



A Joyous Occasion

*"Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"
(Psalm 107:8)*

21st Anniversary of "Suvantha Publications"

The verse quoted above is repeated several times in the same Psalm as the writer describes the miraculous ways in which the people of Israel were led by Almighty God through the wilderness. The writer is trying to project various episodes into the field of view of the people's memory and encouraging them to offer praises and thanksgiving to God for His provision and protection during their perilous journey from Egypt to Canaan.

Similarly, anniversary should be a time of introspection and thanksgiving. So, it is with great joy in our hearts and gratitude to God Almighty that we present this issue of 'Suvantha Magazine' as the '21st Anniversary Issue'. We feel quite happy and satisfied that the magazine has appeared uninterrupted for the last twentyone years inspite of all the financial and other constraints. We are encouraged by the fact that 'Suvantha' has been accepted in our community as a wholesome, spiritual, edifying, family oriented publication. All glory and honour to our Lord and Master. Our sincere endeavour has always been to encourage new writers and discover hidden talents among our children and young people. We will happily welcome more

"And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing"

We feel quite happy and satisfied that the magazine has appeared uninterrupted for the last twentyone years inspite of all the financial and other constraints



Johnson K. Samuel

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*Years of
Christian
Literature
Ministry*

contributions in English and Malayalam from writers in the churches of IPC Maharashtra State. As we repeatedly say, let the pages of 'Suvantha' be the launching pad for you to produce readable Christian literature!

Executive Board

I will be failing in my duty if I do not record our sincere thanks to members of the Executive Board who have promised continued financial support for our publication efforts in future. May the good Lord richly reward them for their prayers and concern for 'Suvantha' ministry and the Lord's work in Maharashtra State. May the name of our Lord be glorified. We are earnestly seeking to reach every family in IPC Maharashtra State through 'Suvantha'. We request your sincere co-operation in this regard.

Suvantha Magazine Website



The website of the magazine (www.suvanthamagazine.org) continues to be popular among the internet browsers. We feel glad that the number of visitors to the site keeps growing. In addition to reading material from the printed version of the magazine, visitors listen to Christian songs and powerful gospel messages available on the website in audio and video formats. All are welcome to browse through our website and be spiritually blessed.

The Jericho Luncheon

Jesus once told the parable of the treasure hidden in a field (Matthew 13:44). A man who knew there was treasure hidden in a field sold all that he has and bought that field. He paid a price that is much higher than the actual price of the field. For the owner of the field and others this man appeared to be a fool. Though the owner of the field was selling the field, this man was in fact buying the treasure. The owner could see only the field but the buyer sees a treasure in it.

This parable applies to all who have sacrificed all that they have for the sake of the Kingdom of God that Jesus came to establish. The best illustration of this parable is what happened in Jericho during the visit of Jesus when he met Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).



The Bible says Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. A chief tax-collector is someone who was in charge of many tax-collectors or had the right to collect tax from one or more tax-districts which he might have delegated to others. What this means is that he was doubly hated. He was hated by the tax-collectors who worked for him for

demanding too much and also by the ordinary people who were struggling under the burden of Roman taxation who hated all tax-collectors!

He was the symbol of exploitation, collaborator with the Romans who economically and politically oppressed the people whom they ruled. Nobody liked Zacchaeus and his class. However, tax-collectors had a life of their own, they partied together and there was plenty of money to spend on lavish parties.

Zacchaeus was very curious but was short in stature. His curiosity was so much that he resorted to climb a tree to get a good view of Jesus. Certainly he might have heard a lot about Jesus, otherwise he would not have longed to see him. It seems that he also had some knowledge of what Jesus was preaching. Otherwise, he would not have told Jesus what he is going to do with his ill-gotten wealth (Luke 19:8).

Jesus carried with him a large crowd wherever he went. Besides the disciples and others who followed him wherever he went, there was also people from the places that he was visiting. In this large crowd that Jesus drew around himself critics were not rare. The critics who surrounded him would question his words and actions. At times they tried to harm him also.

Now, for these critics, meeting Zacchaeus was probably okay. But Jesus inviting himself to the house of Lazarus for a meal raised many eyebrows. Their criticism was valid! A meal is more than having food. We need to be careful not only what we eat but with whom we are eating. Inviting someone for a meal, or having a meal with someone means that we share their values. We are in the same party! Seldom does enemies get together for a party unless to celebrate the end of their hostilities. If we don't like a person we don't like his parties also.

Having a meal with Zacchaeus means Jesus is his kind: A collaborator with the tax-collectors who support the Roman occupation of Judea to exploit his own people. A meal with Zacchaeus, that too with the knowledge of the public (Jesus invited himself to Zachaeus place in the hearing of the crowd) simply means Jesus endorses what Zacchaeus does. Jesus' is risking his reputation and making a public statement about where he stands: that he is with the oppressors and not with the oppressed. Having a meal with Zacchaeus, for the critics means that Jesus is with the imperial government and its collaborators.

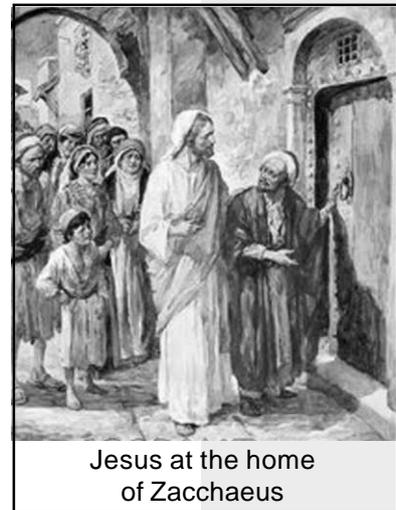
Jesus and Zacchaeus have something to sort out. Do they belong to two parties or the same. If same who is on whose side? The solution was simple. One of them has to join the other. Who should do that? Should Jesus say that he belongs to the class of Zacchaeus or should Zacchaeus declare that he belongs to Jesus?

Zacchaeus knew he cannot have a meal with Jesus unless he joined Jesus party! So he "stood" (Luke 19:8). This word is powerful. Though this word means standing literally, it is used also in the sense of standing up to, resisting, etc. In Ephesians 6:11, the same Greek word is used to 'standing against the schemes of the enemy.' Here



Rev. Dr. Paulson Pulikkottil

heads the Department of Biblical Studies at Union Biblical Seminary, Pune and pastors 'The Community of the Redeemed' Church, Pune. He presents Bible Studies on 'Power Vision TV' under the title 'Vachanavum Lokavum'. *His blogs can be read at <http://paulsonp.blogspot.com/>*



Jesus at the home of Zacchaeus

Four mistaken notions seen in The Book of Job



Rev. Dr.
John Cherian

lists four
mistaken ideas
expressed
by various
people in the
Book of Job.

"In prosperity
our friends
know us;
In adversity
we know
our friends"

Job is a book that calls into question divine justice and providence in a very touching manner. To address "the problem of evil" and the many instances of seemingly senseless suffering in our world, there is probably no better commentary than the Book of Job. The burning message that comes through to us in this book is that God's chosen ones can cling to a foundational faith rising out of utter despair. When every alternate source of help fails, the man of God can rise above it all and in resignation fall back on God saying, "Though He may slay me, yet will I trust Him". Let us examine the following mistakes observed here, as we study the book in depth.

1. Satan's mistake: "Job served God for what he could get out of Him"

"In prosperity our friends know us; In adversity we know our friends".

Job's comforters were fair weather friends. In his adversity they failed Job. They shared in Satan's accusation that Job's devotion to God was from wrong motivations. Satan makes the following charge in chapter one: "*Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made a hedge about him? But put forth thine hand and touch all he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face*". Satan and the world cannot understand how sincere faith continues to abound around us and how God's kingdom has a persuasive sway over human lives. The fact of the matter is that no human heart is totally satisfied with any love except by the Infinite. The devil can't fool us into thinking that a

meaningless life without God is quite satisfactory.

80 per cent of natural scientists believe in a Creator. Natural scientists all over the world are discovering things about our universe that it could not have possibly come into being by mere chance. Dr. Thomas Torrence of the University of Edinburgh has conducted polls among scientists which show that 80 per cent of natural science professors now say they believe in God. The incredible size of the universe around us compels us to acknowledge for its source a power greater than itself. A quasar discovered in 1987 (at the time believed to be the farthest object to us from earth), was 81 million trillion miles from earth! The source of such an enormous universe can't be any less powerful. The Creator God, through His creation is giving expression to facts about Himself He does it even in little things such as the lovely tulip: examine its shape, its texture and its design, the streaks of red which He paints on its yellow petals with the stroke of His infinite brush! Is it any wonder that like Job, thousands in every century have set out on a journey of search for the Creator?

Yes, people everywhere are thirsting for God. They are searching beyond a good job, an overflowing pantry or a huge bank account. Some 800 years ago a humble man named **Francis of Assisi** decided to practice the Christian faith, turning his back on wealth and serving the poor. Thousands began to follow him; and to this very day, thousands more have determined to follow in his foot steps. Yes, today there are millions chanting Francis' well-known prayer "Lord, make

"The Jericho Luncheon" Continuation from previous page

Zacchaeus thwarted the criticism of the crowd, and stripped them of their ammunition before they can fire the first bullet by changing sides. He is no more a tax-collector who exacts money but a new person. He will give away four-fold of what he has unjustly collected and give half of his wealth to the poor! His decision shut the mouth of the critics:

Jesus is doing nothing wrong in having a meal with him, because they share the same values.

So, that meal was not Jesus endorsing

Zacchaeus but Zacchaeus endorsing Jesus!

The cost was high! Much higher than the cost of meal they shared. The cost was so high that Zacchaeus probably may not be able to host another luncheon like that again. This decision might make him bankrupt, but for Zacchaeus what was important was to share the same values as that of Jesus, the Kingdom values, by bidding farewell to oppression and exploitation. That is worth more than what he was parting with—his ill-gotten wealth. He was parting with all that he had because he was simply trading it for a much precious treasure: the Kingdom of God. He bought a field selling all that he had, because he eyed a treasure in it.

For Zacchaeus what was important was to share the same values as that of Jesus, the Kingdom values, by bidding farewell to oppression and exploitation.

me an instrument of peace", not for what they could get out of God, but for themselves. .

2. Job's wife's mistake: "With the loss of the temporal means, all is lost"

"Count your garden by the flowers, not by the leaves that fall".

Job's wife voiced this popular notion; it was a major blunder. She said to Job: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die". That foolish woman saw in the loss of their temporal possessions the loss of everything. Job corrected her by saying, we are to accept both good and bad from God in a spirit of surrender. The fruitfulness of our garden is not to be tested by the number of leaves that fall off, but by the lovely flowers it produces.

C.T. Studd who gave 100 per cent, reaps 1000 per cent.

January 13, 1887 was a red-letter day in the history of missions, when England's C. T. Studd, the wealthy heir of a 29,000 pound bequest decided to give away all of it in obedience to Christ's word: "sell what you have and give it to the poor". D.L. Moody, George Muller and other church leaders became the recipients of Studd's

generosity. Like Paul he "suffered the loss of all things and did count them but dung". He traded the luxury of his boyhood home, a two storey mansion, for a humble thatch-roofed house in the heart of Africa. From there he launched the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade. It sent out hundreds of missionaries around the world, expending millions of dollars and pounds. Thus a ten thousand per cent reward for his sacrifice was handed back by His Master, whom Studd implicitly trusted. Job's wife too found out in the long run that the loss of the temporal did not mean all is lost. "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before".

3. Job's friends' mistake. "Suffering is the result of sin"

"At times Jesus comes to calm the storm; at other times He comes to calm you in the storm"

Perhaps Job's friends did not learn this important truth. To them, this fierce storm in Job's life meant he had sinned. Eliphaz is quite outspoken. He bluntly tells his suffering friend: "Is not thy wickedness great? (22:5) "If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up (22:23). Job's friends missed the whole point. Sin is not necessarily the cause of suffering.

Oh yes, there are times when God sends His

rod of chastisement in the face of sinful behaviour. We are not to take moral failure lightly, by any means. In connection with the fall of some leaders recently, others have begun practising extreme caution. For instance, **Rev. Billy Graham** was moved to introduce the "Modesto Manifesto" to his associates. In Modesto, (California) Graham gathered his team in a hotel to make a solemn pact: each one of them vowed never again to be alone with a woman other than his wife. In fact, Graham could openly affirm that from his very early days he had never eaten a meal alone with any lady other than his wife. He could also say; "I've never ridden in an automobile alone with a woman". These men firmly believed in maintaining clean, exemplary lives.

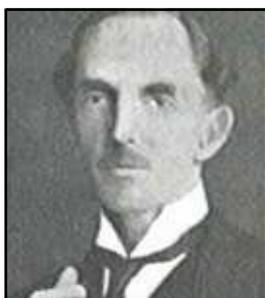
Many times we suffer, not because of sin, but because we are slow to act out our faith. In this connection let me relate the experience of **Catherine Marshal**, wife of the deceased Peter Marshal, Chaplain of the U.S. Senate. In 1944 she contracted a bad case of tuberculosis. It drove her to her knees" where she earnestly studied the healing accounts of Jesus' ministry. Mr. Marshal once brought her a pamphlet on healing, and her faith was greatly built up, reading it. One night she went to bed in a deep spirit of prayer, and woke up at 3.00 AM still under divine unction. She sensed that every nerve in her body began to tingle. So she walked into her parents' bedroom and told her mother she felt positively that her healing had begun. After that early morning experience, the next x-ray showed that tuberculosis had indeed been checked. In a few weeks, the doctors pronounced her well! Jesus had come to calm Catherine in her storm at first - finally He came to calm the storm itself.

4. Job's own mistake: "God is unkind at times".

"Never put a period where God puts a comma"

Even Job found himself in error in spite of his basic integrity. He charged God with unkind treatment. This is a common human reaction from us in the heat of our trials. "As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment, and the Almighty who hath vexed my soul", he blurts out (27:2), What Job failed to remember was that Satan was also in the picture: of course under God's permissive will. The thief cometh not but to kill, steal and destroy. Suffering is primarily initiated by Satan. God had clearly declared before Satan. "Behold, Job is in thine hand; but save his life" (2:6).

Billy Graham



C.T. Studd



Catherine Marshall

"At times Jesus comes to calm the storm; at other times He comes to calm you in the storm"

"Never put a period where God puts a comma"

God's Book for Mankind:

Part 2



Dr. C.P. Varghese

is the Founder & President of Peniel Bible Seminary, Peniel Children's Home & Peniel Academy, Keezhillam, Kerala.

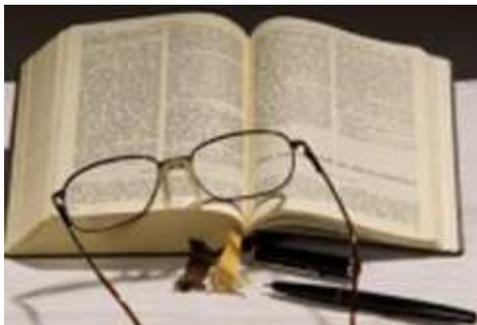
Here is the second part of the Bible Study series on the Books of the Bible by Dr. Varghese



Moses with Ten Commandments

"This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding: its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's character. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened,



and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ, yes, to glory it itself, for eternity" - **Author Unknown**

God inspired about forty men to write the Bible. They lived in different places over a time of about 1600 years (1410 B.C.- 90 A.D.). Moses grew up in Egypt which is in Africa. Most of the writers lived in Palestine which is in Asia, and Apostle Paul did some writing from Italy and/or Greece which is in Europe. Some of the writers knew each other while others had not even met, yet there is one central theme from Genesis through Revelation, God's plan of redemption and restoration of mankind back to himself. It is the Book of books, the miracle book of God.

Old Testament

The first section of the Bible is known as the Old Testament which has 39 books from Genesis through Malachi. The Catholic Old Testament has six more books known as the Apocrypha meaning 'hidden'. There are fourteen or more books that are considered part of the Apocrypha. It is very clear that these writings are not inspired by God as the sixty six books of the Holy Bible. Protestant Bible scholars never accepted the extra books as part of the Holy Scripture. There are very good reasons for not accepting these as part of the Bible.

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible around 1450-1410 B.C. and John the Apostle wrote the last book about 95-97 A.D.

Bible scholars divide the Old

Testament into five sections and the New Testament into five sections as follows:

1. Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy; five books): Pentateuch means five scrolls. It is also known as the Torah which means Law.

2. History (Joshua - Esther; 12 books): Here we have the record of the provision and protection of God as well as the punishments of God upon his people. God gave them victory after victory as they followed his word. God allowed the enemies to conquer them when they rebelled against Jehovah and went after the ways of the heathen.

3. Wisdom Literature / Poetry (Job - Song of Solomon; 5 books): The book of Job might be one of the oldest pieces of literature in existence. This section also includes the wisdom of Solomon in the book of Proverbs as well the poetry of David and many others in the book of Psalms.

4. Major Prophets (Isaiah - Daniel; 5 books): 'Major' because of the amount of writing and 'Prophets' because God used these men to write before hand what was going to happen in the ages to come. Of course there are some contemporary events surrounding these men which are also found in these books.

5. Minor Prophets (Hosea - Malachi; 12 books): "Minor" because of the small amount of writing. Though these books are smaller in comparison their message is equally significant.

New Testament

The second section of the Bible is called the New Testament with 27 books from Matthew through Revelation.

Witnessing: An urge from within!

Meditation

“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus” (John 1:41-42)

John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Hearing this testimony, two of John’s disciples went to Jesus and even stayed with him for a day. They were convinced Jesus was the Messiah. On their return, Andrew, one of the disciples, found his brother Simon. (Andrew was, in fact, seeking Simon. NIV renders it correct. ... the first thing Andrew did was to find ...) Andrew was so excited. He could not suppress the joy of finding the treasure - Jesus the Messiah! (Matthew 13:44). He started “evangelizing!” He witnessed, and even brought his brother to Jesus and that ended up in Simon’s conversion!

Andrew did not wait for a theological degree so he could start witnessing. He



Saju John Mathew

Reading passage:
John 1:35-51

did not wait for a “mega crusade” stage or even charismatic gifts so that his witnessing would be effective. He was simply pouring his heart out before his brother!

Witnessing is just telling others what you have found ... in Jesus. When you do it from your heart, that’s it! All who have found Jesus and stayed with him at least for a day cannot keep themselves from witnessing. Andrew started witnessing the next morning he found Jesus. He did not wait for a “big opportunity”. He started with his own brother. Start with small. To be faithful in small things is a big thing. To him, his brother was important. The truth that I found, my brother should find also ... that was his mind. Witnessing

should be an urge from within.

May be Andrew was not a big preacher. (Preaching, at times, is a “head” business where words are important. Witnessing, on the other hand, is a heart business and words are not that important). But it is Andrew who brought the little boy with five loaves of bread and two fish to Jesus (John 6:8-9). Likewise, the first convert of Andrew - Simon Peter, his brother - became a mighty preacher who won 3,000 souls in his first sermon. I am sure Andrew would also receive a portion of the reward for that big catch on the day of Pentecost!

Prayer: Lord, help me to be your witness, everywhere, every time. Amen!

For further reading: Rom. 1:16-20; John 4:28-42

"God's Book for Mankind" Continuation from the previous page

1. Gospels (Matthew - John; 4 books): The life and ministry of the only promised Redeemer/Savior of all mankind is recorded in these books. One Gospel, and one Savior seen through the eyes of four men showing different aspects of the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament.

2. Early Church History (Acts; 1 book): In the book of Acts we have the record of Jesus going up to heaven, the coming of the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised, and the spreading of the Gospel. Jesus began to build his church by his Holy Spirit, as he said while he was on earth, “...I will build my church...”.



Apostle Paul

3. Pauline Epistles (Romans - Hebrews; 14 Books): Epistle means letter. Paul wrote these letters to churches and individuals. (Hebrews may or may not have been written by Paul.) These letters are details of the doctrines of the church to believe and practice.

4. General Epistles (James - Jude; 7 books): There are three letters by John, two by Peter, one by James, one by Jude (not to be confused with Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus). Both James and Jude were brothers of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). These letters also explain doctrines as well as practical teachings for mankind to live a life that brings glory and honor to God.

5. Prophecy (Revelation; 1 book): This book was written by Apostle John. The book of Revelation begins by showing the glory and majesty of the Christ. It is full of events that will take place at the end of this age, such as the second coming of Christ, tribulation, doom of Satan and his followers, the new heaven and the new earth, the dwelling of God with mankind as it was in the beginning. All those who put their trust in Christ are redeemed and shall be with the Lord for ever in glory.



"To Give Them Something Better ..."



**Pastor
Shibu Samuel**

Senior Pastor,
Philadelphia
Pentecostal
Church (IPC),
Dallas, USA

Website:
www.ppcdchurch.org

The great Missionary George Muller once said, "Our Heavenly Father never takes away anything from His children unless He means to give them something better". "Come let us return to the Lord. He has torn us into pieces, But He will heal us (Job 5:17-24). Hosea says, "The Lord has injured us but He will bind up our wounds".

"Why bad things happen to good people"? This question has not been satisfactorily answered so far. The understanding of God's nature as revealed in the Scriptures provided the key to unlock this mystery. We are all too familiar with the redemptive names of God such as Jehovah - Jireh and Jehovah - Rapha. But there's another name by which God has revealed Himself: Jehovah - Makkeh, meaning, "I am the Lord who strikes the blow" (Ezek. 7:9). Explaining the blessedness of God's chastisement, one of Job's friends said, "Though He wounds, He also bandages. He strikes, but His hands also heal" (Job 5:17,18). Prophet Hosea endorsed this ancient thought (Hos. 6:1). "Both the day and the night are God's" (Psa. 74:16).

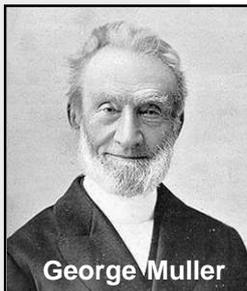
He has appointed the day of prosperity as well as day of adversity (Ecc. 7:14). Both woe and well-being proceed from the mouth of the Most High (Lam. 3:38). Chapter 11 of Hebrews is the favorite chapter of Christians everywhere. But what about

the twelfth chapter? The writer himself calls it a 'forgotten' truth. Majoring on Hebrews eleven and minimizing the teaching of the twelfth chapter will leave us half-baked. Christian life is a race (Heb. 12:1). Runners get rid of all unnecessary weight when they get on the track.

When unnecessary things occupy us, God gets angry. He is displeased when any pastime steals our prayer time, or the reading of a secular magazine sidelines Scripture meditation. All idols must be excluded from our life so the Lord alone may be exalted (Isa. 2:17,18). Even blessings at times can blunt spiritual vision and blunt spiritual sensitivity. Eternal values become obscure and earthly blessings become our objective. God cannot tolerate this. He is a consuming fire (Heb.

"He lays us on our backs so we
may look up!"

12:29)! When everything seems to be going all right, He will suddenly send a storm. He is interested in the removal of everything that can be shaken so that only that which cannot be shaken may remain (Heb. 12:27). He lays us on our backs so we may look up! As George Muller says "The Heavenly Father never takes away anything from His children unless He means to give them something better". George Muller, the great man of God, had many stories to tell related to his ministry. He had many bitter stories to tell us, which he experienced, But he was quite certain that the Lord loved him so much and when the Lord sent the storm against his boat, He also had command over the storm. *The hardship in your life cannot be that hard, if the loving Lord is with you in your trials and difficulties.*



George Muller

George Muller once said,
"Our Heavenly Father never
takes away anything from His
children unless He means to
give them something better".

**Support the "Suvatha" Ministry through your prayers and finances!
If you enjoyed reading the magazine, recommend it to your friends!
Browse through our website: www.suvarthamagazine.org
and enjoy all other features available on the site!**

God looks for ‘UNWORTHY’ people to accomplish His purposes!

"Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel'" (Amos 7:14-15)

The above passage clarifies that Amos was not a prophet by birth nor was he a prophet's son. In fact he lived in a village that was about five miles south of Bethlehem called Tekoa in the land of Judah, and was a man of several trades, including being a shepherd (1:1), a livestock breeder, and a dresser of sycamore-fig trees (7:14). Amos was not part of the prophetic seminary to be labeled as a 'son of a prophet' (see 1 Sam. 19:24; 1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15). However, God had sovereignly called him to the prophetic office, and had sent him to prophesy to the people of Israel (v. 15)!

It is not a position that Amos had sought, but it was a sovereign act of God that took a most unlikely person from a most unlikely place and gave him the highest privilege, that is, to proclaim the message of God (vs. 14–15). Amos has made it clear that he had neither desired nor sought the office of a prophet nor was he worthy for this elevated ministerial position.

We see that God often bypasses the so-called great people and chooses to call and bless the humble and the weak. Yes, God can also use those who are gifted and who hold high positions in this world, but He is not limited to them. Both Moses (Acts 7:22) and Paul (Acts 26:24) were well-educated, but at least seven of our Lord's disciples were common fishermen (John 21:1–3).

David was also the unlikely person to be chosen as the king of Israel to replace the handsome and tall King Saul. He was a young boy, a shepherd, the eighth and last son from a family from the smallest tribe in the nation of Israel. In fact, Prophet Samuel had assumed that one of his more able-bodied older brothers would be the second king of Israel until God corrected Samuel with the following words: "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Sam 16:7)

When we look at God's pattern throughout the Bible, we learn that God makes a regular practice of using unlikely people to accomplish his purposes. In fact God used the following unlikely people for His glory: Abraham (who lied), Jacob (who schemed), Moses (who stuttered), Gideon and Thomas (who doubted), Jeremiah (who was a tenderhearted youth) and Mary (who was an unknown young virgin).

In recent years, we see that R. A. Torrey was a brilliant man and a gifted evangelist, but he worked closely with evangelist Dwight L. Moody, who had very little education. However, God used both men in a remarkable way because both gave all they had to the purposes of God. Let us understand that God is still looking for unworthy people to accomplish his purposes so that no one steals the

glory that is due to Him alone!

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

David was also the unlikely person to be chosen as the king of Israel to replace the handsome and tall King Saul. He was a young boy, a shepherd, the eighth and last son from a family from the smallest tribe in the nation of Israel. In fact, Prophet Samuel had assumed that one of his more able-bodied older brothers would be the second king of Israel!



Dr. Shibu Cherian

is a certified Community Service Chaplain and a Premarital Counselor. He authors a Bible reading-meditation blog called 'United in The WORD' @ <http://unitedintheword.blogspot.com>.

Importance of *Memorizing Scripture portions and persevering in Prayer*

We, children, usually learn memory verses due to a little persuasion from our Sunday School teachers or parents. This may not be entirely true, but does any good come out of this practice? Are the memory verses in any way profitable to us? Let us think about it.

Yes, they are surely profitable to us. *First benefit is that the Word of God kept in our memory becomes useful in our practical lives.* "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105). God's Word will guide us, make our paths straight and will be our light. In Psalms 119:9 we read, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word". We can keep our ways pure by learning and living according to His word.

Another benefit is that we can stand strong against the devil. In Psalms 119:11 we read, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You". When we have God's word in our heart, we will not sin – because we will know what God wants and does not want us to do. Apostle Paul says in Eph. 6:11-18: "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ----- and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God". This passage reminds us that God's Word is the sword that God has given to us to fight against the devil. We also read in Heb. 4:12, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword". Bible is a powerful weapon that God has given us.

Memory verses will help us to plan for our future. God has promised us: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned" (Isa. 43:2&3). God will be with us through the waters, rivers and fire. So in other words God will be with us through everything at all times. Such promises if kept in memory will encourage us, strengthen us and give us hope. In Jer. 29:11, God declares through the prophet that He knows the plans He has for us. They are not to harm us - but they are to prosper us. So,



Brian Ninan

learning verses will reveal to us what God has in store for us. Thus we can seek God's help and plan courageously for the future.

Apostle Paul reminds Timothy "that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:15-16). *Scripture is good for doctrine, for correction and for instruction. It will make us wise for salvation.* That is the reason why God has given us His Word and God's Word is good for us.

Prayer is communication with God. Regular prayer is regular talking to God. For us as a Christian, God is our Father in heaven. Just as we talk to our father on earth, we talk to God our Heavenly Father. Regular prayer helps to keep a Father-child relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Praying is easy and usually a simple act. It is a lot like talking to someone on the phone. Though you do not see the person at the other end of the line, you speak what you want to convey to the other person. The sound of one's voice conveys any excitement or sadness, encouragement or criticism, anger or happiness, to the other person. Similarly when praying we talk to God about our needs, our concerns about others, or any other help we desire.

Through prayer a Christian can make his or her request known to God. It is important to be consistent in praying. I read in a book that "to persist in prayer and not give up does not mean endless repeated and long prayers. It means to keep our requests constantly before God

as we live for Him, believing that He will answer. Sometimes an answer to a prayer might be "to wait a while". As we persist in prayer, we grow in faith, character and hope.

Only through prayer can we present the needs of others to God. James 5:16 says that we should pray for each other so we may be healed. Jude 1:20 says that when we pray for others, we help build them up. *Building each other spiritually makes strong Christian believers.* In 2 Thes. 1:11, Paul tells the believers that he is praying for them so that they can continue in their service to God. Praying for others benefits the person praying too. Each of us has a commission to serve the Lord wherever we are placed. So upholding each other in prayer helps each one of us to be effective in service to the Lord.

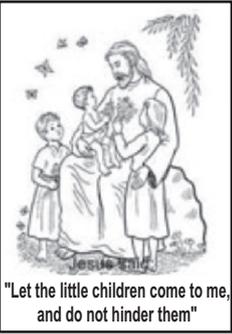
Prayer helps us to fight against the devil. In Luke 22:40, Jesus told His disciples to "pray that you will not fall into temptation". At this time Jesus and His disciples had just reached the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knew that He would be leaving His disciples soon. He also knew that they would need extra strength to face the trials and temptations ahead.

In 2 Chr. 7:14, God gave Solomon an answer to his prayer. *God said that four conditions had to be met by the people of Israel before they could receive their blessings.* The first condition was to humble themselves, next to pray, then to seek God, and then to turn from their wicked ways. Only then they would receive forgiveness of sins and healing of the land. The conditions given to them are applicable for us too. We have to first humble ourselves. Next we should pray, seek God and turn from evil ways. Then we will be blessed abundantly and our prayers will be answered.

So friends, let us be strong in prayer. As we read in Eph. 6:18, after putting on the whole armor of God, we must "pray in the Spirit on all occasions" making all our requests in prayer and thanksgiving to our prayer-answering God. *And the verses that we commit to our memory will certainly stand us in good stead to lead a victorious Christian life!*



Jealousy



Melissa was very upset that her sister always excelled in everything she did. Even before Melissa could

do the homework, her sister would finish with her homework or whatever assignment she was given. Melissa was slow as well as lazy most of the time. Yet she did not care about improving her work or disciplining herself for a better performance. But she would keep brooding over her sister's excellence in her work and study. She was very jealous of her sister because she was always systematic and punctual in her studies and work. Melissa even started to hate her sister because she was better than herself. But one day, when they were reading the Bible portion at the family prayer, they happened to read the

verse which said *"Do nothing out selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourself"* (Philippians 2:3). Melissa felt God was talking to her, that she needs to stop hating her sister and start appreciating her and emulating her pattern of life. She prayed to God that day, that He would give her the grace to love her sister and to be like her sister. She started to work hard and disciplined her

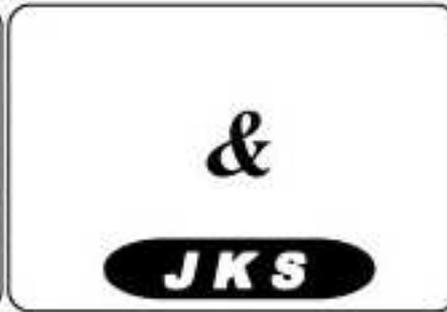
life-style in the way that she did not waste her time in laziness. At the same time, she kept trusting God and seeking God to help her. In a few months' time everyone at home started noticing the change in Melissa's life. She became very much like her sister in her work and studies. She thanked God that He gave her the grace to become better.

Dear friends, let us not brood over our inability or others' ability. Rather let us work hard to do the best that we can be, trusting in God. Then we will be rewarded by God to excel in our study or work. And let us always appreciate the good in others and follow their example in our life. *God bless you.*



Shiny Aunty

<p>In an eye doctor's clinic</p>	



Being honest improves health!!

According to a new research study presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, people who tell fewer lies have improved health, less stress and fewer headaches. "Recent evidence indicates that Americans tell about 11 lies per week on an average", said Anita Kelly, professor of psychology at the University of Notre Dame who led the research project. For the study lasting 10 weeks, 110 people were selected. Half of them were told to stop telling lies for the duration. Those who told fewer lies reported fewer mental health complaints such as feeling tense or melancholy, and fewer physical complaints such as sore throats and headaches. Some participants admitted that they could simply tell the truth about their daily accomplishments rather than exaggerate, and others said they stopped making false excuses for being late or failing to complete their assignments at their work place. How great, indeed, to be honest!

Jesus said liars belong to the devil and added: Devil "was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is

As the saying goes:

Honesty is the best policy

a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Dishonesty finds expression in various ways. Exaggerating achievements, misrepresenting facts, claiming qualifications without really earning them, etc. are not uncommon even in Christian circles. If the research study quoted above is anything to go by, then such dishonest people stand the risk of losing their health!!

Bible on banned list in Uzbekistan!

Police confiscated an Uzbek Bible, a Russian Bible and a book by John Bunyan from the home of a Christian and asked him: "Don't you know that it is prohibited to keep such books at home?" The books would be sent for "expert analysis" by the Religious Affairs Committee and that their owner would be fined. Recently, there has been an apparent increase in confiscations of privately owned religious books from homes during raids.



The Book may be banned. But there are no chains for the Gospel of Jesus!

Rev. Sun Myung Moon passes away

Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church died at the age of 92. He turned his religious vision into a worldwide movement and a multibillion-dollar corporation stretching from Korea to the United States. He founded his church in Seoul, South Korea in 1954 and became famous by marrying thousands of followers in mass ceremonies presided over by Moon himself. The couples often came from different countries and had never met, but were matched up by Moon in a bid to build a multicultural religious world. He says in his autobiography: "International and intercultural marriages are the quickest way to bring about an ideal world of peace. People should marry across national and cultural boundaries with people from countries they consider to be their enemies so that the world of



Rev. Moon

peace can come that much more quickly". In 2009, Moon married 45,000 people in simultaneous ceremonies worldwide. He claimed to have a good relationship with American leaders such as former Presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. As he grew older, Moon also handed over day-to-day control of his empire to his children. His US-born youngest son, the Rev. Hyung-jin Moon, was named the church's top religious director in April 2008. Other children run the church's businesses and charitable activities in South Korea and abroad.

Rev. Moon was an enigmatic and controversial figure. We do not know what will happen to his followers!

Children's Bible on iPhone

Scandinavia Christian Publishing House has now made Children's Bibles available as apps that can be downloaded and read on iPhones and iPads, with Android and Kindle formats. The apps are being sold worldwide, even in closed Muslim and communist countries where the written Bible and other Christian books are not permitted. The publishers are able to monitor downloads of



the apps worldwide People in China, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Russia and Egypt have downloaded Bibles. Bibles are digitally entering countries where printed Bibles are prohibited!

The message of the Gospel can penetrate any barrier!!

"Pastor Joel Osteen's theology"

Pastor Joel Osteen's positive thinking theology was on full display in his TV interview on CNN. Osteen assured the interviewer that speaking positive words can bring positive results and warned that speaking negativity will bring negative results. His theology is: "With our words we can either bless our futures or we can curse our futures". Deepak Chopra, the New Age guru, who was also on the CNN program, enthusiastically endorsed Osteen. It was clear that positive thinking philosophy drives them both. Chopra's New Age spirituality and Osteen's version of the word-faith movement end up as the same message. Then the



interviewer asked Osteen whether he calls the homosexual people in his church as sinners. The Pastor responded: "Well, I don't necessarily focus on that". Osteen explained that he tries to avoid such issues intentionally and added: "I think it is part of my success. I've stayed in my lane and my lane is lifting people's spirits and there are issues that good, Bible-believing people see on both sides of the fence". So, according to Pastor Osteen, "good, Bible-believing people" are found on both sides of the fence when it comes to the issue of homosexuality!

A commentator, Albert Mohler, said: "Viewers of CNN saw a display of confusion, evasion, and equivocation coming from one presented as a Christian pastor. What they were really seeing is the total theological bankruptcy of the gospel of positive thinking. Osteen cannot, or at least will not, speak even the simplest word of biblical conviction. Christianity is based on the truth that sinners need a Savior, not merely a coach or a therapist. Osteen offered no word of the gospel, and

no reference to Jesus Christ, but he was introduced as one of the most recognizable faces of Christianity in America today".

Religious freedom diminishing worldwide!

A new study by the 'Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life' released recently is a bit alarming. The researchers found increasing intolerance in every region of the world. Restrictions increased not only in countries that are already known to be not protecting religious freedom, such as Nigeria and Indonesia, but also in countries where citizens have generally enjoyed a high degree of religious liberty, such as Switzerland and the U.S.!! A Pew study on the subject for the previous one year period found that 70 percent of the world lived under religious restrictions, **but the latest study has** found that 75 percent of the world's population lived in a nation with high or very high restrictions on religious beliefs or practices. Government and social restrictions have been tightened particularly in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

Devil knows that this Age of Grace is soon to end. He is working hard as his time will soon be up!

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

- Total Chapters in the Bible — 1189 (Chapters in the Old Testament — 929, Chapters in the New Testament — 260)
- Longest Chapter — Psalms 119; Shortest Chapter — Psalms 117; Centre Chapter — Psalms 118.
- Chapters before Psalm 118 — 594 Chapters; Chapters after Psalm 118 — 594 Chapters.
- Add the Chapters up — 1188 (594+594)+1(Centre Chapter)=1189.
- Centre Verse — Psalms 118:8: *"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man"*
- Most Comforting Chapters — Psalms 23, John 14.
- Love Chapter — 1 Corinthians 13; Faith Chapter — Hebrews 11.
- New Testament Church Formation — Acts 2.
- Alike Chapters — 2 Kings 19, and Isaiah 37.
- Longest Verse — Esther 8:9; Shortest Verse — John 11:35.
- Most Precious Verse — John 3:16; Saddest Verse — Mark 15:34; Grandest Verse — Romans 8:11.
- Word "God" occurs — 4,370 times; Word "Jehovah" occurs — 6,855 times; Word "Lord" occurs — 7,736 times.
- English Bible published first— 1380 A.D.; Divisions of the Chapters made first — 1227 A.D.
- Longest Word — Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isaiah 8:1).
- The Greatest Word — **JESUS**.
- Words that appear only once in the Bible (King James Version):
- Reverend (Psalms 111:9), Eternity (Isaiah 57:15) and Grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5).

- Contributed: C.C. Abraham