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C O N T E N T S

From the editor
 Rev. Dr. Richard Howell..... 5

No Compromise
 Sanjiv Ailawadi..... 8

Above Mediocrity
 Solomon R. John..... 13

Death & Death
 Divya Jacob 17

Tough? LareauLinqvist
 Hansraj Jain..... 20

Am I a Christian
 Joyce Davis 22

Church's Mission - God's or Human's
 Anand David 25

On God's side
 Abhishek Isaac Lyall 28

Enterprise with Expertise
 Namrata Achowe 29

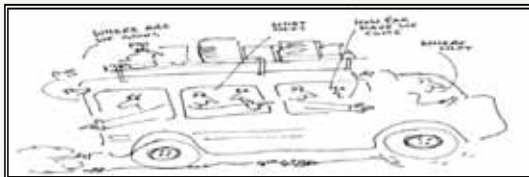
Biblical Missio Dei
 Vikas A Ram 32

Suffering: Meaning & Values
 Dr. Saphir Athyal 35

Prayer Calendar 39



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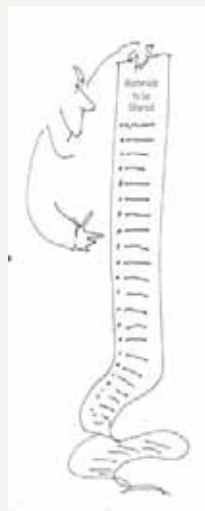
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From the Editor



Our Calling is to Demonstrate Integrity

Samuel, the prophet, priest and judge of Israel was a great leader because he understood leadership as an opportunity to serve people and add quality to their life. He abhorred the idea of leadership as an opportunity that uses power to exploit the led for personal gain and position.

Godly leaders are hard to find. Samuel was one of Israel's greatest leaders, one of a few! His life reflects the story of an intimate relationship with God, because of this relationship, Samuel's mother took him to the temple when he was a young boy, and he lived there with Eli the high priest. Through the years, as Samuel observed men and women offering their worship to God, he gained a thorough understanding of what it meant that the Israelites were God's people.

One of the defining moments in Samuel's life occurred while he was still a young child. When Samuel got up in the morning and opened the doors (between the room in which the ark was housed and the place where Eli slept) he was naturally afraid to tell what he had seen and heard. God commissioned him to deliver a

One of the defining moments in Samuel's life occurred while he was still a young child.

rebuke to Eli. "Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am." "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not

hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you.” So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, “He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes.” The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word’ (1 Samuel 3:15-21). God was preparing this future judge and prophet for the rigours of his leadership role. Samuel loved God and even in childhood began developing the courage and conviction he would need during the difficult days in which he would serve Israel.

Eli accepts the fact that God has spoken and exemplifies the kind of acceptance of judgment that the people were called to make after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587. Leadership in Israel was about to pass from the Shiloh priesthood, and the head of those priests acknowledged the justice of this change. David expressed a similar piety in 2 Sam 15:26 when he too faced possible punishment from Yahweh.

Samuel’s growth continued. He is a man of promise for Yahweh is with him. The assurance of Yahweh’s

presence is an empowering word, present also in the calls of Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah and others.

God did not let any of his promises to Samuel fail or fall to the ground. All Israel recognized that Samuel had now been confirmed as a prophet. The all-inclusiveness of the recognition is emphasized by the note that it involved everyone from Dan to Beersheba. Other accounts portray Samuel as judge (7:16) seer (9:6–9) and as a prophet to the whole people.

Samuel’s growth continued. He is a man of promise for Yahweh is with him. The assurance of Yahweh’s presence is an empowering word, present also in the calls of Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah and others.

Samuel served as Israel’s judge with integrity. He travelled a circuit around Israel settling disputes among the people. The integrity with which he handled this powerful position is demonstrated by the challenge he extended, near the end of his life, to the people whom he had served for so many years (12:1-5). He invited anyone whom he had cheated or wronged to come forward and he promised to rectify the situation. The unanimous response was, “You have

not cheated or oppressed us...You have not taken anything from anyone's hand" (v.4). That's quite a testimony, especially coming from the people themselves.

Samuel is also remembered as Israel's king-maker and king-breaker. In obedience to God, Samuel anointed Saul as Israel's first king. But he later told Saul that, "your kingdom will not endure ...because you have not kept the LORD'S command' (13:14). Even while Saul was king, Samuel effectually served as Israel's spiritual and moral leader.

Samuel's view of leadership is shown in his protest over Israel's demand for a king. He warned: "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve...he will take your daughters ... He will take your fields... He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage... Your menservants and maidservant and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves" (8:10-17). Contrast that description with the importance of servant leadership and warned against the dangers of a leadership that defines itself by its privilege and power to live off the efforts of those who are led.

Leadership for Samuel was stewardship, a responsibility, an honour. He demonstrated integrity because it was not his intention to show off integrity. He was honest because his intention was not to be known as an honest man. He was fair

Whatever your leadership responsibility, hold to standards of integrity! Manage your affairs with honesty, whether you're an owner of a multi-crore company or a parent of a two year old child. Our calling is to demonstrate integrity.

and just because he was not thinking about developing his reputation as an honest and just man. He was thinking about honouring God and serving God's people. He wasn't living to build a reputation. His high calling and focus resulted in those things.

Whatever your leadership responsibility, hold to standards of integrity! Manage your affairs with honesty, whether you're an owner of a multi-crore company or a parent of a two year old child. Our calling is to demonstrate integrity.

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell

*(Notes from the Leadership Bible
and Word Bible Commentary)*

NO compromise

Can't afford to be lukewarm

Sanjiv Ailawadi

The coach carrying the gold skidded on the wet mountain road as it negotiated the sharp hairpin bend too rapidly. It came to a rest teetering on the edge of the cliff, half of it on the mountainside and the other half hanging over the abyss, balanced with the weight of the gold on one side and five men on the other. One moved towards the gold but the bus started to tilt over the cliff so he leapt back to retain the balance. It was a frightening Catch 22 situation – save your life or perish with the gold.

The movie ended with the hero saying 'just wait, I'll think of something'.

Like the bus, India teeters on the edge of a cliff. Like a ship whose bottom has long weakened

with rust, we resemble the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream with a strong fine head and body made of gold, silver and bronze but with feet of clay. And like the hero, many promise bizarre solutions but none seem to work, most just seeming to inexorably push us further to tip over the abyss.

India on the edge of disaster? This may seem ridiculous when we look at the incredible strides we have made as a nation in the global arena. Hailed as an emerging superpower, our economy has been growing in leaps and bounds. The Ambani's, Mittal and Premji amongst 61 other Indians are on the Forbes 2012 list of billionaires; our middle class now visit places like

London, Paris and New York for a holiday. Just twenty years back this would have been unthinkable for most, who now add ipads, macs and the latest galaxies to their shopping lists of baingan, bhindi and broccoli.

Books like ‘Karma Cola’, ‘Saris and Chips’ in the 80’s heralded the dawn of a new order where east meets west, where a traditional society is being rapidly subsumed by ‘gizmology’, the new theology – the latest gadgets now control the way we think, shape our private worlds and direct our corporate ideologies.

Steven Best in his book ‘The Post Modern Adventure’ said the world is ‘*in the midst of a tempestuous period of transition and metamorphosis*’. This ‘*tempestuous*’ change he speaks of in the west was a much slower process spread over two centuries in the wake of the industrial revolution.

The Indian story has been far more catastrophic: we are primarily a ruralised country, living in a thousand year old medieval paradigm, rudely forced into a post-modern urbanised world. From 12 million plus cities in 1981, we have almost 60 today – a staggering increase of 500% in just 30 years. Most of this increase comes from migrants from old tribal cultures, from the poorest parts of India.

What happens when you thrust the medieval into a post-modern world?

It is a radical shift from a dictatorial regime into a democratic one. Much too drastic for many of our politicians, most of whom can’t take a joke and behave ‘*more like rulers than leaders*’ (www.hindustantoday.com). They have wealth and power as their goal, resulting in our democratic system managed by an increasing number of dictators.

Our dynamics are too complex to reduce to any one cause. However, it does not take a prophet to say that India teeters on the verge of a moral collapse.

It is a sudden movement from oppressive inequality to liberating equality. A concept not acceptable to our feudal mindsets which prefer to keep the marginalised majority in their oppressed states of serfdom and slavery. More than 80% of our cities are poor or very poor.

It is a bewildering change from a very few opportunities to dizzyingly multi plural possibilities and choices. This leaves most grabbing at chances they never thought they could have. Ending up in all sorts of quick fix, money making: trafficking, drug running, money laundering, robbery. The bigger the city the greater the prospects.

It is not just the medieval meeting the post modern. Our dynamics are too

complex to reduce to any one cause. However, it does not take a prophet to say that India teeters on the verge of a moral collapse. Our political system is in shambles to quote Bernard Shaw: *'smirched with compromise, rotted with opportunism, mildewed by expedience, stretched out of shape with wire-pulling and putrefied with permeation'*. Our economic system allows for the storage of thousands of tons of food grains to rot in one city while millions starve in another, just to keep food prices constant. Our social prejudices have kept a majority in the cruel bondage of poverty, while a mere fraction enjoy an opulent lifestyle.

History has shown that there will always be a reaction to a bondage of this nature. *Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind*. When we have fragmented self-seeking leadership, corruption rife under a very thin veneer of so-called public morality, there will be consequences. Where there is terrible social injustice, glaring socio economic inequality, people used, abused, exploited and discarded, there will be a price to pay.

We are breeding an increasingly cruel, brutal and indifferent society, impervious to the cries of others, unable to appreciate the pain faced by them. We scream when attacked by those we have oppressed. We lash out when there is the smallest hint of deviance on the part of those

we exploit for our own benefit. We are increasingly like that with one another, in our own communities, our own families, with our closest friends.

India is brimming over with anger and a deep restlessness. Media has brought the glitter of the world to our Indian slums and villages and everyone wants a slice of the pie instantly. The rumblings of discontent, the contempt of people, the erosion of values have

Our economic system allows for the storage of thousands of tons of food grains to rot in one city while millions starve in another, just to keep food prices constant.

already started to make their presence felt. We have yet to learn that we cannot oppress people in order to accumulate wealth, denounce rape but watch pornography, have no private morals but insist on public morality, without destroying the very foundation of our society.

The church, supposedly the primary agent of the kingdom, is part of this crisis. The word crisis has been defined as *the point where danger and opportunity meet, where future is in the balance and events can go either way*. A point where there is much danger

and darkness, but great opportunity to be the light. A state when the future hangs in the balance like the bus over the cliff, but we have it within our power to change the future. *What we bind on earth will be bound in heaven and what we loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.* We are to act, to be concerned, to offer solutions.

We cannot be the answer if our churches are places where most of us *are being instructed by somebody we do not know, about something we do not want to know* (GK Chesterton). We cannot offer solutions when both the worship and the preaching of the word are unreal, and disengaged having little resemblance to the church that Jesus had in mind. For most, the church begins and ends with the pastor, his cohorts and the power centres they occupy. Little realising the church comprises of all Christians everywhere. That it is a body of people linked with one another through the blood of Jesus. Forgetting that Jesus intends us to be dynamic, on the move, not static and huddled in some brick and stone building for a couple of hours on a Sunday. Ending up mute and sterile, unable to bear testimony to the living God.

In 2 Ki. 2:19-21 *The men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren."* 20 *And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in*

it." So they brought it to him. 21 *Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, "Thus says the Lord: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.'"*

We are the salt of the earth. Salt must be applied for it to be effective: we need to be applied to our nation and all that affects it. Our bowls are old –

Our bowls are old – we need a new way of thinking, new structures in our churches that do not resemble the dominant culture around us.

we need a new way of thinking, new structures in our churches that do not resemble the dominant culture around us. Structures that empower, that force us out there to be involved with people; structures that are inclusive, not exclusive; structures that are flexible, not hard and unyielding. When we engage according to the pattern that God sets for us, there will be sweetness in the place of bitterness and sorrow; compassion and mercy in the place of hard and brutal indifference. There will be light in the *deep darkness that covers the earth.*

We need to make a choice as Elijah told the people (1 Kings 18:21) *"How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow*

him.” The gospel has the power to transform provided we give it to those whom God wants us to – *the poor, the captive, the blind, the broken hearted and the oppressed* (Lk. 4.16-18), most of whom do not figure in our scheme of things.

We cannot compromise any longer and yet be called *the people of the living God*. We cannot afford to be lukewarm and yet fool ourselves that we are *the priests of the most High*. We are meant to be *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that we may proclaim the praises of Him who called us out*

of darkness into His marvellous light. Let’s be *sojourners and pilgrims, not settlers, let us abstain from those acts which war against the soul, being honourable among the people of this nation, that they may, by our good works which they observe, glorify God to follow Him* (1 Pe 2:9-12).

Sanjiv Ailawadi leads the New Generation Church in New Delhi, a church involved with sex workers and rescuing trafficked minors.



Compromise used to mean that half a loaf was better than no bread. Among modern statesmen it really seems to mean that half a loaf; is better than a whole loaf.

— G.K. Chesterton

Above Mediocrity

Engage in developing a coherent biblical perspective in socio-economic and politics that will allow us to make judgements about the justice and injustice of the changes taking place.

Solomon R John

A first century fisherman certainly not a poor man, and by no means a beggar, owned a house, a boat, and all the necessary equipments for his work. He hired, most likely as casual labours, the fisherman Zebedee and his family. His appearance must have been gruff, shabbily dressed and full of vigor with boisterous tempers, a rough life since fishing was a physically demanding job.

He was Apostle Peter, well trained by the furious storms that came upon Sea of Galilee. His experience imparts a reverence for nature and an appreciation of history. Nature, in his life was a true teacher and motivator that produced leadership skills, quality stewardship, resourcefulness and confidence in his task.

At one point of his life, a veteran in fishing was helpless, when his efforts turned futile. No fish! No money! But risked encountering Jesus Christ—a paradigm shift, from fish to men. It was an action packed, a spontaneous realization of Peter’s unworthiness before Christ, “Lord I am sinful.”

Simon Peter’s public confession reveals that Jesus is Lord and in him all things hold together. Even the authorities on earth. Whether living under a democratic, authoritarian or utilitarian government, whether persecuted or free, Jesus Christ still rules the world both for judgment and for blessing.

God’s kingdom embraces the whole world, the entire creation. We also believe that because of God’s patience

and the climax of Christ's kingdom lies in the future and will come by God's decision, not ours.

Considering the origin, the domestic circumstances, and the social surroundings of this fisherman, he was a prominent figure, be it acknowledging "Christ the Lord" at first or with eleven, addressing the crowd on the day of Pentecost. Peter possessed a personal, though not exceptional, natural talent which raised him above mediocrity. He had a lively and brilliant spirit, a quick and impetuous will, and, above all, a warm heart.

He was a simple, upright person who cared faithfully for his family and himself, later did not spare himself in looking after the newborn Church. His was a practical life: first things first. He planned boldly; his goals were high. If they were not completely rejected, they were at least opposed and discouraged. But Peter persevered till the end.

If we flip the other side of Peter's life bunch of blunders tagged against his character. He expected benefits from Jesus Christ, followed Jesus at distance during troubled times, rebuked Jesus' plan for salvation, chopped soldiers ear, denied Jesus, led a compromised life among the Jews and gentile. Yet he did not live in solitude, every move of his suggested to live godly and holy life.

However, Peter's life is truly a sociological experience Peter's breakfast with Jesus by the Sea of Tiberius reflects a turning point for Peter as a leader – a shepherd of God's flock (John 21:17). Once cowering from the threat of discovery, Peter emerges as a leader. His effectiveness as a leader is evident in his charismatic style, his conviction for his beliefs. He also challenged the religious and socio-economic and political norms of the time as a witness to Christ's life, suffering, death, and resurrection.

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Today, we have ample opportunity to engage in issues that concerns our nation as Apostle Peter did in his time. This transition moment in our fellow citizens life will offer a tremendous opportunity to effectively pray and work together in new ways for socio-economic and political understanding, an understanding that will allow us to influence people to follow in His steps and become more faithful witnesses for God who rules the world through Jesus Christ.

Every religion globally have a vision to reach God, but still compete for the human heart. I only speak here of my country (India) with a vision of unity – of how citizens of our nation see our life style and eventually be united.

It is the vision of Christ's kingdom fulfilled. As Paul explains to the Corinthians, this will come when Christ has reconciled all things to God and has defeated every evil, including death that stands in the way (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Christ's kingdom, for the glory of God, embraces everything that is human, including all technological, socio-economic, and political dimensions of life. But it will be achieved not by secular design but by God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our challenge is this: *"In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us."* (Titus 2:7-8) and then learn how to exercise our earthly socio-economic and political responsibilities in obedience to Christ.

What does this mean? How we conduct ourselves as a community, between the times of Christ's first and second comings? Whether we are in minority or majority, it should

make no difference as regards to the biblical principles while exercising responsibilities to disciple every citizens of our nation.

Most of us, far too long, approach socio-economics and politics as something outside the primary responsibilities of Christians. When the distinction is drawn between "church" and the "world," for example, it usually implies that politics, socio-economics, science, technology, and mass media are

Christ's kingdom, for the glory of God, embraces everything that is human, including all technological, socio-economic, and political dimensions of life.

"worldly." The Christian life is confined to personal piety, to church activities, to family prayer and Bible study etc. From this point of view, our engagement in politics, business or what-so-ever is seen as a step into the secular world.

This dualistic distinction between church and world, between the sacred and the secular is sadly mistaken. Christ is Lord of the whole world, over every dimension of creation. People's aims and purposes outside Christendom may predominate in politics, business, and the public media, but that does not mean these

areas of life exist outside God's standards for creaturely life or outside the domain of Christ's kingdom. To the contrary, from a Christian point of view, we should see that, in Christ, believers have been called to bring every thought, every activity, every responsibility, captive to Christ. All of life is God's creation and is claimed by Christ. So it is high time that we learn to proactively involve ourselves with people in the interest of our nation.

Christians therefore, must amount to more than the attempt to maintain upright personal behaviour in a secular environment. It must mean more than crusading for a few moral causes by political means. Christian politics must be about politics in its entirety. It must be about defining the very nature of government – about the structure, limits, and policy responsibilities of government. Our personal piety and heart-deep dedication to Jesus Christ should work their way out in the way we seek to obey God with all the responsibilities of stewardship we bear as citizens.

When we approach our nation this way, we can see that the socio-political arena is neither neutral nor

non-religious. Rather, it is a world shaped by the religiously deep drives, commitments, and habits of a culture. Politics is organised by the vision of life that controls citizens and governments. Its time now is to avoid easy path of simply going along with democratic, economic, and technological changes as they occur. Instead, engage in developing a coherent biblical perspective in socio-economic and politics that will allow us to make judgements about the justice and injustice of the changes taking place. Even more, we should be seeking to exercise as much leadership as possible – leadership in our parliaments, in our governments – to propose principled policies and changes in political and civil structures that advance justice domestically and internationally.

to be continued.

Col. 1:15-23; 2Pe. 3:9; Hab. 2:3; Heb. 10:37; Ro. 2:4; 1Ti. 2:1; 1Ti 2:2 1Ti 2:3; 1Ti. 2:4.



*Solomon R John,
Managing Editor*



DEATH & DEATH

Choice between mortal and eternal

Greetings to all our readers. Hope some of you may remember me because of my earlier articles. This time I am encouraged to write on an issue which is very contemporary and relevant to our times and true to our lives.

We are living in an age, where everything that works is considered to be 'ok'. Therefore, this time around, I would like to provoke your thinking on the issue of how we react in midst of a conflicting choice – ***the choice between 'death and death'***. *Well I am not trying to confuse, but I mean Choice between mortal death and the*

eternal death. How do we react when we are in midst of situations similar to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? What we do when we are in such circumstances, to which we are well acquainted many a times in our day to day lives.

The story of the testing of faith of Daniel's three friends - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to bow before the idol or face the blazing furnace, is a familiar one. The king had raised the issue—who was able to deliver them? They responded that they need not give Nebuchadnezzar any answer because he was not their

deliverer. They need not make their defence to him. He could not deliver them and this is why they could not bow down to his golden image. God was their Deliverer. He proved at the time of the Israelite Exodus, and afterward He commanded His people not to bow down to any image.

The God of the Jews was their Deliverer. He was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace. They did not presume that He was going to do so, although, He could, if in His sovereignty He chose to do so. The statement which follows is significant: "He will deliver us out of your hand."

The confidence of these three comes not from any personal assurance of deliverance from the furnace, but from God's promise to the captives of Babylon that He would deliver them from captivity and restore them as a nation:

Whatever happens to them personally, God has promised to deliver and restore His people. Their hope is in God, their Deliverer. One thing is non-negotiable: they will not bow down to this image.

There is a strong note of irony here. The Jewish captives of Babylon were in bondage because of their idolatry (see Isaiah 2; 30:19-22; 31:7; Jeremiah 8:19; Ezekiel 5:1-12; 6:1-10; 14:1-5; 16:15-23; 20:39-40; 22:1-4; 23). Israel was commanded not to make or worship idols, on penalty of death.

Until their Babylonian captivity, they persisted in their idolatry. Idolatry was one of the reasons for their being in Babylon.

Now, with the making of this golden image and the dedication ceremony, Daniel's three friends found themselves commanded to worship that idol, or die. While **God said, "Worship idols and die," Nebuchadnezzar said, "Worship my idol or die."** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were determined not to submit to idolatry, even if it meant death; In doing what seemed to lead to certain death (refusing to bow down to the golden image), the three Hebrews were actually delivered from eternal death. These three remained faithful to God and to His law, even when threatened with the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are the ideal Israelites, who obey God's law even when it is life-threatening. They would rather face the wrath of men than the wrath of the omnipotent God. The bible extols us ... ***do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*** *Matthew 10:28*

The king gave them another shot to bow down, but they said no. They went on to say that our God is big enough to deliver them from the furnace and even if he doesn't, they would rather obey Him. What an amazing faith they had! **Would we**

be able and willing to stand up to someone or something like that?

He was the king and threatening them with death but they stood by God. How often do we let down God in even much minor matter? When in circumstances, where we are drawn- to say no, to doubt, to back down from our standards, to compromise; Let us resist and remember those three men of faith and the grit they showed in their hour of test.

God pushed them to the limit and their faith held strong. Maybe God does that to us sometimes. We get up to the fire and we are still strong when others are fainting away. But that is not the end of it, God pushes it farther because he knows we can take it and the miracle will be bigger because our faith allows him to work in bigger ways. And then when God shows up, through the triumphant test, even those without faith take notice. And even if He chooses not to deliver, still it does not give us the liberty to fall short of His standard. Our God is an awesome God, who wants to give us the chance so that He may be proud of us - *His creation.*

The question is do we choose a quick and easy compromise leading

to temporary relief from the face of adversary or show grit and resistance in the times of trials and temptations, thereby choosing everlasting salvation? Under the great benevolence we have the free will as well as a clear picture of the outcome but again the choice is ours.

My friends what would you choose today? A broad and easy life which leads us to the fast-track to destruction or a radical lifestyle, which may make many unfriend us and due to which life may seem filled with challenges. ***Roads are different and so are their destinations. Choice of the drive is ours.*** Compromise to survive in the world may sound easy and lucrative but a radical lifestyle would ultimately ensure us eternal glory. ***Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James4:7***

God bless!



*Divya Jacob
Research Officer, EFI*



Yes. Really tough?
Sometimes, yes. But worth it? Yes

Lareau Lindquist

PETER DRUCKER:

Peter Drucker, one of the better known authors on leadership, has said that the four most difficult jobs in America are: President of the United States, the university president, the hospital administrator and the local church pastor. Many of you receiving this letter are in the fourth category. You are a pastor or Christian worker whether serving in the United States or overseas.

THE APOSTLE PAUL

He often addressed the wide variety of troubles that often accompany Christian workers. The major theme in Second Corinthians is trouble of any kind. He speaks from his own experience in ministry. For example, in chapter one he mentions *trouble*, *suffering*, and *hardship*. In chapter two he identifies *grief*, *distress* and *anguish*. In chapter four he says he was *hard-pressed*, *but not crushed*; *perplexed*, *but not in despair*; *persecuted*, *but not abandoned*; *struck down*, *but not destroyed* (4:8-9).

More specifically, he cataloged many of his pressures in chapter 11 which include the following: *imprisonment*, *severe flogging*, *the threat of death*, *beatings*, *stoning*, *shipwreck*, *danger in the rivers*, *danger from bandits*, *danger from his own countrymen*, *danger from false brothers*, *sleeplessness*, *hunger*, *thirst*, and *nakedness*. After cataloging these pressures (11:23-27), he added another heaviness that was always with him. He finishes his list of pressures with this

. . . *Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.* To those of us who have pastored churches, we can readily identify with Paul as we think of the work of pastoring. Only a pastor can begin to understand what he is talking about here. Tough? Yes. Really tough? Sometimes, yes. But worth it? Yes. If I would start ministry all over again, would I choose the pastorate? Yes, definitely so.

Peter Drucker identified the pastorate as a difficult vocation. The apostle Paul affirms it. My own experience confirms it to be true.

BARNABAS INTERNATIONAL

It was twenty-five years ago that Evie and I co-founded Barnabas International. We had already traveled and ministered in many countries around the world. We had observed Christian workers who were heavily weighed down in their ministry assignments. Many of them faced the pressures mentioned above. Often these pressures were magnified and intensified with these realities: language barriers, oppressive heat, loneliness, and relational discomfort with those they came to serve.

For these reasons we created the ministry of Barnabas International. It is a ministry of listening and loving. It is also a ministry of encouragement. In the Bible, encouragement comes from one of three sources . . .

- ❖ The encouragement of the Scriptures as stated in Romans 15:4 . . . *the encouragement of the Scriptures.*
- ❖ The encouragement from the Lord . . . *God encourages* (Romans 15:5).
- ❖ Encouragement from person to person. Every Christian is called to this ministry of encouragement (Hebrews 3:13, 10:25).

Jesus told His disciples that . . . *in this world you will have trouble* . . . and in the same verse He says that He will give us His PEACE. He goes on to add this . . . *I have overcome the world* . . . and because He has, He promises that we, too, can live and serve triumphantly.

Be encouraged, Lareau Lindquist, Founder, Senior Associate.

Am I a Christian with just a Christian T. Shirt?

Joyce Davis

I wish that I could answer this question by saying that I am a Christian all the time. But I am not a Christian all the time. Some days it is only an exterior while a battle rages within. Let me tell you the story of Jayanti & Jagdish.

Jagdish a four year old ran down the mountain slope for a little distance as his mother Jayanthi followed carrying the heavy school bag on her shoulder. Jagdish ran back to his mother said a few words and then ran forward. He now reached the little stall by the side of the school and ran back to his mother. “ma! See those orange candies! I want one”.

Jayanti replied, “I am coming. I am coming. Wait”.

Jayanti saw the orange candies. They were candied sweets in the shape

of a whistle. It cost just a rupee but Jayanthi had not even a rupee. She felt downcast and sad; can I not buy a sweet for my son?”

She could not because she had no money. She and her husband had come to live in the mountain region to share the Gospel with the people there. Her resources were few but there was a joy in living a life with the bare necessities. After all she loved Jesus she could make sacrifices! .so Jayanti told Jagdish, We don’t eat candies because it can spoil our teeth”.

Jayanti pondered over this episode. This was not the first time that she faced up to her changed life style. She and her husband could have a comfortable life had they not responded to God’s call. The pinch was felt the most when their son asked for simple things and they could not provide.

A bigger challenge was going to face the family.

It was Easter evening and the family of three had returned from conducting a second Easter service in a nearby village. All were tired and fell asleep by nine that night. Jayanti got up suddenly thinking she heard sounds of something bursting. She woke up her husband who went upstairs to the first floor and found the land lady with her head spattered in the room what a shock!

The next day friends from their church invited them to their home. The shock was great and their organization asked them to return home for a month. This holiday was soon over and it was time to return to their mountain home. Now came the struggle. Should their son Jagdish be exposed to the aftermath of the murder? The land lady's daughter had taken to prostitution after her husband had confessed to his crime and Jagdish had often wandered around in the different portions of the house including theirs. Little Jagdish could not understand the situation. He asked Jayanti one day "why do they have so many daddies in that house"?

These kinds of things made Jayanti and her husband decide to leave Jagdish with his grandparents and Jayanti and her husband returned. Following this Jayanti battled with thoughts of "Did

I do the right thing in leaving my four old so far away.

Jayanti had given up much to follow Jesus. But somewhere in her being she was close to slipping? Was she looking around at the people and circumstances?

In Psalm 73.2 the psalmist says "But as for me, my feet had almost slipped, I had nearly lost my foothold for I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked"

Psalm 73.4 they have no struggles: their bodies are healthy and strong.

73.5 They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills".

The psalmist here describes unwary ways in which a disciple could slip from his 'No compromise' walk with God. That way is described as the disciple envying the arrogant, self sufficient, wicked, God independent, people live.

The remedy the psalmist found is seen in psalm 73:16 "When I tried to understand all this. It was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.

How often have we entered the "sanctuary of God"? The opportunities to do so are galore at both personal and corporate level. In our individual lives,

as devotions, as Bible studies, singing songs of worship. In corporate ways every Sunday, every cottage meeting, every time we pray corporately. God's word is a mirror where we can see our true selves and the Holy Spirit touches our hearts to build our character.

In Jesus we find that not only did he show 'No compromise' in his life but he went on to bless those who cursed him. He moved in the opposite spirit. Today this can only be the work of God in our lives, his character in us. Matthew 5:38-42.

There is a book of hope where ordinary people with all their good and bad

facets have been described. If this book called the Bible becomes our daily bread then we have hope of becoming people with "No compromise" in our character and become more like Jesus. All Bible heroes had the character of "No compromise" in their love for God. All started with weaknesses but ended with strength of character.

*Mrs. Joyce Davis,
Education
Coordinator,
ASHA Foundation,
Bangalore*



The chief danger of the Church today is that it is trying to get on the same side as the world, instead of turning the world upside down. Our Master expects us to accomplish results, even if they bring opposition and conflict. Anything is better than compromise, apathy, and paralysis. God, give to us an intense cry for the old-time power of the Gospel and the Holy Ghost!

— A.B. Simpson

Church's Mission - God's or Human's

Someone said, 'prosperity is the promise of the Old Testament, adversity is of the new.' In apostolic times, ministry was a matter of toil, sweat, blood, tears and many prayers as they navigated through adversity, opposition, physical torture, mental agony and persecution.

Suffering on account of one's faith was found inevitable. In these days, faith appears to be a ready mix of philosophy, new age thought, contemporary culture, national polity and power equations, enterprise, and socio-economic projects! Ministry today has many faces: orthodox, evangelical, conventional, rural, urban, digital, contemporary, liberal, radical, social and even business! Power-mongering, nepotism, factions, dissensions, lawsuits, disunity and violence are diabolic manifestations in majority of Christian institutions and denominations today.

Faith is played up to the gallery to demonstrate one-upmanship by getting hyped, branded, specialized, commercialised and sophisticated.

Mission strategists have come to believe in repackaging the gospel with a touch of corporate culture, futuristic vision, innovation and fashion as soul-winning mantras.

Christian TV soaps, web evangelism, cyber churches, e-tube, online Christian singles dating, cyber hymns, e-books, online library etc mark the undercurrents of ministry in this new millennium. Cyber-bishops are just a click away to christen, baptize, solemnize a wedding, confirm, ordain or consecrate you. You can date online, fellowship online, pray online, give online, send flowers online, marry online, argue online, commit adultery online and divorce online! Cults and heretics thrive on the internet with their "products and services" to proselytise the 'Netizens' of the Internet kingdom.

It is quite sadistic to pen a scathing article denouncing all that is done under the banner of Christian ministry! I think there are more capable people than me for that. Nevertheless, as we observe how

today's ministries are rattling down a decadent path, dependant on mundane know-how, sowing in wind and reaping whirlwind, it is high time to take stock of the situation and seek biblical solutions.

Titles or Testimonies?

Cyber Chancellors are ready to trade a divinity doctoral degrees or a fanciful ministry title for you - via net for a net price. 'Upmarket' preachers and Christian leaders cherish crisscrossing the globe by super jets to attend global conferences and present "strategy" papers weaved with esoteric mumbo jumbo of theological, sociological, philosophical, economical, missiological domains, indiscriminately meddling on every thing under the sun, from homosexuality to global warming, nuclear holocaust to local politics, contraceptives to genetically modified foods, water crises to water baptism, ignorant of their calling and thrust areas. While they engage with the whole wide world around, their personal world crashes all of a sudden with financial scams and scandalous sexual affairs. Let us remind ourselves: Pharaoh had a mighty title, but Moses a miraculous testimony! Naaman had a title as a military general, but his poor servant girl, an orphan had a testimony! The high priests had a lofty titles backed by a Sanhedrin, but the wandering

disciples of Christ who were illiterate fishermen had a testimony of turning the world upside down! Nebuchadnezzar had a title as a grand emperor, but Daniel and his associates had a zealous testimony of overcoming trials, temptations and death.

Workaholics or Witnesses?

Christian organizations revel in introducing mundane "management principles" leading to squandering away of time in exhaustive discussions at luxury hotels and resorts and periodical production of a mountain of paper work, powerpoints and documentaries highlighting 'activities undertaken', 'problems encountered', 'facts and figures,' 'churches planted', 'projects managed,' 'annexure of maps,' 'curriculum developed,' 'training conducted', 'events chronicled', 'population covered', 'literature sold,' 'targets achieved', 'letters answered,' 'trends projected,' 'testimonies profiled' and budgets ... program-wise, strategy wise, activity wise, region-wise, gender-wise, item-wise, line-wise etc., in an attempt to establish a niche for themselves and impress the donors.

In order to ensure steady inflow of funds, the above workaholic frenzy spirals non-stop till people are afflicted by a 'burnout' and quit organisations! While many Christian

leaders earn international standard salaries and perks and enjoy living in ivory towers with three rings of security, their subordinates down the human pyramid are kept as hungry, sickly, burdened, lean cows, leave alone the deadline pressures, petty politics, fear psychosis, job insecurity and threat of transfers and ‘use and throw’ personnel policy!

Martha of Bethany was a workaholic to the core, even ignoring God-in-flesh in front of her own eyes! Do we value life and the welfare of the human soul? If we ignore our high calling to preach, teach, heal, disciple and serve the hurting world, we would only turn as Judases with eyeing the money bag. That would amount to betrayal of Christ and the end of being witnesses for His saving grace. A ministry sans human touch and spiritual sensitivity would fall out of grace, die a natural death in a matter of years, and sink into oblivion.

Professionalism or God’s Power?

While the value of professionalism is upheld through constant innovation in systems, work culture, technology, production processes, distribution logistics and administration of services, some argue that ministry cannot be left behind in the shadows of antiquity. Was Jesus a professional in the modern sense of the word — (selling His gospel)?

Did His disciples exhibit any brand of reckonable homiletic expertise in their preaching, tested pedagogy in their teaching or any media-savvy formula in their healing? The corporate world works 24X7 marked by a work-till-you-drop approach! Is it professionalism? Input of expertise in work that redeems time would be a beneficial approach.

At a decisive point of time, early apostles prudently prioritised their work, so that they did not waste a moment majoring on minor issues! Luke records, “Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables ... but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:2, 4) How well the apostles reorganised themselves that they all lived sharing their faith and resources and faithfully preached Christ and not themselves and then saw their words were indeed confirmed by signs and wonders from above!

Anand David works as a Program Officer for a diplomatic mission in Delhi and spends his free volunteering in churches for preaching, Christian writing and counseling. He and his wife Sharmilee attend Centenary Methodist Church.

On God's Side...

The Bible is as relevant as it was when it was penned down and was canonized; the issues that our society confronts today and often grapples to find a suitable solution are dealt in the Bible. These days we hear a lot about people compromising in values, principles and methods for shortcuts to success or to fulfil ulterior motives.

Joyce Meyer says, “*Compromise means to go just a little bit below what you know is right. It’s just a little bit, but it’s the little foxes that spoil the vine.*” This little bit deludes our minds and blurs our vision from the goal, we end up following the middle path where we follow the popular opinion and do what everyone does, right or wrong not considered, but what is in fashion is considered right, and thus knowing right and not doing it is compromising. The Bible is very clear in this it warns the believers to be difference makers and not compromisers and follow the designs of the world.

In Genesis chapter 39, we come across a man, who is sold by his brothers, he is a refugee in a foreign land, purchased by the Medianite merchants and later is sold to Potiphar in Egypt. The man is Joseph, who was put in charge of all the affairs of Potiphar and here comes the biggest moment, a moment that defined his destiny forever. Potiphar had a young wife; she turns up to Joseph one day and says that she wanted sexual favour from him. What would have been our reaction in a similar situation?

Most of us would have thought that the mistress of the house would be in our grip after the episode. A moment of weakness, the looming temptation to compromise, all these thoughts must have baffled Joseph. But, this is where he comes up head and shoulders above the rest - in that very trying and difficult moment Joseph does not compromise with the situation and entertains no thought of breaching the trust of Potiphar, his master. God rewarded Joseph in the long run and made him in charge of Egypt, and when the nation faced famine, it was because of Joseph that his siblings and many Hebrews benefitted in the face of calamity.

While God rewarded Joseph for his faithfulness, God punished Solomon because he compromised and his marriages to the many women swayed his heart away from God. **When we compromise it all seems sweet but the consequences are tragic**, as the Bible tells us that the Israelite kingdom divided after Solomon and there was constant fighting in his household. ***We need to brace ourselves up and to realize that we are responsible for thoughts, attitudes, and actions.***

Only as we accept our responsibility and appropriate God’s provisions will we make any progress in our pursuit of holiness and then we would rather be on God’s side than compromise to the world’s end.

*Abhishek Isaac Lyall
Pastor, Methodist Church Unnao*

Enterprise

without

expertise

This country has a fair number of Christian organisations in the form of schools, orphanages, hospitals, colleges, rehabilitation centres etc. All of these institutions have been built on foundations of anointed entrepreneurial endeavour. They are the result of decades of labour, sacrifice and diligence, they bear testimony to the struggles men and women have had to face in order to transform a challenge into an opportunity.

But all that is in the past. I wonder if we are still capable of Christian enterprise?

Enterprise needs expertise. An organisation cannot run on love and fresh air. It needs vision, strategy and capital.

In the real world, as opposed to the Christian bubble, capital is acquired at huge costs. In our case, we simply

beg. When we can't pay our employees what they truly deserve, we remind them of the rich man's love for wealth. Just so you know, God said it was difficult for a rich man to enter heaven, not impossible. Besides, is anything too hard for the Lord?

But, lets not digress. As modern day Christians, we have mastered the art of self-charity. Everything is fine as long as we can laugh all the way to the bank.

Also, in a master-stroke of hypocrisy, we have elevated poverty to the level of the highest possible virtue, so as to imply that the inability to provide for ourselves brings us closer to God. Well, the Bible talks about Jacob and his ingenuity. Isn't there is a lesson in that?

Like all organisations, Christian organisations, too, have costs. Sure,

we've got a mansion of gold in heaven and all that, but, as of today, we are answerable to the BSES, the municipal corporation etc.

From a personal perspective, I think there are two kinds of dilemmas that a majority of the Christian organisations suffer from. One, they hire under-qualified staff. It is not surprising, considering the talent hunt is conducted within the four walls of the church. Since, the calibre of the employee determines the calibre of the institution, the results are dismal, figures dip, people are not paid, the building is in shambles. The answer is not in ashes and sackcloth. They are the paraphernalia of repentance, not profit-making. Father Eaton, the Vice Principal of St. Xavier's, Calcutta, my most beloved teacher, would have said, 'It's time to pull up your socks.'

No one is against prayer, it is inaction under the guise of prayer that is despicable.

Second, they are compelled to hire non-Christian staff. The result of hiring non-Christian staff is the incorporation of a slow, systemic invasion of mock tolerance and the slow erosion of the original value system.

Upon closer observation, I realised that this dearth of professionally accomplished believers has resulted in a unique response. I found that more and more theologians were being appointed as members of boards,

trusts, funds, committees and more. (Before you misinterpret this, please keep in mind that I have great respect for theologians and their learning, and this article is the result of their most valuable suggestions.)

A few years ago, Amartya Sen wrote a book called *An Idea of Justice*. At its launch, he placed a riddle before the audience. There were three children and each was laying claim to a flute. One of them knew how to play the flute, the second child knew how to make a flute, and the third had a strong desire to play the flute. The audience was asked, who should be given the flute?

As we explore the question of Christian enterprise, a similar question arises. Who should be given the responsibility to run our organisations? This is a serious question because the stakes are exceptionally high. The average church goer remains oblivious to larger questions. He lives in his happy bubble, and is content with three meals a day and occasional cake.

But, as leaders and shepherds of the community, you have greater responsibility. Each Christian organisation, both small and huge, is a part of the express will of God. You and I shouldn't repeat the mistake made by the servant with the single talent. You and I are stewards, remember?

Just as every article in the house has its own specific purpose and

cannot be replaced by another, each person in the congregation has his God-assigned task and capabilities. Surely, theologians have an important role to play in the house of God, so do surgeons, marketing executives, bureaucrats, investment bankers, real estate agents, TV producers, professors, film-makers, managers. I dare say that interpreting the word of God requires as much grace and anointing as the creation of a legal document that safeguards your private equity or the administration of a team of fifty sales agents and achieving near-impossible targets.

We need to be bold enough to let each man in the body of Christ do what he does best. This will make us richer in terms of knowledge and perspective, and it will enable a

holistic understanding of any given situation. 'Familiar and available' can no longer be the criteria.

However, as I write, I am aware that several organisations are rethinking their strategy and actively seeking the help of believing professionals both within and outside the church. It is a welcome gesture, and I believe that it will go a long way in training the younger generation for positions of responsibility, raising the levels of professionalism in existing institutions, ensuring sustainability, and increasing our presence in the national scenario.

After all, what kind of a father leaves debts for his children?

Think again.

Namrata Achowe

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Biblical Missio Dei

Since the beginning theologians as well as philosophers have been trying to systematically understand the Universe in all its diversity. One such successful model of understanding the universe from a theistic point of view was proposed by Franz Rosenzweig. He aimed at grasping, articulating and indeed realizing ‘truth’ as the identity and difference of ‘all’ that is. Commenting upon Rosenzweig’s philosophical framework Pollock says that unlike the modern day understanding of a ‘system’ as some kind of totalizing force of intellectual oppression that reduces all difference, and all human individuals, to cogs in a machine, to batteries powering the Matrix, it addresses fundamental human problem, a philosophical task of grasping, articulating and realizing ‘the All’. He made use of ‘*Star*’ in order to articulate ‘*All*’ in its identity and difference. Based on the philosophical framework depicted through ‘*Star*’, Rosenzweig presented forays into the theological categories of creation, revelation and redemption. Based on this comprehensive framework, the ‘Biblical Missio Dei’ or the Mission of God has been successfully and very

effectively explained in the form of creation, de-creation and re-creation themes present in the Bible. This short essay has attempted to understand Biblical Missio-Dei based on these three broad categories. So, tighten your seat belts as we take a rapid tour through the pages of the Bible, right from Genesis till Revelation...

Creation: The mission of God is evident through the very act of creation itself. God is a creative creator, who brings the universe into existence by the power of His word. The book of Genesis does not doubt but powerfully claims in its opening verse how in the beginning God (the only One who exists from eternity past) created the heavens and the earth. The first two chapters of Genesis not only explains how the universe was created by God, also explains how God created man and woman in his own image (2:26-27) and placed them as stewards to tend and take care of the garden (Gen. 2:15).

It is noteworthy that there was a perfect harmony within the created order – harmony between man and the rest of the creation and harmony within

the animal and plant kingdom as well harmony within a human individual. We also witness a perfect harmonious relationship between human beings and God himself, who used to have fellowship with Adam and Eve on a regular basis. However, the Genesis narrative shows the change in the behavior of Adam and Eve in the presence of God – while it was time of fellowshiping with God, Adam and Eve began to hide themselves from God. Such an unusual behavior was not witnessed earlier. What exactly might have caused this unusual behavior? This marks the beginning of the de-creation process (deterioration) within God’s erstwhile perfect creation. Even the creation came under the influence of this cataclysmic event.

De-creation: Pointing to the reason for such an unusual behavior, the Genesis narrative informs us that God had clearly commanded Adam and Eve that they were to eat the fruits of all the trees except the one in the center (Gen. 2:17). However, as the narrative shares, they disobeyed the clear commandment of God. As a consequence, they not only realized their nakedness and shame but they also hid themselves from God out of fear. Sin always brings us into a state of shame and guilt. This was the beginning of an era that marked the jarring of all relationships. The land was cursed in that it would now produce weeds that choked the good seeds and made cultivation difficult and as a result Adam was now supposed to work harder. Eve was now to go through excessive birth pains. Similarly, there was conflict

between the animal and plant kingdom. The effects of this de-creation (fall) were evident in three main areas: ‘*the seeds*’, ‘*the land*’ and ‘*the name*’. The land came under a curse (Gen. 3:17; Gen. 4:1-16); there developed enmity between the seed of the women and the serpent’s – Gen. 3:15; and the names of people, who sought to have a big name for themselves apart and independent from God, were now disturbed (their plans ruined) and scattered (Gen. 11:1-9, esp. v. 4).

Proto-Gospel Pronouncement: Just as the de-creation event was not a surprise to God in the same manner His plan to restore (re-creation) his creation did not require God to plan a strategy. The proto-Gospel is thus present at the very incident, where de-creation began – Gen. 3:15 shares how Eve’s offspring (singular, pointing to Lord Jesus Christ) will be struck by the snake (the Evil One) but eventually how the ‘Seed’ will crush serpent’s head and claim victory over sin, death and curse on behalf of the entire humanity and the created order.

Re-creation: The beauty of God’s mission (Mission Dei) is evident in that while in chapter 11, the people attempting to make a big name for themselves end up getting confused and scattered, in Chapter 12, God calls a man named Abraham from the Ur of Chaldeans (modern day northern Iraq) to go to a city that He would show him and in this, God promises Abraham three things: a ‘big and honorable’ name, a county ‘land’ and seed (descendants as the sand of the sea) –

Gen. 12:1-3. Abraham obeys God and it is credited to him as righteousness – as if he was walking with ‘justice’. Later, we recognize that he becomes the ‘father of faith’- the first-fruits (*bereshit*) of a generation of people, who would exhibit the same kind of faith, that pleased God.

During the Moses’ time, after he spent forty years in wilderness, God calls him for a specific task. In this call, God promises two things: ‘*release*’ from the oppression and bondage of the Egyptians and ‘*a space*’ for them – a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex.3:17) and God’s special help to Moses in order to fulfill the task (Ex. 4:15).

Global Mandate: After the people of Israel are released from the oppressive hands of the Egyptians, they are given a very special call, which represents the heart of God for the whole world – *the Missio Dei*. The people of God are to obey the Lord in everything (to keep His covenant) and they are to be a ‘kingdom of priests’ and ‘a holy (Heb. *Qadosh*= set apart for God/distinct) nation’ (Ex. 19:6). The nation was Israel was thus called to act as a ‘kingdom of priests’ and reach out to the entire world for and with ‘Yahweh’.

De-creation continues and Re-creation promised:

While God called the nation of Israel ‘to be’ and ‘act’ as his ‘Priests’ for the whole world, they failed in this calling and as the history of Israel shows, they went after ‘other’ things that do not

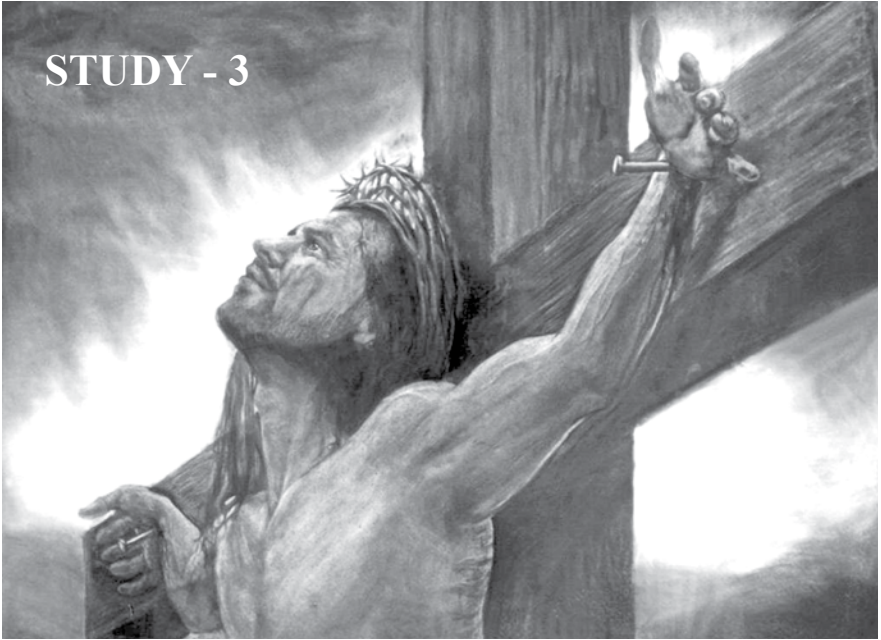
profit. Nevertheless, God continued to move forward in His mission of restoring his creation (re-creation). In Numbers 22-23, we find prophet Balaam, who agrees to pronounce curse upon God’s chosen people in exchange for money from King Balak of Moab. So many times even today we also sell away our calling and spiritual inheritance for few silver coins. Is it not? However, God did not allow Balaam to pronounce curses on His people (Num. 22:12) and while the prophet Balaam blinded by his own greed fails to see God’s angel, his donkey speaks up and stops him from cursing God’s people (Num. 22:30). At the end of the discourse, it is evident that God will not allow anyone to pronounce curse upon his people because he has chosen to bless them and through them to bless the whole world (Num. 23:19).

Nevertheless the effects of de-creation were evident even within the created order. While the men of Jericho meet Elisha the prophet, they report how the water is bad and land unproductive (2 Kings 2:19). However, God’s act of healing and restoration is also evident as he heals the water and land through his prophet. Acts such as these shed light into God’s re-creation process that worked simultaneously, cancelling the effects of de-creation.

*Vikas A Ram,
Research Officer, EFI*

*(For the part 2 of the Missio Dei,
please follow the next month’s AIM
issue...don’t miss it!)*

STUDY - 3



Suffering: Meaning and Values

Dr. Saphir Athyal

“In the world you will have trouble.
But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 12:23-28, 32-33; 16: 1-4, 31-33.

John 12:23-27, 31-33

23 Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world

will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. 27 ‘Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—“Father, save me from this hour”? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour....

31 Now is the judgement of this

world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people* to myself.’³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

John 16:1-3, 33

1‘I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling.²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.³And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me....³³I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!’

Theme for our study today is ‘Suffering: Its meaning and values’. The words ‘passion’ and ‘patient’ come from an original root that means ‘to suffer’. There are not many other places like CMC Hospital where day after day and year after year many people from different parts of India and abroad in great numbers live in pain and suffering, and others try to deal with them trying to alleviate their pain.

The Bible has much to say about healing, especially wholesome or holistic healing, and there are a few Scripture passages that deal with health care, but not much about medicines, and even less about doctors. During the Old Testament times, the priests

served as doctors, and we know that the evangelist Luke was a doctor. One New Testament reference, Mark 5:26 talks about a woman who came to Jesus to be healed. It says, “A woman was there. She has suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.” I am not going to preach on this text tonight to this audience of doctors, medical staff, nurses and medical students!

We call this week ‘Passion Week’ as we meditate upon Christ’s sufferings even to his death on the cross on our behalf. So let us briefly look at the issue of suffering in general and Christ’s vicarious suffering in particular.

The Reality of Sufferings:

Suffering of different kinds and intensities is a reality in human life. All people in some way or the other suffer. “Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). There are many instances of suffering that are caused by wrong choices of humankind. Most often people suffer from man-made calamities such as wars, communal and racial conflicts, exploitations and terrorist attacks. Most sickness also is man-made.

But human beings are not responsible for natural calamities we face increasingly today, such as unprecedented earthquakes, massive tsunamis, tornadoes and floods that

cause deaths of ten thousands of people including countless number of children. We cannot understand why and for what purpose they occur. One mother in east coast of India who lost her husband and three children in 2004 tsunami cried, “Oh, the cruelty of gods to let me live after taking away my husband and children. I wish not to live”.

Some people try to hide from the reality of sufferings and some others try to face pain stoically. They try to put blame on other people and everything in life. Often they get angry with God.

Where is God when we suffer?

When people go through great sufferings whatever faiths they may have, they all struggle with various questions. Did God cause it, and if so why should he? How could God let this happen? If he did not cause it, could he have not at least stopped it, if he is God? Does God care when we are in despair and agony? We wonder, can we question God when it seems that he is silent. Yes: Job did, Jeremiah did, and Jesus did.

Some Muslim religious leaders say that it is all Allah’s will; our fate whether we live or die is in Allah’s hand. Hindu clerics generally would attribute it to the working of karma, a cause and effect principle that works in the universe from which even gods have no escape. Certain Buddhists

consider that suffering is the very fabric of human life. In our greed we meddle with nature and pay the consequences. Some Christians also tend to think along these lines that it is some kind of God’s judgment, or a display of his power.

God’s will for humankind and creation is not suffering and death, but life, peace and joy. That is why God in Christ entered into our broken world, its history and lives of its people. Out of the brokenness of the world, God is in the process of recreating it through Christ. “The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth” for its own redemption as it shares in the suffering and pain of humankind (Rom 8:22-23). God is “reconciling the world”, and creating “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1, 5).

We are in the middle of those two awesome events, one at the beginning of times when God created all things good and perfect, and the other at the end of times when God will recreate everything to be faultless, excellent and good. We share in the brokenness and limitations of the earth until God’s work of re-creation is completed. Suffering does not have the last word, but God does.

Biblical Perspectives on Suffering

We will briefly look at the meanings and the values of suffering from the perspective of the Bible. The Gospel

of John chapters 12-20 deal with not only the suffering and death of Jesus but also the pain, distress and even persecution that his followers would face. A very troubling question of many of us is, if God is all-powerful, just and loving, why should the innocent suffer. Undeserved suffering or the issue of theodicy is a dilemma for which we have no answer.

In the beliefs of some religions, good and evil coexist eternally, the

Yin-yang (shadow and light) principle. Suffering and distresses are believed to be caused by evil spiritual powers or certain type of gods or demons. But in the strict biblical monotheistic concept of God, we believe that while he uses other agents, ultimately God is in control of all that happens to us, although he may not directly cause them. In the context of our faith in an Almighty God, the question of suffering, especially undeserved suffering, becomes an enigma.

Bible does not deal with the intellectual questions involved in this issue. We might say that in the Bible the reality of suffering is taken for granted and different explanations are given for it. So also values or benefits of suffering

are dealt with. We will briefly look at them.

First, one commonly expressed truth in general in the Bible is that suffering is due to sin. When God created the world he made everything good and perfect. But because of the disobedience and sin of man, evil entered the world with the resultant curse of God, pain, toil, conflicts and death. Adam and Eve were punished. So also the people of the earth were destroyed by flood for their wickedness at the time of Noah. Nations surrounding Israel were punished for their sins.

Israel, God's people also faced distress by wars, famines and slavery in foreign nations because of their sin of breaking God's covenant with them. Blessings of God for obedience of him and his curses and punishment for disobedience, are often taught in the Old Testament. Not only at the national level but also in terms of individuals, suffering is understood as God's punishment for sin. Yet in the Old Testament people questioned why should the righteous suffer. The question is occasionally raised, but not answered.

to be continued.

*We have to pray with our eyes on God,
not on the difficulties.*

- Oswald Chambers



JULY 2013

“The Christian life is not a constant high. I have my moments of deep discouragement. I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, ‘O God, forgive me,’ or ‘Help me.’ – Billy Graham ”

1 MONDAY Today is Doctor’s Day - this day is nothing but a day to show special appreciation, gratitude and care to the Doctors, who are there whenever we feel sick. For a particular span of time we visit them, take medicine and then we forget them completely. If we think deeply, we can feel that doctors are a reflection of GOD’s care for this world; they and their family members sacrifice their lives for the patients by giving up so much of their time. Doctor’s day is a real opportunity to understand the relation between doctors and patients. Let us thank God for such a noble profession and for all the doctors known to us!

2 TUESDAY Pray for EFI General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Richard Howell as he leads EFI and travels extensively for the Kingdom of God. Kindly pray that God will continue to equip him with wisdom and good health.

3 WEDNESDAY Kindly pray that God will keep us safe from the monsoon maladies as tummy troubles, jaundices, typhoid and mosquitoes related diseases are common in this season. Also pray for all the places which are under flood alert or facing flood situations.

4 THURSDAY Kindly pray as schools reopen and children and teachers get back to routine after the vacations. Pray for a good teacher pupil bonding and that children may be moulded in such a way that they become future nation builders.

5 FRIDAY Please pray for God’s wisdom upon the political leaders, especially KV Thomas (Food minister, Govt. of India) as they work towards passing a landmark ‘food security bill’ that ensures legal entitlement of food through the entire life of an individual.

6 SATURDAY Pray that the Christians in the different states of India will be able to enjoy their fundamental right of freedom to profess, practise and propagate the faith.

7 SUNDAY Pray for the Christian evangelists that witness the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ to whom God brings to them, that their goal shall be not to ‘win Souls’ and accomplish objectives in this way, but to make Disciples of Jesus Christ, for much is at stake in regard to one’s soul. (Read Matthew 7:21-23)

8 MONDAY Pray for the Telugu pastors, who were attacked by the Hindu extremists on 4 June in Hyderabad. Some were badly injured. Kindly pray that the experience of persecution will strengthen their faith in Christ.

9 TUESDAY Pray for the ministry of Global Leadership Institute (GLI) as they seek to serve as a research and training institute in developing leaders for the 21st century.

10 WEDNESDAY Pray for the Dalit Christians, who have been fighting for a long time for inclusion and due recognition.

11 THURSDAY World Population Day - The United Nations' (UN) World Population Day is annually observed on July 11 to reaffirm the human right to plan for a family. It encourages activities, events and information to help make this right a reality throughout the world. World Population Day aims to increase people's awareness on various population issues such as the importance of family planning, including gender equality, poverty, maternal health and human rights. Kindly pray for greater awareness.

12 FRIDAY Pray for the house churches across the nation as they run effective ministries in the midst of ever growing challenges and opposition.

13 SATURDAY Pray that God's people would use their resources to glean a great harvest, usher in revival, extend the kingdom and love one another as Christ does.

14 SUNDAY Pray for the Sunday worships going on across the globe today. May each individual celebrate the living Lord and His goodness. May Jesus be put on the highest pedestal today and forever.

15 MONDAY Pray for all the EFI secretaries, executive members and group member institutions across the country. Praise God for all their contributions towards God's Kingdom and pray that God will continue to bless them with health, wisdom and strength.

16 TUESDAY Kindly pray for a renewed spiritual revival of the EFI staff in New Delhi. Praise God for their diligent work in their respected fields and pray for God's continued blessings upon them.

17 WEDNESDAY Pray for the Christians in Pandherwani, Yavatmal, Maharashtra as the Hindu villagers are opposing them because of their faith since April. A house construction of a Christian was destroyed and the police have filed an FIR against 28 believers. To procure their bail, the Christians need to submit Rs 15,000/- to the police. Kindly pray for the leaders of Indian Evangelical Mission and for all the believers in this area.

18 THURSDAY Pray for the Victory of Christ Church in Imphal, Manipur. The church complex was vandalized on May as some people opposed the church construction, which allegedly stands adjacent to a historical site. Pray for the Christian workers who are facing difficult times. Pray that they will stand firm with wisdom from the Holy Spirit amidst all the difficulties.

19 FRIDAY Pray for all the Christian youth in New Delhi and other parts of India. It is very easy for youngsters to deviate from the truth in this high-techno world. Kindly pray that they will remember Christ and that they will be wise to put Him first in their lives.

20 SATURDAY Let us spend some time quietly before the Lord, seeking his guidance in all that we do that brings glory to His name. Ask God to grant us to speak His Word with all boldness. Pray that there will be transformation amongst people through the Gospel and that the Holy Spirit will open up their hearts to receive Christ.

21 SUNDAY Pray for the protection of pastors and evangelists, who continue to bear witness in a hostile situations in different parts of our country. Continue

to pray that God's anointing might come upon the leaders, churches, institutions, that every Christian in our country will be a living witness for Christ Jesus.

22 MONDAY Pray for all the Christian workers, who are reaching out to people with the love of Christ in all the corners of the world. Pray that they will press on with a living hope in Christ and win more souls. Let us pray that the word of God may be communicated clearly and powerfully.

23 TUESDAY Please pray for the disciples of Lord Jesus so that they may live and minister, based on the biblical values of integrity, honesty, spirit of serving Kingdom concerns, without the spirit of selfish ambitions for creating personal wealth and power. May the Lord raise the disciples/leaders of Lord Jesus Christ to greater levels of excellence - those who would become modern day's Pauls, Peters, Stephens, Daniels, Nehemiah and Ezras.

24 WEDNESDAY Praise God that despite persecution and discrimination happening in Kandhamal, Odisha, EFICAR has been successful in the revival of Sunday Schools in that region by opening 10 new and reviving 10 existing ones.

25 THURSDAY Pray for the destitute and homeless children, who are forced to beg on the streets. Pray that trafficking of young lives for profit may be stopped.

26 FRIDAY Today is Kargil Victory Day – Pray for the families of the soldiers, who had lost their lives during that proxy war. Also continue to pray for the brave heart soldiers, who man our borders to give us peace and security.

27 SATURDAY Pray that the Lord would bless the ministry of ETANI and especially pray for Wg. Cdr. R. Mukha, General Director; Mrs. Varghese, Finance Secretary, other staff members - Mr. Ezra Robert, Rajesh Masih and Robinson.

28 SUNDAY Parents' Day promotes the message that the role of the parent is important in human development, which requires investment, focus, and commitment. In 1994 President Bill Clinton signed into law a resolution adopted by the US Congress to establish the fourth Sunday of every July as Parents' Day. This day is similar to Mother's Day and Father's Day. According to the Congressional Resolution, Parents' Day is established for "recognizing, uplifting, and supporting the role of parents in the rearing of children". Though a foreign concept, still today we too can offer our thanks for the wonderful parents He gave us, who love and care for us.

29 MONDAY Please pray for Pastor Ram Prakash, who has been serving the Lord in Eastern UP since 2001. Please pray for Lord's protection upon his life as he has been recently receiving threats from Hindu fundamentalist groups.

30 TUESDAY Pray for the safety of young girls, especially in Jharkhand, who have been going missing without any trace and are inevitably being trafficked for trade throughout India.

31 WEDNESDAY Praise God for helping us to complete this month successfully. Pray that we will continue to remain faithful to His calling.



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