved us and blessed us spiritually, physically and materially... His gift of grace was not a onetime event - rather He is continually blessing us, protecting, providing, caring, healing and loving. But we have lost our first love and become lukewarm. He was the love of our life and the reason for life, however it is sad to say many have forsaken

Him, some have drifted away from Him and the passion, dedication, commitment, closeness, holiness, worship, prayer life - all have lost their zeal.

Where is our heart and desire to serve, love and follow Him? In the scripture, the word 'heart' represents the center of our emotions, thinking and reasoning. It is the command center of our life. Bible says: *“Keep your heart with all diligence” (Proverbs 4:22)*. Physically, when we neglect the warning to protect the heart, it will lead to an attack and death. The same theory applies spiritually, too. Neglecting the word, the will of God and the instructions in the Bible will cause a spiritual heart attack by losing the

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** The title of this article is from an inspirational message given by:*

Pastor. Rufus Mathew in IPC, Hebron, Houston.

attachment to the cross and leading a life not acceptable to God.

Hanging around the cross?

John was the only disciple standing at the cross with Mary, the mother of Jesus, Salome, the mother of Jesus, Mary, the wife of Clopa and Mary Magdalene to show the depth of their love for Christ. It is incredibly striking to note who were not there! The rest of the disciples were not even around the cross while their Master was hanging on the cross going through intense pain and suffering. Peter, a disciple very close to Jesus said, "I do not know this man".

Throughout the Bible we can see many denying and disappointing God by their disobedience, sin, pride, jealousy, fear, etc. King David, Prophet Jonah and disciple Peter are some of them. We see many great men whom God called and used mightily, committed awful sins and fell from grace. Once they were nailed to the cross, but gradually got away from the cross, hanging around the cross for some time and finally fell from grace.

Where do we stand spiritually at present? Where is our first love, dedication, passion, holiness, fear of God, compassion for others, prayer life, powerful worship, desire to declare the Gospel, hunger for the word of God and commitment to live for Christ? Many are hanging around the cross, living a form of Christian life, lacking holiness in life, ignoring the word of God, neglecting the warning of His coming, refusing to correct bad habits, disappointing the Master. Many believers and churches are just going through their routine projects and programs. Programs, projects and popularity are all good. But each and every child of God must make every effort to become like Christ. We must first die to self and sinful natures. We must be crucified with Christ. We have to walk the Calvary road and Christ and His kingdom must be the goal of our life.

Back to the Cross.

American history has a story illustrating the principle of sacrificing one for the sin of others. The chief of an Indian Tribe declared a punishment for the thief who was stealing chickens from his farm. The offender would

receive ten lashes. When the stealing continued, he raised it to twenty lashes. The crime did not stop and he raised the punishment to hundred lashes, which was equal to death.

The thief was finally caught but to the wonder and shock of many, the thief was the mother of the Tribal chief himself. The day of penalty came, the whole tribe gathered. The crowd gasped when the chief ordered his mother to be tied to the whipping post. Then the chief removed his own shirt and took the whip in his hand. As the crowd looked anxiously, the chief handed the whip to another person and slowly walked to his mother. The crowd thought that as he did not want to beat his mother, he was assigning someone else to punish her. Then he did the amazing action of wrapping his hands around his mother in an engulfing embrace. The he ordered the man to start the lashing and stood there protecting his dear mother from the pain and the cruel punishment. He took the punishment on himself for the guilt of his mother.

At the cross, Jesus Christ, the son of God suffered and died. The Lamb of God was sacrificed to spare our life from death and hell and for the sins of the whole world.

Look at the cross and see God's amazing love and incredible sacrifice of His only begotten Son taking all the punishment for our sins and giving us eternal life, so much joy and inner peace. Apostle Peter reminds believers that Christ-like living and fruitful services result from a process: *"But also for the very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to kindness love. --- Therefore brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure for if you do these things, you will never stumble (2 Peter 1:5-10).*

May God lead us back to the cross, back to the first love, to prayer life, to holiness, to love, to be kind, gentle, honest, loving and caring and to be passionate for His kingdom, sharing His love to others and be fruitful everywhere. May the Lord help us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Remember the song: *"Thank you for the cross, Thank you for the cross, Thank you for the cross, My Lord".* ■

We see many great men whom God used mightily, committed awful sins and fell from grace. Once they were nailed to the cross, but gradually got away, stood hanging around the cross for some time and finally fell from grace.

Look at the cross and see God's amazing love and incredible sacrifice of His only begotten Son taking all the punishment for our sins and giving us eternal life, so much joy and inner peace.

An eye opener!

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (Ephesians 1:17-18)



**Pastor
Anand
Balachandran**
Atlanta

Mr. John Adams stated, "Education should not just teach us how to make our living, but it should teach us how to live". Our learning and acquiring of knowledge should help us find purpose and transform us to become reasonable, kindhearted, conscious of God and desiring spiritual maturity.

It was Martin Luther King Jr who said, "The goal of education should be intelligence plus character." With this, he meant that learning must sharpen the minds and soften the hearts. Learning should enable one to understand and become wise, not merely to be informed and become knowledgeable.

John Adams, an American lawyer, author, statesman, and diplomat, became the first Vice President of the United States (1789-1797) and the second President to serve the country (1797-1801). Mr. Adams stated, "Education should not just teach us how to make our living, but it should teach us how to live". Our learning and acquiring of knowledge should help us find purpose and transform us to become reasonable, kindhearted, conscious of God and desiring spiritual maturity.

However, since our schools are far from these goals, men and women have become devoid of the fear of God, spiritual reasoning and God's love.

Last week I received a text message from a family friend who shared how she felt sad, hopeless, lonely, and lost, because her newly married life is at stake. Although the couple is well-educated, they are clueless in understanding, enjoying, and loving one another. Although I prayed for them immediately, I did spend a few days in prayer before I shared any word of counsel. First, I needed to receive wisdom before I could give any godly guidance. I believe God has the perfect solution for this predicament.

When Paul prays for the church at Ephesus, he prays that their inner eyes would be enlightened to know the things God has already prepared for them.

Godly wisdom is primary for every believer to discover God's best for them. If today's academia is challenging faith in God and life in His word, it's time for the Church to prayerfully prepare for spiritual enlightenment to help the body of Christ to live godly, love the family, and serve the community.

In the book of Genesis 21:18-20, we read of the story of Hagar. Hagar was the servant girl of Abraham and the mother of his son, Ishmael.

Sarah, the wife of Abraham, became jealous of Hagar and commanded her to leave the master's house. Abraham sent Hagar away with a few provisions that helped her on the journey. However, Abraham's provisions were insufficient, leaving Hagar and Ishmael helpless in the desert. As she cried out to God for help, God arranged a miraculous provision.

God also promised to bless

Ishmael by making him into a great nation. In verse 19, God opened the eyes of Hagar so that she could see the well of water near her. It's interesting that Hagar did not see it until God opened her eyes. God opened the eyes of her understanding to see His provisions and believe in His promises.

Even today, in our state of need, brokenness, loneliness, and feeling lost, God is the Hope. Even if all human provisions come to an end, God's provisions never cease. All we need is an eye opener to see the answers already prepared for us. We need spiritual enlightenment to discover His salvation. This requires us to humble ourselves and come to God just as we are. We should pray that He opens the eyes of our heart, to see the unfolding of His provision prepared for us, and the promises that He made for our future. God bless you. ■

Even if all human provisions come to an end, God's provisions never cease. All we need is an eye opener to see the answers already prepared for us.

Are we 'truly' CRUCIFIED with CHRIST?

New Series:
Meditations from
"Galatians" - 2

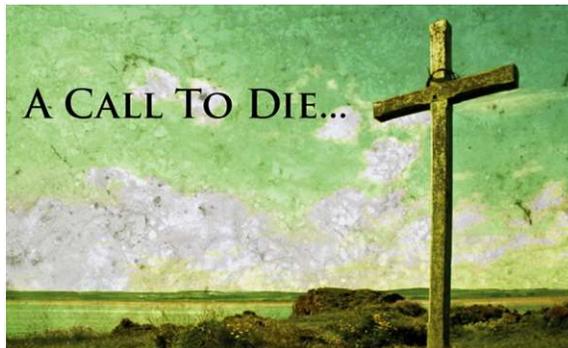
"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal 2:19-20)



**Dr. Shibu
Cherian
D.Min., Ph.D.**

is an ordained Minister with the Church of God and serves as President of United in the WORD Ministries, Inc. He is a certified Clinical Chaplain, a Bible Teacher and a Premarital Counselor. Visit his ministry website @ <http://www.unitedintheword.com>

The penalty for breaking the law is death (Rom. 6:23). As sinners by birth we have broken the law, so we are condemned to die. But Christ paid the penalty of the broken law for us by dying in our place. The only way we can



now live for God is by being dead to the law. Apostle Paul died to the law in the death of Christ; he was crucified with Christ (v. 20), for he was united to Christ who died in his place (3:13; Rom. 4:25; 5:6). So too, he was raised with Christ and lived in relation to God (Col. 2:12; 3:1).

We also identify with Christ in His death to the Mosaic Law (Rom. 7:6). Our lives are no longer self-efforts in keeping the law, but our lives are empowered by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Jesus did not die for us in order that we might go on living our lives as we choose. He died for us so

that from now on He might be able to live His life in us. We now live by continual dependence on Christ, by yielding to Him and by allowing Him to live His life in us.

When we put our trust in Christ by accepting Him as our Lord and Savior, and publicly identifying ourselves with Christ through water baptism, God identifies us with His Son not only in the present and future but also in the past.

Thus we can boldly say, "When Christ died, I died. When Christ arose from the grave, I arose to newness of life. My old self-centered life died when I died with Christ. His Spirit-directed life began in me when I arose with Christ". Therefore in this sense our new lives are really a manifestation of the life of Christ!

Let us always remember that the power of

sin has died in us – no more self-centeredness and harboring greed, lust, pride or bitterness. We now live by faith in the Son of God, who has died for us and has given His life for us. We are crucified with Christ, and He has control over our lives now. Have you ever turned your life over to the Lord Jesus with the prayer that His life might be manifest in your body? Are we 'truly' crucified with Christ?

"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as

When we put our trust in Christ by accepting Him as our Lord and Savior, and publicly identifying ourselves with Christ through water baptism, God identifies us with His Son not only in the present and future but also in the past.

though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:20-21). ■

Have you ever turned your life over to the Lord Jesus with the prayer that His life might be manifest in your body? Are we 'truly' crucified with Christ?

Reflections on the lives of some
Female Characters in the Bible

The Bible is a record of facts, penned by nearly 40 different writers, over approximately 1600 years. It presents a variety of colorful characters, affording the readers the flexibility to study each individual's situations and circumstances, and draw their own conclusions about the appropriateness of their actions. However, if such interpretations are made with much prayer, careful study and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they will lead to our edification – on what to do as well as what not to do.

In the light of this, some reflections about the lives of a few female characters in the Bible – both from the Old and New Testaments- are described below.

Old Testament:

1. Jael, wife of Heber (Judges 4:1-24, 5:24-27)

The children of Israel were at war with the army of Jabin, king of Canaan, who had cruelly oppressed them for 20 years. Heber the Kenite (Judges 4:11) had chosen to separate himself from the Israelites, to whom he was related, and maintain good relations with the Canaanites for political reasons. In today's parlance, this is akin to "sitting on the fence" – maintaining good relations with both sides/ parties of a war, waiting to see which side wins. However, Jesus warns the Church of Laodicea that He detests such "lukewarm" people, and will spew them out of His mouth (Revelations 3:15-16). Not so was Jael, Heber's wife, though. She burned with godly zeal and indignation because of the oppression of God's people. When Sisera, commander of the Canaanite army, was defeated by the Lord and the Israelite army led by Barak, he fled on foot to the house of Heber, hoping for refuge and shelter from a family friendly with his king. Sure enough, Jael, his "friend's" wife came out to meet him, and invited him into her tent, extending her hospitality by giving him creamy milk when he asked for a little water to drink,



Aneka Paul, MSW
Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai

and covering him with a warm blanket. However, as soon as Sisera was fast asleep, Jael – who being a wealthy woman, would never have had to do a day's manual labour – stretched out her hands with a tent peg and hammer, and drove it into Sisera's head, thereby killing the enemy. Israel subsequently enjoyed 40 years of rest (Judges 5:31). Zeal for the work of the Lord emboldens us and the Holy Spirit enables us to do things for His Kingdom that we may have never done before. Paul says he has become all things to all people, so that by all

Zeal for the work of the Lord emboldens us and the Holy Spirit enables us to do things for His Kingdom that we may have never done before.

possible means he may save some (1 Corinthians 9:22; emphasis added). May God help us to identify newer ways to preach the gospel of salvation to a perishing world.

2. Jezebel, evil queen of Israel (1 Kings 16:31)

Jezebel was a Zidonian princess, who married Ahab, king of Israel, most likely for political alliance (1 Kings 16:31). Not only was she from an idolatrous nation, she introduced idol worship into the ruling house of the people of God, feeding 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves, at her table every day (1 Kings 18:19). She was cruel,

scheming to have Naboth killed for his vineyard, just because it was in her power to do so (1 Kings 21). Even prophet Elijah had to flee for his life, in fear of Queen Jezebel's wrath (1 Kings 19). The book of Revelations later describes a woman "Jezebel" introducing sexual immorality into the church of Thyatira (Revelations 2:20). Yet how did the people of God, both Ahab and the other Israelites of the Old Testament and church goers of Thyatira in the New Testament, who ought to have upheld the laws of God, permit such false doctrines to enter their midst? They neglected to catch the little foxes that spoil the vines (Songs of Solomon 2:15). Paul fears that the serpent who deceived Eve might corrupt the mind of the church (2 Corinthians 11:3). How many false doctrines have we allowed to enter the church over time? From assigning Christian themes to pagan festivals and celebrating "Easter" and "Christmas", to baptism of infants who have not yet attained the "age of reason" and therefore cannot believe, to teaching "scientific" theories of evolution alongside the truth of creation, to ordaining persons who openly practice homosexuality as pastors – history is replete with instances of the church inviting the spirit of Jezebel in. We must, at each moment, in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, be alert to various deceptions creeping into the church, and prayerfully defend our faith, based on the word of God.

New Testament:

1. Lydia, the seller of purple (Acts 16:14-15,40)

Lydia was a wealthy business woman, evidenced by her title as "seller of purple". The purple dye, "Tyrian Purple" also known as "Royal Purple", was naturally obtained only from a type of sea snails, and being a rare commodity, the cloth dyed with it was also consequently expensive, only within the purchasing power of the very rich. It would take considerable capital to set up and

sustain such a trade. Further, Lydia lived in the notable city of Thyatira, famed for its 'guilds'; associations of craftsmen or trades people, formed to protect mutual interests and maintain standards, who shared techniques and business ideas, and who had considerable power and influence. She was also presumably the single head of a large household of adults, and took independent decisions. With these achievements, she could possibly be classified as a "virtuous woman", as described in Proverbs 31:22,24. Yet for all her busy workday schedules, she made time to attend scripture discussions on the Sabbath with other ladies, which was where she met Paul. She and her whole household were saved, and she opened her home to men of God who sought to teach the scriptures in more depth. Hebrews 13:2 talks about hospitable people who have unknowingly entertained angels. Even Abraham and Sarah received the promise of Isaac when they welcomed the Lord Himself into their home (Genesis 18:1-16). Paul and Silas found so much comfort at Lydia's home, that it was their choice destination to take refuge in, after much beatings and a night of imprisonment,

at any time of the day (Acts 16:16-40). Do we find time to be hospitable to the workers of God, amidst everything else we do? Is our home a safe haven, where people of God might find welcome and rest, no matter how busy we may otherwise be?

Let us always be proactive in matters concerning the edification and exhortation of the church, much more as we see the day of coming of our Lord Jesus is approaching

2. Priscilla, wife of Aquila and co-worker with Paul (Acts 18:2-3, 18-19, 24-28)

Paul arrived at Corinth and met a fellow Jew and tentmaker, Aquila, and chose to stay with him and his wife, Priscilla. After preaching for more than a year and half there, they joined him in his missionary travels via Syria to Ephesus. Paul travelled further, but Aquila and Priscilla stayed behind at Ephesus. While they were in Ephesus, another Jew, Apollos, well-versed in scriptures and fervently preaching the baptism of John to repentance, reached there. As they heard him speak, both

Aquila and Priscilla took it upon themselves to teach him 'The Way of God' more correctly. It would have taken a lot of humility, courage and depth of knowledge of the word, to teach someone who was already so mighty in scripture. Yet, Priscilla was prepared with the Word of God, to teach it in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). After she and her husband exhorted Apollos, he went on to "water" the churches of God (1 Corinthians 3:6), convincing many Jews from scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah they awaited. They even went on to establish a church in their own home, from where Paul writes his epistles (1 Corinthians 16:19). Paul honors Priscilla and her husband by calling them his "helpers in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:3). Are we also thorough in our knowledge of the Word of God, that we could teach or show others a more correct way? Let us always be proactive in matters concerning the edification and exhortation of the church, much more as we see the day of coming of our Lord Jesus is approaching (Hebrews 10:25).
 May God bless you to fulfil His purpose for your lives. ■

IPC Hebron - Houston's 'PRAYER & CARE MINISTRY'

Shaji Daniel, Church Pastor

Joseph Kurian, Coordinator

IPC Hebron-Houston started this wonderful Ministry called The Prayer & Care Ministry in addition to many other special ministries, such as Children's Ministry, Local Outreach Ministry, Marriage Ministry, etc.

Prayer and Care are probably the most urgent needs for any individual anywhere. So, we want to introduce and encourage all churches to start this very necessary and vital ministry. It is one of the most important ministries we have and currently we have around thirty members, area leaders and a coordinator. The primary purpose of the Prayer & Care ministry is to take care of the members who are going through various difficulties and who are in need of special prayer and care. This team will facilitate and strengthen the fellowship and commitment of members to the Church.

- Main goals and functions:**
- * Visit those who are sick and pray for their deliverance and comfort
 - * Show special care, concern and compassion
 - * Call and check their progress and conduct routine visits as needed
 - * Inform the Church Pastor, if any member is sick and need any special Pastoral care
 - * Give emotional support and assistance as needed
 - * Make suggestions to Church officials regarding any support or care needed
 - * Conduct Monthly progress meetings
 - * Conduct weekly or monthly house or hospital visits as applicable

God has blessed this Ministry and we are very pleased with the commitment of the team members and the great joy, peace and comfort expressed by the members after our visit and prayer, especially the elderly and sick dear ones.

This will be a wonderful and rewarding ministry to start in your local church and it will comfort many, strengthen the weak, heal the sick and enhance the fellowship among members and more than anything God will be very pleased with the valuable care, compassion, commitment and dedication to serve others in need through the Prayer & Care Ministry.

May the spirit of God enable the readers to start a Prayer & Care Ministry in their church for the blessings, comfort and consolation of those who are going through tough and difficult experiences. The power of prayer is incredible and the blessings of caring others is immeasurable.

We are saved to serve.

I went in search for love's true meaning,
Thinking, it would rather be an easy chase.
As I went by, my mind murmured,
"Its uneasy, its difficult.
Bloke, you seem hunting treasure
On a distant shore!"

Along the way, I met a lover;
Who was perhaps dancing to the tune of
young age.
'Ah! Now this guy could help me through,'
I thought.

But lo, he could hardly define it!
All he said, left me puzzled-
" Love is affection;
Nothing to define."

I paced my journey,
It now seemed more the tough!

I met the clergy at the cathedral,
If he could help me some.
The clergyman opened the letter to the
Corinthians,
And made his view-



Asher John
College Student, Mumbai

" Love is gentle,
Love is kind,
It does not envy,
It does not boast"

Alas! I heard all this,
But my hunt seemed droll!

I met a critic or rather a thinker,
As he claimed himself to be.
He despised the young,
The young despised him.
In his words-

"There is nothing, so called love.
Woe is man!
He isn't worthy of love.
Neither to lend, nor to receive."

Depressed and dejected,
Left me, his words.
In my rabid enigma,
I cursed my shattered hopes.
'Nay, I'll ne'er find love's meaning.'

With the shrivel of an old man's breath,
I wiped my scruff and turned around!
In despair, I scaled up a hill-
A hill to where many, had in despair,
walked!
I came across the 'Place of Skulls'-
A throng of mockers, of murderers, of
thieves!

Between them was raised a rugged tree-
On which was nailed Heaven's pride.
**I saw my savior pouring love,
Pouring love in scarlet red!**

"Power of Prayer"

Everybody knows that Billy Graham Crusades are well organized and every detail is well planned. Some might be tempted to think that the organization is what brings people to Christ. While it is necessary, it is not the secret of Billy Graham's incredible success.

The following incident took place during the last Billy Graham crusade in Sacramento, California. The night before the crusade was to begin, the choir was rehearsing till late in the night. One of the musicians in the choir was Pastor Ray Johnston. As he was returning home and driving through downtown, he noticed a homeless man slumped over on the steps of the state capital building. It was cold outside, almost midnight and definitely not the safest place to be in. He decided he couldn't ignore the plight of this poor homeless man. The homeless man was crouching almost cocoon like on the steps. Ray Johnston reached out and gently touched his shoulder and asked, "Sir, can I help you, are you okay?" The man looked up and in that instant he recognized the man, it was Billy Graham himself praying fervently for the city of Sacramento!

It was not just the incredible



Jeremy Ninan
Houston

preparation and work that brought thousands of people to Christ each time he held a crusade. Billy Graham depended upon the Lord's power. Through prayer he handled his crusades. He handed the crusades over to God and God did the rest. In our lives too, through prayer we can handle our problems, worries, assignments, projects or any situation which comes before us. 2 Samuel 22:31-33 reads: "As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven: He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect". Through prayer we hand over the situation to God and God does the rest for us.

Through prayer we can claim healing from our Lord. in James 5:15 we read: "And the prayer of faith will save the sick".

Just as we pray for ourselves, we have to pray for others. We read in Job 42:10 that "The Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends". Praying for others gives us hope of future blessings. In I Thessalonians 4:25, Paul asks the believers: "Brethren, pray for us".

Apostle Paul gives an example of how to pray: Colossians 1:9-10 "For this reason we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God".

Through prayer we can handle all our situations, claim healing and have hope of future blessings. Let us practice what we read in Philippians 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." ■



&
JKS



Doomsday Clock

The Doomsday Clock is a symbolic clock face, representing a countdown to possible global catastrophe (e.g. nuclear war or climate change). It has been maintained since 1947 by the members of the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, who are advised by the Governing Board and the Board of Sponsors, including 18 Nobel Laureates. The closer they set the Clock to midnight, the closer the scientists believe the world is to global disaster.



Originally, the Clock, which hangs on a wall in the Bulletin's office in the University of Chicago, represented an analogy for the threat of global nuclear war; however, since 2007 it has also reflected climate change and new developments in the life sciences and technology that could inflict irrevocable harm to humanity.

"Today, unchecked climate change and a nuclear arms race resulting from modernization of huge arsenals pose extraordinary and undeniable threats to the continued existence of humanity," said Kennette Benedict, executive director of the Bulletin, last year. "And world leaders have failed to act with the speed or on the scale required to protect citizens from potential catastrophe". The world is getting close to dangerous levels of global warming, which could bring with it massive changes to the environment. That could lead to the widespread destruction of large parts of humanity and other animals. Changes

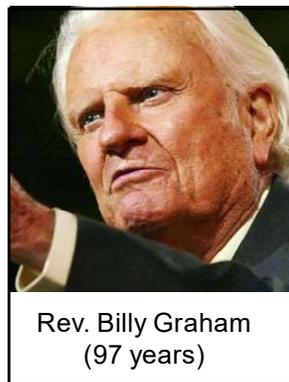
in sea levels are likely to bring flooding to many parts of the world, and could eventually lead to large parts of the world going underwater.

One of The Bulletin's big concerns is that the advances in genetics and biology that have been made in recent years could soon be turned on humanity itself. The new knowledge has mostly been used for good - but it could just as easily be turned on us thus becoming "artificially created biological weapons".

The most recent officially announced setting—three minutes to midnight (23:57) - was made in January 2015. This setting was retained in January 2016.

All evidences are pointing towards the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us keep ourselves ready for that great event in history!

Rev. Billy Graham on
'Faith & Young Christians!'



In response to a question by a newspaper reporter regarding young people losing their faith, the 97-year-old evangelist Billy Graham said that while there were many reasons why a young Christian might turn away from God, one of the main causes was that they did not realize their relationship with Him needed to grow. He explained further: "Like the seed in one of Jesus' parables, a plant with no roots eventually withers and dies - and the same is true of faith". He added: "Young people also turn away from their faith because they lack

commitment or they get distracted with other values and friend groups, ultimately making the decision that there is no room for God in their adult life. Children may not understand everything - but they can understand that God loves them, and Jesus Christ came into the world to offer them the gift of eternal life. Moreover, they can understand that they need to commit their lives to Jesus by inviting Him to come into their lives. Faith and commitment go hand in hand. This basic understanding of commitment equips children with the ability to grow in their faith, but they must make an active effort to do so".

What profound word -s! In the present day society where only quick-fix ideas are popular, people want their faith also as a quick-fix solution to all problems. 'Prosperity' preachers thrive on this ground - by selling the magic solution of deliverance from sickness, debt, joblessness, tension or any other problem!

Christians in UK, a minority?

Anglican Bishop of London Richard Chartres and Catholic Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Vincent Nichols, met recently in London to discuss the issue of declining Christian faith in UK. They concluded that Christians are now a "significant minority" in Britain, and that this applies to both Protestants and Catholics. Church of England attendance has dropped to less than one million per week. This means that only 1.4 percent of the population is attending Anglican services. The church reportedly loses about one percent of its attendees every year.

The status of Christian faith is similar or worse in most of the Western countries! We must pray earnestly to the Lord for a real revival!

Quotable quote

"There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'"

- C. S. Lewis



Helping those in need !

The one thing Davey and his four friends enjoyed during summer vacation is to explore. In the small fishing community they lived in, sometimes their parents let them go out as a group and explore the many coves and hills that lined their shores. They made sure to stick together mostly but often split up in groups of two to explore several coves at a time. They loved the surrounding water and they played a lot in it.

Davey really liked being with his friends, Benny, Jimmy and Paul and playing all day. One day they had found a whole area of coastline that they had not explored so they were very excited. Suddenly as Davey and Ben were playing tag in the water, they heard Jimmy yell out with excitement: "Hey, look what I found!"

The three friends ran as fast as they

could to Jimmy. All of them stopped and just looked in wonder at what Jimmy found. He was standing on the edge of a small cove (narrow creek) that was almost completely hidden from the sea or other inlets around it and the fish were so plentiful, they were almost jumping onto the shore to be caught. Jimmy was standing over a huge stack of fish he had already pulled in to take to his family.

The boys went wild fishing and catching the biggest, fattest fish as though this paradise was going to disappear any second. An unlimited

quantity of fish is like unlimited money or gold to the fishing community and so you can imagine how much they wanted to keep it a secret.

Then Paul said, "You know, I don't feel right keeping this to ourselves. Our parents work so hard every day and I know all of our parents can afford to buy us stuff. But maybe we should share this with the poor families in our community". Jimmy said, "You are right. Mrs. George is raising 5 small kids by herself. We should share this with her." Though Benny worried that he may not get enough, he supported his friends.

The friends told their community leaders about their discovery. The leaders praised the friends for the right decision they made to help the needy people in their community.

Dear children, in our lives too, let's overcome selfishness and know God's heart for the poor. Let us be humble and look for ways we can help those around us who have various needs. ■



Beena Aunty

The Good Samaritan



Abel John
Mumbai.



Though Jesus had done no crime, they handed him for crucifixion



Alvin Thomas
Nerul, Navi Mumbai.



Issac asked "I see that you have the coals and the wood, but where is the lamb ?"



Alvin Thomas
Nerul, Navi Mumbai.

Jesus making the wind and storm quiet.



Aben John
Mumbai.

