



Did you hear God's Voice 'out of the whirlwind'?

*"Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm (whirlwind-KJV).
He said: "Who is this that obscures my plans
with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you, and you shall answer me.
"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?" (Job 38:1-4)*

Natural disasters like hurricanes, floods and earthquakes are happening in different parts of the world. As our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples, these calamities will continue to happen more increasingly as the return of our Lord draws nearer.



**Johnson
K. Samuel**

I am writing this piece in the wake of the monstrous hurricanes, deadly whirlwinds and huge floods that recently devastated the cities of Houston and Florida in USA, where a large number of our dear brothers and sisters live and serve the Lord in various capacities. Many have lost their homes and valuable possessions. It is going to take many months to rebuild these cities and bring them back to their previous status. Natural disasters like hurricanes, floods and earthquakes are happening in different parts of the world. As our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples, these calamities will continue to happen more increasingly as His return draws nearer.

When Job went through great sufferings, he had many questions to ask God whom he had served very faithfully. In answer to Job's questions, God answered *"out of the storm"* and reminded him how small and feeble humans were in the vastness of God's creation.

Has God spoken to the world *'out of the recent storm'*? Has anybody heard God's voice coming loud and clear *'out of the storm'*? Natural disasters remind us of our limitations and how much things are out of our control. In the wake of such a devastating storm, our responsibility is to be compassionate and helpful in whatever is really in our control.

When facing calamity or disaster, a believer has access to the very throne room of heaven (Hebrews 4:14-16). We hear the cry of David as he composes Psalm 66 in a desperate situation, who *"cried out to God"*. He felt assured when he got the answer: *"God has surely listened and has heard my prayer" and "has not withheld His love from me"* (Psalm 66:17-20).

In the circumstances of a natural disaster we should pray for God's grace and mercy for several groups of people.

a) Those who are affected personally and are grieving over the loss of life and livelihood.

b) Those who worry about what to do or where to turn.

c) Those who question and wonder what is happening.

d) Those who lead the recovery efforts and those who are helping the affected people.

Trials strengthen faith in believers. Even natural disasters can test one's faith and provide an opportunity for the faithful exercise of Christian grace. Paul's trial at sea provides an insight into how a Christian should face a calamity. Luke's first hand narrative of the events at sea is very thrilling and thought provoking (Acts 27,28). Paul, Luke, Aristarchus, a large group of soldiers, prisoners and shipmates are on a rickety ship in an angry sea. After days of desperate struggle, when those on board have given up any hope of being saved (27:20), the only beacon of hope is provided by Paul. Paul effectively and actively ministers in the midst of chaos and fear. The Apostle who has full trust in the promises of God exhorts all to keep up their courage. Although the ship finally breaks into pieces, all aboard the ship escape safely to the island of Malta, where the Maltese people treat them with *"extraordinary kindness"* (28:2). Through the catastrophe, Paul was the voice of God ringing *'out of the storm'* and many souls were added to the kingdom of God.

We usually cannot predict when disaster will strike our community, but we can prepare ourselves spiritually to be faithful ministers of Christ in any situation. Disaster calls for sound action and faithful ministry of God's people to those in need. In such crisis situations, many may get to hear the voice of God *'out of the storm'* and the name of the Lord will be glorified. The sovereign God Almighty rules over all things to bring them into conformity to His will. *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28). ■

'The helpless babe', really?

*"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied himself**, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8 - ESV)*

The famous song 'Servant King' by Graham Kendrick begins with this line:

*'From heaven
You came helpless babe'.*

It is indeed a wonderful song which goes on to describe Jesus who is 'The Servant King'. However, the phrase 'helpless babe' needs to be explored. How helpless was this babe born to Mary in a little manger in Bethlehem whom we celebrate during the season of Christmas? Or put in other words who was Jesus in His incarnation?

The christological hymn in Philippians 2:6-10 is certainly profound. However, the phrase 'but made himself nothing' (Phil. 2:7) has given rise to much speculation. The Greek phrase literally means, 'but he emptied himself' as ESV puts it. However most English translations avoid the literal meaning. The New International Version has it as 'but made himself nothing' and KJV has it as 'But made himself of no reputation'. The original word comes from the Greek word KENOW which means 'empty'.

The reason why the translations do not use the literal meaning is to avoid a debate called 'Kenosis Theory'. This theory was propounded in the beginning of the 19th century with good intentions. It proposed that Jesus in His incarnation was limited in omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. Then there were many variations of the theory down through the centuries. This theory tried to explain why Jesus in His human form seems to have been limited in His knowledge - He doesn't know the times and days appointed by the Father - Seems to have limited power - He did not resist the arrest - He was limited by His language and culture - He lived and died as a Jew.

I have nothing more to add to this debate but would like to use insights from these discussions to understand this 'helpless babe' that Graham Kendrick popularized through his song, 'The Servant King'.

The meaning of the word 'empty' is not in

the word itself but in what Jesus revealed to us about Himself in words and deeds. I want to suggest that 'emptying' here gets a new dimension of meaning. Just two aspects of it: In becoming man, He did not leave His divinity nor did He become less divine. But 'emptying' here implies two things: first of all He restrained His divine power and secondly, He veiled His glory.

On the very outset, I would like to make another observation. Jesus prayed in *John 17:5*: 'And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed'. This does not mean a glory that was lost but a glory that was veiled.

Instead of suggesting that Jesus was devoid of His divine power I would like to suggest that He was still with the divine power but restrained it and used it discreetly. It is true that Jesus did not resist when He was attacked physically. Once they tried to push Him over the cliff and kill Him. It is also true that He did struggle with hunger pangs. At Jacob's well in Samaria we find Him thirsting for water.

But the Gospels also present another side of Jesus' power. He exercised His power over domains where humans have no authority. This is evident in His exorcisms and nature miracles. Here His power over the domain of Satan and the nature as the creator is evident.

The Jewish and Hellenistic exorcists of His day used means to drive out demons. For example in the Book of Tobit the demon called Asmodeus was destroyed using a strange mixture of fish gall and other herbs which angel Raphael prescribed. But Jesus did not drive out demons by the help of any means. They just dreaded His presence and they were driven out by the power of His word. As Creator God, He exercised His power over the nature - over the waves and the wind. He was not powerless but in His incarnation He just restrained His power and used it discreetly.

This power He did not gain through training



Rev. Dr. Paulson Pulikkottil

heads the Department of Biblical Studies at Union Biblical Seminary, Pune and pastors 'The Community of the Redeemed' Church, Pune. His blogs can be read at <http://paulsonp.blogspot.com/>

In becoming man, Jesus did not leave His divinity nor did He become less divine. But 'emptying' here implies two things: first of all He restrained His divine power and secondly, He veiled His glory.

There were people who were touched by His glory and power throughout His period of incarnation! They were the disciples who witnessed His miracles, those who experienced His power, those who testified that they saw His glory.

His veiled glory had at times broke through the thick cover of human flesh that He put on. One such instance is the Transfiguration that we find in Mark 9.2-3:

as He grew up. He did not cultivate these skills, but He was born with it as the Word became flesh. The babe in the manger was not 'a *helpless babe*'. But He was born with power to help the helpless and the hopeless. However, He took the form of a *helpless babe*'.

Secondly, in His incarnation Christ did not give up His glory, but He simply veiled His glory.

However, a plain reading of John 17:5 may suggest that He was devoid of His glory in His incarnation. Here He prayed: *'And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed'*.

What does this mean? Does this mean that He was devoid of the divine glory while He was on earth? I think the emphasis of the passage is on two different aspects. First of all, the emphasis here is on 'glorifying' than on glory. Glorifying simply means acknowledging the glory that is already there than bestowing the glory. Secondly, we must also note that the emphasis is on the place than on the state. It has to do with being in a glorified position in heaven, after His resurrection, ascension and accession to God's right hand. It doesn't imply that He was without glory on earth.

The evidence that He was with glory on earth (but veiled and not devoid of it), is narrated than stated. The Gospel accounts provide us with enough evidence to this fact. Just as He restrained His divine power in His incarnation, He veiled His glory within the flesh that He chose to put on in His incarnation.

However, it had at times broke through the thick cover of human flesh that He put on. One such instance is the Transfiguration that we find in Mark 9.2-3: *"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them"*.

Every miracle, especially the nature miracles, in particular the one where He walked defying the wind over the waves, was display of His glory and power as the creator of the world.

"This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And

his disciples believed in him" (John 2:11 ESV).

So, His closest disciple would later reflect on their life together on earth in the following words: *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14 ESV).

He was born with this glory; it is not gathered over the years. The baby in the manger was not a 'helpless babe'! He was God in all glory but a veiled glory. It was not glory to dazzle feeble human eyes but to be revealed very discreetly.

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He maintained that power and glory even at the height of His physical weakness and shame. The soldiers who came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gathsemene are witnesses to this. They saw Him when He was at the lowest of His human state. He was holed up in a garden at night, spent the whole night pleading with God to avoid that moment, however failed. He was sleepless and hungry, deserted by His own dear friends. It was at that moment the soldiers came to arrest Him. However, when He

said 'I am he' they experienced the divine power of those words and His presence and *'drew back and fell to the ground'* (John 18:6).

Another example is the Roman centurion who was in charge of Jesus' execution. He recognized in the bleeding, weak and dying Jesus, the Son of God. The Gospel of Mark records: *"And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he 1 breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"* Mark 15:39 (ESV).

So we conclude that the baby was cute, weak and adorable. However, He came to us in a manger restraining His power and veiling His glory. He did not cultivate power and glory through a 'tapas' or training. This our king, born in a manger, looked helpless, but full of divine power and glory! ■

When does God *really answer our prayers?*

New Series:
Meditations from
"1 John" - 5

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." (1 John 5:14-15)

As Apostle John concludes his first general epistle, he answers a question that has been in the minds of many Christians through the centuries past. The question is: when does God really answer our prayers? We come across many charlatan preachers who advocate the theory: "name it and claim it" based on a declaration that



Jesus had made before He left the earth: "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14). However, in reality they are twisting the words of Jesus and not paying attention to the words of Jesus in the previous verse that states: "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). Ultimately, God should receive the glory when our prayers are answered!

Many times we pray for certain things or situations, but our prayers are not answered as we are off-target and our prayers are intensely selfish in nature. This is how Apostle James describes it: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3). We really do not know what we should pray for, and we should ask God to teach us how to pray as did the disciples in Luke 11:1: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples". This is confirmed by another scripture: "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought..." (Romans 8:26). So, how do we truly know what to pray for, and when does God really answer our prayers?

Apostle John answers this question as follows: the key to knowing that God hears our prayers is to pray according to His will. Prayer is just another expression of our trust in Jesus Christ and our confidence toward God. God will hear our prayers and answer them because we are His children asking for help to do His will. God will always grant

that kind of prayer request from us. The Bible theologian Alford has explained it well: "If we knew God's will thoroughly, and submitted to it heartily, it would be impossible for us to ask anything for the spirit or for the body which He should not perform...it is the Spirit who teaches us inwardly, and

Himself in us asks according to the will of God".

Now the question arises, "but how can we know the will of God?" In a general way, the answer is that God's will is revealed to us in His Word, and so we should study the word in order that we might know better what God's will is and how we can pray more intelligently. Our assurance of salvation (v. 13) leads to our confidence in petitioning God. When we abide in Christ and His words abides in our hearts, we will pray only according to His will, and God will then certainly hear and answer us (John 15:7). Effectual prayer is always according to the will of God!

Let us have our faith in God strengthened based on our knowledge of God's Word and His character. Let us practice the principles of faith-filled prayer. Let us be assured that God hears all of our prayers that are in accord with His will, and says "Yes!" to every prayer He hears from us. To be effective, let us pray "according to His will" (v. 14) as we "do those things that are pleasing in His sight".

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1John 3:21-23).



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

is the Pastor of Carolinas Christian Assembly in Matthews, NC that serves all Asian Indians in and around the Charlotte area. He is also the 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>

Setting our Priority!

“Seek ye FIRST the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33.).



**Pastor
Shibu Joseph**
Navi Mumbai

Since the church is a lifeline to many who are lost in life, instead of caring about those lives, we simply go around the world with projects and programs. This means we are slowly and steadily withdrawing ourselves from the life giving ministry. The churches today need to do a self-evaluation. Then we definitely will find out the failures in setting of our priorities.

The churches of today seem to have enormous involvements in the world. They take part in various works, such as social and political programs. Since we are the citizens of a country it may be imperative to involve in different organizational bodies to maintain our social status. Our solidarity and commitment to the nation must be exposed and highlighted through these kinds of social involvements. Christianity can be the final voice to many of the social and moral issues the world faces today because we have the appropriate assessment and answers to many such issues based on the holy scripture. The Bible does not encourage criminality, partiality, favouritism, corruption, injustice, bribery and any form of inhuman activities. In contrast, the Bible emphasizes noble virtues, like love, compassion, sacrifice, generosity, equality, restoration and all kinds of humanitarianism.

Although these engagements are necessarily good, the churches must not neglect and devalue the primary purpose to which she is called. There is an outcry today that we are focusing immensely on secondary purposes. Since the church is a lifeline to many who are lost in life, instead of caring about those lives, we simply go around the world with projects and programs. This means we are slowly and steadily withdrawing ourselves from the life giving ministry. The churches today need to do a self-evaluation. Then we definitely will find out the failures in setting of our priorities.

PRIORITY - WHAT DOES IT MEAN ?

The term priority means, the fact or act of being regarded or treated as more important than others. It is the prime concern and most pressing matter or most important thing. And there is nothing above or equal. Though these are the common definitions, they are same when it comes to spirituality. In every human life there must be some priorities. They vary in the way we arrange. The nation has a priority, for example, the safety of the country and its citizens is the highest priority. A family has a priority. But wherever the priority stands at the level of least consideration, there will be

disintegration and dilemma eventually. More often people ignore their priority and revolve on the least important matters of life.

Here we have to look into the Bible or find out what is the divine perspective in regarding the matter of priority. If we observe patiently, we can find out how God wants us to function on the earth. Wherever the priority was being sidelined the Lord began to interfere in the lives of God's people. The life of Jacob might be a typical example when we consider an individual. The book of Genesis unveils the ups and downs of Jacob's life very clearly. In Genesis chs 28-34, we look into how Jacob left his father's tent and did drive to his life achievements in the home of his uncle, Laban. Later Laban became his father-in-law! While running away from his father, he landed in the city of Luz (later Bethel) where he was confronted with a vision. He took certain resolutions (28:18-22). Nevertheless in his long journey of life he forgot these and shifted his tent place to place. He threw out his priority into oblivion in situations of greatness in wealth and prosperity and also troublesome scenarios of family matters. He never gave importance to the resolutions that he made to God. In his utter crisis and chaos, he was prompted to jump into emotional decisions. He was able to earn more wealth. This kind of situation may compel us to neglect the importance of priority even in our life too. However, God intervened into his life (ch. 35). There he began to throw his eyes into his past life. He had no option. He fell down at His feet and resettled his priority. Since then Jacob began to be known as Israel with a covenant relationship with the Lord.

Jacob's story greatly resembles the present picture of the church. The churches had been having the troublesome scenario in the initial era. Yet, they did not ignore the priority but rather with all her menial resources she fulfilled the divine priorities. But what is the picture today? Achieved a lot, earned much, widened our store houses, increased resources but failed in fulfilling God-given priorities. We now engage in empty talks and vain activities, having forgotten the purposes of God. We are in

comforting zones of life and merely boasting in material blessings. The prophet Haggai here is appropriate in his oracles.

Haggai the post-exilic prophet was sent by Almighty God to encourage the leaders and people to complete the temple of God in Jerusalem. When he came down to the city he saw the people of God who lost their interest in the work of the temple. But they were very much busy in beautifying their houses to live comfortably and luxuriously (1:3-4). The Lord was criticizing them about their disgraceful and disrespectful attitude towards the house of God. Hence, God asked them to “*consider their ways*” (v.5). This simply means they failed in the priority. They exchanged their priority of God’s work into their own selfish desires. When the worship place was remaining desolated, how could they enjoy their life? This is probably the same problem of today’s churches.

Every one is busy in their own schedule and modifying and modernizing their own houses, while many of our churches and parsonages are remaining in pathetic and shameful state. Even the people are very sluggard and lethargic in the work of God. In many places the worship centers are not in good shape. At the same time, their own houses become so splendid and modernized every year. If Haggai appeared today he would feel the same, may be more than that. Many of the leaders also are not different, they are fixing and re-fixing their chairs while the church is sinking. Rather than fixing the leakages inside, they are trying colouring the outsides. Self-centeredness is the interest of the people today.

PRIORITY OF JESUS

The gospels obviously reveal the priority of Jesus, the Son of God, on the earth. Though He was equal with God He left everything in heaven and came down in the form of a man so that He could fulfill the will of His Father. More than everything Jesus emphasized to do the will of His father (John 4:33; 8:29). Again, Jesus spoke to the people that the Son of Man came to the world not to be ministered but to minister to others and give His life as ransom for many (Mark 10:45). So He was very clear in His priority. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed in agony that He is ready to do the will of His Father (Mark 14:36). Jesus never deviated

from the plan of the Triune God. And He perfected all things on the cross. He was conscious about His life on the earth. He was committed to His priority. Both preaching and teaching the kingdom was His priority. He had no option other than pleasing His Father. He revealed the love of God, provided eternal life, restored relationships, changed the life-prospect of people, etc. and He had no secondary priority in His life.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus asked the hearers to settle their priority favourably to the Kingdom. He said, “seek ye FIRST the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Unfortunately WE ARE NOW JUST FOCUSING ON THE SECOND PART OF THIS VERSE. We are thinking how we can add more and sometimes even praying for that! However

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Jesus asks to set our priority. Kingdom’s priority must become our purpose. But today we think about our own kingdom rather than God’s kingdom. This means we missed the priority given by Jesus. In every activity, we talk about adding and gaining. Surely we must CONSIDER OUR WAYS today seriously. When the common people are getting crushed with unwanted

false teachings, our leaders are rushing to secure their own positions. Many wealthy people are spending God-given resources to gratify their pleasures of life, rather than spending it for God’s work. A few so-called ministers and believers involve in spreading false accusations against others and using their energy in different media. Why can’t such people print some gospel tracts and distribute to the unsaved, rather than engage in such venomous activities? Is it their priority? Now Pentecostals have become the enemies of Pentecostalism! Where is the priority?

We need to come to God’s feet with humbleness and broken hearts and plead to the Spirit of God to restore us and enable us to reset the divine priorities in our life. Let us stop all kinds of unnecessary activities, false testimonies, cheap involvements and such other businesses and put all our efforts to get into the Kingdom priority in doing the will of our Father. Seek Him first, His will, His Kingdom and fulfill it till the night comes. ■

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Benevolent Sovereignty of God Almighty!

"Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is"
(Eph. 5:15-16)

Management books today teach us about six main leadership styles: authoritarian, paternalistic, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional and transformational (Source: Wikipedia). Historically, upheavals like the French Revolution caused the downfall of monarchy and gave rise to the concepts of democracy, liberty, fraternity and equality. While individual dictators still rise up now and then, most countries in the world today are governed by democratic processes. For most of us living in post-independence India, with all its attendant freedoms enshrined in our constitution, life under a sovereign monarch is hard to comprehend. Yet such was the general manner of governance during the times when most of the Bible, as we know it, was written.

Imagine a life where you were born a subject of the reigning monarch and could not take any decisions on your own. The ruling king / queen had the final word on every aspect of your life: from what you wore, to what you owned, to where you went, to who you married. They collected taxes on all your possessions, could snatch away any servant / family member of yours whom they fancied and your life was in danger if you displeased them in any way. Any opposition or revolt was suppressed by threats, torture and execution. The king / queen could live in splendour, even excesses, while the general public starved. Remember King Ahab and Queen Jezebel? Prophet Elijah was threatened with death for speaking against their ungodliness (1 Kings 19:2), Naboth was murdered for his vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-16) and their palace was likely the only place where bread and meat could be found during three-and-a-half years of drought in Israel (1 Kings 17:6).

God, on the contrary, while sovereign, has endowed humans with a free will. Since Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we have always been at liberty to choose to obey or disobey Him (Gen.



Aneka Paul, MSW
Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai

2:16-17). However, once we make a choice, we are expected to do all things possible to adhere to it. A Jewish manservant or maid-servant was expected to be released in the seventh year after serving his / her master for six years. If the servant chose to stay on, out of love, their ear was pierced as a symbol of ownership and obedience (Deut. 15:12-17). Any servant, with his / her ear pierced, could never be independent again. When we choose to follow Christ, it is like having our spiritual ear pierced; always attuned to hearing God's voice (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Yet God in His benevolence allows us to choose whether to obey His will or not, with virtually every breath we take.

God always desired that His anointed people be governed by Him and Him alone. For day-to-day matters, He provided the ten commandments and several instructions, largely recorded in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Clarifications were to be provided by the learned priests from the tribe of Levi. Prophets and judges were raised up every time Israel needed to be rescued from its enemies - from Moses to all those named in the book of Judges to Samuel - yet it was always clear that deliverance was ultimately from the Lord. Yet God foresaw that Israel would one day clamour for a human king to head them and lays out rules for a king's behaviour, even before they take possession of the promised land (Deut.

17:14-20). There too, the condition is that the king would be chosen by God Himself (Deut. 17:15), contrary to the general practice of establishing ruling dynasties, where a king's own descendants succeeded him on the throne.

Years later, when the Israelites desire to be like the gentile nations around them and demand for a king, God consoles Prophet Samuel that they are not rejecting him, but God Himself as their leader (1 Sam. 8:7). Though Samuel warns them about the behaviour of kings who will rule them (1 Sam. 8:9-18), the Israelites still insist on a human king (1 Sam. 8:19-20) and the Lord permits it (1 Sam. 8:20). What Israel failed to realize is that, as God's chosen and anointed, **they were never meant to be like all the other nations** (1 Sam. 8:20, *emphasis added*). By demanding human governance, they were undermining their own uniqueness. King Solomon initially understood this, when as a very young and newly appointed king, he asks God for an understanding heart to judge innumerable Israel (1 Kings 3:5-9). However, he later wanders away from the true God and disobeys every rule for kingly behaviour that God laid out in Deuteronomy 17 (1 Kings 10:14-11:8).

As God's chosen people today, we are required to honour and *pray for our rulers in authority* (1 Pet. 2:17, Rom. 13:1-7, 1 Tim. 2:2), and abide by all the laws of the land in which we dwell, yet we must not forget that our actual *citizenship is in heaven* (Phil. 3:20). Accepting Christ as our Lord and Saviour means receiving Him as our King of kings, once for all. Continuing to follow Christ in obedience is a conscious decision we have to actively make, every minute of every day of our lives. We are asked to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling* (Phil. 2:12), walking carefully in our Christian walk *during evil days* (Eph. 5:15-16). Yet our hope is in our faithful God, *who is able and willing to preserve us blameless till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Thes. 5:23-24). ●

Be faithful towards God!

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own"? (Luke 16:10-12)

How can one be faithful towards God? Let us turn our attention to the verses quoted above (Luke 16:10-12). These words are spoken by Jesus to His disciples. The Lord is teaching them to be faithful in lives. He is telling His disciples that if a person can be trusted with very little, he can also be trusted with much but on the other hand, if he is dishonest with little, he will be dishonest with much also. He is teaching them that while living in this world we have to be honest in our dealings with riches and wealth and be trustworthy with things we are entrusted. For instance, my dad entrusts me and my siblings with little chores around the house such as vacuuming, dusting, handy work, etc. If he sees that we are faithful and able to complete the tasks in a timely manner, he sometimes entrusts us with bigger tasks or rewards us for what we did. If our earthy father looks at these attributes in us, how much more our creator in heaven! We have a great responsibility and that is to remain faithful to God.

In the book of Jeremiah we read: *"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee"* (Jer. 1:5). Our Abba Father who created us and called us by name even before we were formed in our mother's womb, He knows our being. He knows whether or not we will be faithful to Him. Do you think when Jesus chose His disciples; He did not know Judas was going to betray Him?



**Joel V. Blessan
Houston**

He definitely did! Read John 13:11: *"For he knew who should betray him"*. The devil worked in Judas Iscariot's heart to betray Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus for some wealth. My dear brothers and sisters let the wealth of this world not lead us to temptation. The Lord tells

Let's look up to Jesus. The Lord of lords came to this world taking the form of man. He lived on this earth thirtythree and half years. He died on the cross for our sins. He is the PERFECT example for us that shows how He was faithful to the point of death.

the church in Smyrna: *"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown"* (Revelation 2:10). This is being written to the church as an encouragement to them that they should not be afraid of the suffering or persecution that has come against them. Even when they

are thrown into prison and suffer persecution in the name of Jesus, they are asked to remain faithful even unto the point of death to receive the victor's crown.

My dear brothers and sisters, let's look up to Jesus. He remained faithful even to the point of death. Our King of Kings and Lord of lords came to this world taking the form of man. He lived on this earth thirtythree and half years. He died on the cross for our sins. John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life"*. The word SO in this verse shows the magnitude of His love. Christ so loved us that He gave Himself for us as a sacrifice so that we can have an eternal life. He is the PERFECT example for us that shows how He was faithful to the point of death. In the same way, we have to be ready to suffer for Christ. We have to count it a blessing to suffer for His name. We have to die to our

own desires, flesh, and lust and desire to be like Jesus. The coming of our Lord is very near. We hear about wars, famines, earthquakes, diseases everywhere. This is only the beginning. The tribulation days are at hand. Let us pray that God will help us to be faithful to Him. Only those that remain faithful to the end will receive the victor's crown. So I urge all of you to tarry for His coming and remain faithful. *May God bless you all.*

**"Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved"
- Martin Luther**

Be my Captain!

In this ocean so vast
I am a stranger lost
Be the wind I know
And take me back home

Your love is like the wind
That guides my open sails
My boat got no captain
Lord move me as you will

You are the breeze
That calms my soul
Even though you can be
The hurricane that hurts!

Can't see the wind
But can always feel it
A constant that never ceases
Like your grace through seasons

So come be my captain, Lord
Or this ocean will swallow me whole
Be the wind and carry me home
For this ship is just a temporary tent!

Poems



Jobin Mathew

All to Jesus!

I was burdened by what I was
Broken by what I could never be
For I was judged by my past
And this world had disowned me

For I was worth the money I had
And a beauty which was skin deep
Was wise till they termed me mad
Taught, what I sow I would reap

But this dying soul got a chance
A blue book handed over in time
Which has the word Bible written on
What would a sinner do without it!

But those words compelled me to dance
This wasn't the comfort of a mortal man
My salvation was through Jesus Christ
It was eternal that came from a sacrifice

It could heal, mend and still not judge
So I will call upon His name with reasons
The remainder of my life is His own
For I owe my all to Jesus!

Why worry?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7)

How do we overcome worry? We all get worried. Each of us go through different situations that bring anxiety. We hear so many things happening around us that increase tension which cripples us and deeply affects many of our actions. But it doesn't have to be that way! Not if God has something to say about it. And He does! We can read what our Lord Jesus had to say in Matthew 6: 25-34. He repeatedly instructs us: "*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear -- If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you? --- Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own*". This same message is reinforced in many places in the Holy Bible such as Romans 8:38 -39, Philippians 4: 6-7, John 14:1, Luke 12: 24-34, John 14: 27 and many others.



Lisa Adolf, Houston

Our God wants us not to worry, yet we do worry any way. Sometimes, it feels like it is utterly inescapable, no matter what we do. But that is NOT true. God is handing us a lifeline, something we can use to overcome our struggles. Since situations that cause worry are, obviously, inevitable, let's see how we can overcome them.

1. Firstly, we can seek Him.

We cannot defeat worry by worrying about it. But we can share it with

someone who will actually be able to do something about it - JESUS! Prayer is our first weapon.

2. Second, we can trust Him.

God desires for us to depend on Him. So, as the Word says, we need to learn to cast all our burdens on Him and receive His peace.

3. Third, we need to remind ourselves of Him and His bountiful blessings.

Remember how God has helped us in the past, how He has blessed us. We need to shift our focus from worrying to worshipping and thanking Him.

4. And finally, we need to replace our worries with the Word of God. Find out verses on God's promises, repeat them and claim them for ourselves.

As someone said, "Where faith begins, worry ends and where worry begins, faith ends". May God help each one of us to overcome all obstacles and fears in our lives. May God be able to see us as worshippers and not 'worriers'.

Bible verses create panic!

A passenger in a London train started reciting Bible verses about the sins of homosexuality and illegal relationships outside marriage. There was panic in the compartment and people started to vacate it when the train stopped at the next station. One lady went out and told the guard that the man said he had a bomb with him and was going to kill everybody! The man reciting the Bible verses was escorted off the train and his bag was searched, but law enforcement found only books and a water bottle!

We read in Heb. 4:12: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart". Bible verses can, indeed, create a scare in the minds of the sinner!

Stone workshop discovered in Galilee

Archaeologists excavating a site in the Lower Galilee region of Israel, have uncovered what they believe was a production site for the manufacture of stone mugs and bowls that were used by Jews in the area who adhered to very strict purity laws 2,000 years ago, according to a report from the Israel Antiquities Authority. They unearthed a cave in which they found thousands of chalkstone cores and other types of production waste, including fragments of stone mugs and bowls in various stages of production. Dr. Yonatan Adler,



Excavation site

a senior lecturer at Ariel University said: "According to ancient Jewish ritual law, vessels made of pottery are easily made impure and must be broken. Stone, on the other hand, was thought to be a material which can never become ritually impure and as a result ancient Jews began to produce some of their everyday tableware from stone". The stone vessels provide a link to the New Testament story of the wedding at Cana, where Jesus performed His first miracle - transforming water held in six stone containers into wine.

Another evidence unearthed by excavations pointing towards the truth of biblical stories!

"See You at the Pole" prayer event!

The annual "See You at the Pole" (SYATP) prayer event was celebrated on September 27, 2017. SYATP is a day



Students at the flagpole

committed to global unity in Christ and prayer for your generation. The event is a simple time of prayer for countries, families, teachers, and schools. The prayer rallies are led by students who gather at 7 am at flagpoles for a time of prayer before the school day begins. SYATP had a humble beginning in 1999 with a group of students in Texas simply meeting to pray. But the prayer rallies caught on fast and are going strong today. This year's theme was "Fix Our Eyes", taken from Hebrews 12:2 which encourages Christians to fix their eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. According to a report in The

Christian Post, one million students participated in the event this year all over the world.

Praise be to God for the students who take time to pray for the community and for the welfare of the world in these perilous days!

US Presidents turn to the Bible in moments of tragedy!

In response to the horrific shooting incident in USA, recently, President Trump quoted Psalm 34:18: *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit"*. He added: "We seek comfort in those words, for we know that God lives in the hearts of those who grieve". In a "Washington Post" report of the incident, the reporter says: "The fact that the U.S. President would turn to God's Word in response to tragedy contrasts oddly with the reports of Christianity's decline in America". In support of his statement, he adds: "In 1990, the number of Christians in the United States was 86 percent, according to the American Religious Identification Survey. That number is now 70 percent. And since the early 1990s, the percentage of Americans identifying as 'atheist,' 'agnostic' or 'nothing in particular' has roughly tripled in size".



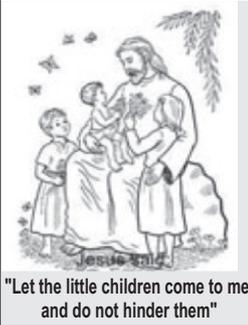
President Trump

The Bible remains a consistent source of comforting words. Previous presidents before Trump have all turned to the Scripture to comfort the nation in times of incredible violence. The "Washington Post" article speaks about the enduring nature of God's Word and the reality of our constant need for it. The Word of God alone offers an adequate explanation of the state of this world and Christ alone gives us a complete image of life and hope.

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Children's

C O N T E N T



Hiding from God? Impossible!

John and Sam were good friends and were neighbours. Very close to their house lived Uncle James. Uncle James had a big garden in which there was a big apple tree. Sam and John always wished to eat those shiny apples from Uncle James' garden. Every day they would make plans to climb the wall and get to the apple tree when uncle is not at home. One day the boys climbed over the wall and jumped into the garden and plucked some apples while Uncle James was away. They continued to steal the apples whenever they thought uncle is not at home. Sam and John felt they were very clever to steal from the garden without being caught. One day to their surprise Uncle James invited Sam and John to his house for lunch and he also said that he wished to show them some nice videos. Very excited both of them

went to Uncle James house. After the delicious lunch Uncle James switched on the television for the boys to watch. The boys was shocked to see the video as they video was about them climbing the wall and plucking the apples from the garden. The boys were so embarrassed and scared after seeing the video. Seeing the frightened faces of the boys, Uncle James sat down beside them and said, "Don't be afraid. I took the video while you were plucking the apples. I wanted you to know that in the same way God is watching all of us. All our deeds and words are being

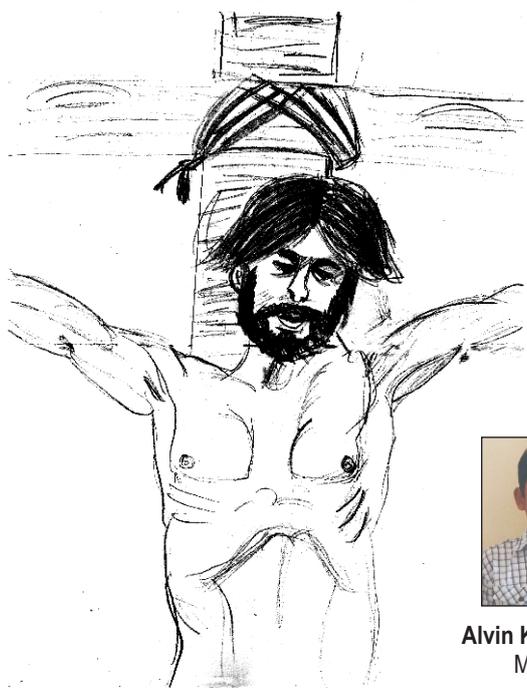
watched and we can never hide from God". The boys apologized for stealing and promised that they will never steal again. Uncle Sam gave them some apples and dropped them home. He knew that they will never steal again.

Dear friends, God is watching us. He wants us to live a life according to His word. Remember we can never hide from God. We read: "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me", even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day for darkness is as light to you" (Psalms 139:7).



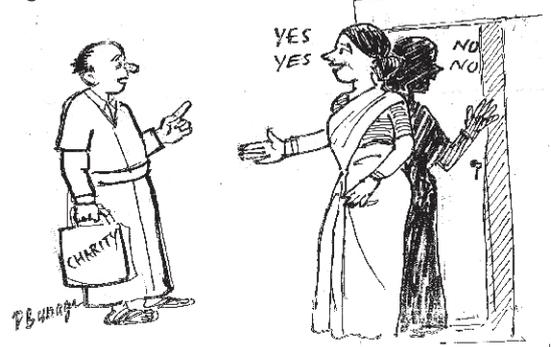
Juby Anoop, UK

Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

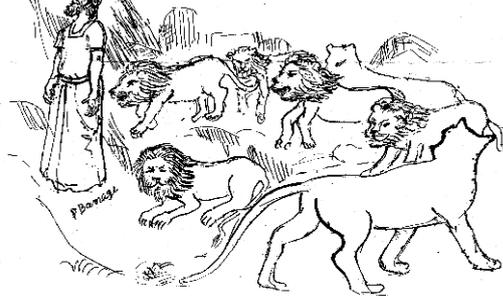


Alvin K. Varghese
Mumbai

Are you double minded ?



Daniel in lion's den



Banage P.K.