

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST

# aim

September 2021 ❖ PAGES 54 ❖ ₹ 20/-

A Journey of Faith

*I will instruct you  
and teach you  
in the way you should go;  
I will guide you.  
Psalm 32:8*



## JOB OPPORTUNITY IN EFICOR, NEW DELHI

EFICOR, a Christian organization involved in relief & rehabilitation, poverty alleviation, training, HIV/AIDS awareness and care, Climate change adaptation and Anti-Human Trafficking, working in different parts of India is looking for a person with commitment and qualification to join the leadership team.

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Reporting to : Executive Director

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- ☐ Working knowledge of laws and rules relating to an Indian NGO is necessary.

**Salary:** Commensurate to qualification and experience

**Expected start date:** 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021

Interested candidates may apply with detailed C.V. giving details of three references including Pastor and two Christian leaders latest by 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2021 to:

The Chairman, EFICOR Board, EFICOR, 308, Mahatta Tower, 54, B-Block Community Centre, Janakpuri, New Delhi 110058. Telefax: 011-25516383/4/5; email: [chair@eficor.org](mailto:chair@eficor.org)

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Vol. 50 / No. 9  
AIM Annual Subscription for  
India, Nepal & Bhutan Rs. 200/-  
(Other countries \$ 20)

A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

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Centre Spread (Color) :	Rs. 7000/-
Back Cover (Color) :	Rs. 5000/-
Front Inside (Color) :	Rs. 4000/-
Back Inside Page (Color):	Rs. 4000/-
Ordinary Page (B&W) :	Rs. 2000/-
Half Page (B&W) :	Rs. 1200/-
One third Page (B&W) :	Rs. 900/-
Quarter Page (B&W) :	Rs. 500/-

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## Online payment details

Name : EFI Publication Trust | Bank : State Bank of India | Account No. **54015789597** | IFSC CODE: **SBIN0040415**  
Branch : Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019

For subscription query call us: 011-26431133; Tele/Fax: 011-26285350, E-mail: [aimatefi@gmail.com](mailto:aimatefi@gmail.com), website: [www.efionline.org](http://www.efionline.org)

THE TREASURER, EFI PUBLICATION TRUST, 805/92, Deepali, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019.  
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Rev. Vijayesh Lal



# THE SUICIDE PROBLEM

The parents and the extended family were devastated as their eldest son took his own life. One could offer little comfort, except praying for them and grieving with them. It was heart-breaking watching them cry as they collected his bones from the cremation ground and then immersed them into the river. The question that lingered on in the mind of the family was: how come they never saw this coming?

Close to 800000 people die by suicide every year the world over: that's one person every 40

seconds. Figures tell us that for each suicide, there are more than 20 suicide attempts.

India has the highest suicide rate in the Southeast Asian region, according to the World Health Organization. Suicide rates in the country have been rising over the past 5 decades and every day over 381 people commit suicide in India. According to the National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB), more than 90,000 young adults died by suicide in India in the year 2019. In fact, suicide is the leading cause of death in India

among the age group of 15–29.

Most suicides in India happen because of family issues according to data and the tendency of suicide is greater among men than women. NCRB data shows that out of 100 people that commit suicide, 70.2 % are male and 29.8 % are female. Nearly 37% suicides in India came from 53 cities. According to NCRB, every hour one student commits suicide in India, with about 28 such suicides reported every day.

These are startling figures and introduce us to a major problem in the world today, particularly in our nation. However, suicides are preventable if timely help is sought and given. The important thing is not to ignore the warning signs. The following things may indicate that a person is susceptible to suicide or thoughts of the same: talking or researching on how to hurt oneself, withdrawing from social contacts or family, mood swings, preoccupation with death, substance abuse, changes in appetite and sleep patterns,

indulging in risky or self-destructive behaviour etc.

The above signs cannot be ignored. In fact, thoughts of suicide are a medical emergency. Mental health issues unfortunately, do not get the priority they should in the Indian society and culture. The young person mentioned at the beginning of this editorial, who eventually took his life, demonstrated most of the signs mentioned above except substance abuse, but the family either failed to notice or did not give it serious thought.

People who are at a greater risk of suicide include people who may have a mental illness or poor physical health or even disabilities; people who have attempted to harm themselves in the past; people with relationship problems; those who have been sexually abused as children or people who have recently been exposed to suicide by someone else.

Urgent intervention from organizations and experts is a must. However, suicide

prevention involves much more than just psychiatrists or medicines. It requires providing moral support and ways to escape from abusive relationships; it involves strengthening of communities and social ties as well as recognising those in need and helping them seek professional help. It can also involve economic development and financial assistance.

Arguing with a person contemplating suicide is not going to help no matter how logically you do so. According to doctors, the following can be said to a person who is having suicidal tendencies: I am here for you, I understand it is a difficult situation for you and let's figure this out and speak to a professional.

There are many suicide prevention helpline numbers that can be contacted for help and guidance. Some of them that are available 24x7 are:

Kiran, Government of India helpline, All India - 18005990019

Vandrevala Foundation, All India - 9999666555 / WhatsApp- +1(256)6662141  
Fortis Hospital National Helpline, All India - 8376804102  
Sneha India Foundation, Chennai - 044 2464 0050  
Aasra, Mumbai: 022 2754 6669

Too often, the discussion on suicide within Christian circles gets concentrated on whether the person who took his/her life will be forgiven by God or will go to heaven or not, while we should be worrying and discussing about how to bring hope to people with suicidal tendencies and help them instead. The pressing issue is not their destination after death or even the morality of suicide, but the spiritual and mental hopelessness and despondency that threatens to push them over the edge.

As Lewis B. Smedes wrote years ago, "Loved ones who have died at their own hands we can safely trust to our gracious God. Loved ones whose spirits are even now slipping so silently toward death, these are our burden."

Rev. Vijayesh Lal



# TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION



EFI - Children @ Risk (EFIC@R) has been transforming the lives of young generation through education across the country.



Children from marginalized and most backward communities; Dalits and tribals who have been

denied of their rights to education due to poverty and various other social issues are being given their much-needed education. These children are also most vulnerable groups to trafficking and child exploitation.

At present, EFIC@R is providing free basic education to 510 children through its 14 Literacy Centres in five Indian states. The Literacy Centres not only focus on formal education but also engaged in strategic


volunteered in the cause have paid off for the success and transformation of every child. We Praise God and give all the credit to the Almighty for His providence and guidance in all our endeavours.

EFIC@R is humbled to share that through the efforts of Literacy centre, many underprivileged and school dropouts are now joining the mainstream schools and have even enrolled for higher secondary studies.



**Mrs. Aashima Samuel**  
*National Director,*  
*EFI – Children @ Risk (EFIC@R)*

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# Is It Vain to Serve God?

Rev. Dr. David Mende

## Introduction

Have you ever felt discouraged as you served God? Many of us, especially pastors go through a lot of discouragement. According to a survey, forty percent of the pastors say that they have considered leaving their churches in the last three months. Fifty percent of the ministers starting out will not last for even five years. Seventy percent felt God called them to pastoral ministry before they began their ministry, but after three years of ministry, only 50 percent still felt called. Sometimes, you may think that you're paying too heavy a price to serve God. You may feel discouraged when you are not rewarded by the Lord for serving him. You may feel dejected when

nobody notices your labor for the Lord. You may get disillusioned with ministry and think, that it is vain to serve the Lord.

Malachi 3:13-18 has a message for those who think that it's vain to serve the Lord. I've entitled this article as, "Is It Vain to Serve God?" Malachi 3:13-18 contains the sixth and the last disputation in Malachi. This disputation echoes the first one. In the first disputation, the focus was on God's people (Israel) and those who were not his people (Edomites). In this disputation, there is a distinction between his people who embraced the covenant and those who didn't. In Malachi 3:13-18, we see that the Lord rebukes those who speak

against him and commends those who fear him and promises that he will make a clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked.

The Lord's message for today from this passage is: **We must serve God and obey him because in due time he will reward us.**

**1. The Lord rebukes those who grumble against him (3:13-15).**

The people of Judah spoke arrogantly against God (v. 13). They didn't speak to God directly, but it seems that they spoke arrogantly about God to one another. By saying, "How have we spoken against you?", the people imply that the charge of speaking against the Lord is false. Once again, for the seventh and final time, people deny that they have a problem. When we are confronted with our mistakes and sins, this is how most of us respond. We deny our mistake or justify it, but God knows us thoroughly. God hears every word that we speak. Commenting on this verse, John Piper says, "This is a warning to us. All of our life is a theater and we are the actors. Every kitchen, every car,

every den, every office, every bedroom, every bar is on stage! And God is in the front row of the theater and doesn't miss a single line in the drama of our life—not one! No matter where or when or with whom we speak, God hears our conversations, and he interprets perfectly what they imply about him."

The people of Judah complained about several things:

***a. They grumbled that it is vain to serve God (v. 14).***

The Lord now tells them as to what they spoke against him. The people of Judah make an irrational charge that it is vain to serve God. Earlier, they accused God of being unjust (Mal. 2:17). They even said that "Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape" (Mal. 2:15). Since they were suffering economically, they forget the truth that God loves justice and he will execute justice in due time (Pss 9:16; 37:28).

***b. They grumbled that there is no "profit" in obeying God (v. 14).***

They felt that there was no "profit" in serving God. The Hebrew word

for "profit" (besa) suggests a strong hint of evil (the same word is used in Genesis 37:26), which reveals that they were insincere in their worship. They were not serving God because they loved him, but they were serving him for his blessings. The phrases "keeping his charge" and "walking as in mourning" refer to ceremonial or liturgical requirements. The people probably thought that since they were doing some acts of righteousness, God will grant them material blessings (Deut. 28:1-4). The people of Israel boast about their mourning in Zechariah 7:1-6 as well. But the call to repentance in Malachi 3:7 shows that they didn't really repent. Their mourning was a mere show (cf. Mt. 6:16-18). Since they were living hypocritical lives, their mourning meant nothing to God (Isa. 58:3-9; Mal. 2:13).

***c. They grumbled that God is not fair (v. 15).***

The people charge that the evildoers "put God to the test" and escape, which is contrary to the principle of retribution (cf. Deut. 28:15; Ezek. 17:15). In

Psalms 73, the psalmist also wrestles with the question of why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer (Ps. 73:3, 9-13). Even Job wrestled with this question. Today, even we can see people who deny the God of the Bible, live sinful lives, and still, live a pain-free and luxurious life. You may wonder as to why they are prospering even as you suffer. But remember, payday is coming. God will surely reward and bless his people in due time. When we keep reading Psalm 73, we see that when the psalmist entered God's presence, he finally saw things from his perspective.

Writing about the destiny of the wicked, Asaph says, "But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms" (Ps. 73:16-20).

In contrast, Asaph had a glorious

hope: "You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory" (Ps. 73:24). So, when we go through tough times and see evil around us, we must not grumble against the Lord.

## **2. The Lord blesses those who fear him (3:16-17).**

Let's see why the Lord blesses the faithful:

### ***a. The faithful feared and esteemed the Lord (v. 16).***

Verse 16 suggests that some people did respond to Malachi's message. The fact that some people feared the Lord conveys that they remained loyal to Yahweh's covenant. God's fear leads to righteous living and genuine worship (cf. Exod. 20:20; Deut. 5:29; 10:12). Even the early church feared the Lord (Acts 9:31). We too must fear the Lord; that will enable us to live holy lives.

### ***b. The faithful encouraged one another (v. 16).***

Just as the Lord heard the blasphemous words of the cynics, he heard the conversation of those who fear him. The righteous remnant probably

encouraged one another. Today, even we are called to encourage one another (Heb. 10:24-25). The Lord is delighted when his people come together and encourage one another to pursue God.

### ***c. The faithful are rewarded by the Lord (vv. 16-17).***

Verse 16 says that, "the Lord paid attention" and heard their words. The Lord shows a lot of interest in his people's words and lives (cf. Jer. 8:6). Listen to these wonderful promises:

"The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous" (Prov. 15:29).

"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Mt. 6:6).

"A book of remembrance" concerning the faithful ones was written in the Lord's presence. If you recollect, the book of Esther mentions that King Xerxes also kept an honor roll. This roll recorded Mordecai's faithfulness (Esth. 6:1-3). Similarly, God records his people's faithfulness (see e.g., Exod. 32:32-33; Pss

56:8; 139:16; Dan. 7:10; 12:1; Rev. 20:12). God will never forget our labor for his kingdom. If the Lord were to record about you in his book of remembrance, what would he write?

Verse 17 says that on the day of judgment, the righteous will become the Lord's "treasured possession," which describes the privileged status of Israel as God's chosen people (Mal. 1:2–3; Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2). Yahweh affirms that he will be their father (Mal. 1:6; 2:10; cf. Exod. 34:6–7; Ps. 103:13). Even the righteous deserve to be punished, but they will be spared on the day of judgment because of what Jesus did for them on the cross. This passage must comfort those who trust, obey, and serve God until he vindicates their cause on the day of judgment. So, the Lord will bless those who fear him.

### **3. The Lord will make a clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked (3:18).**

The people had already seen the distinction between the righteous and the wicked through the judgment of Edom (Mal. 1:5).

Despite that, they were still questioning his justice. In Malachi 3:15, we see that some complained that "evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape." But the Lord reveals that on the day of judgment, he will make a clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked. On that day, it will be proved once and for all that God is indeed just.

On that day, we will realize that it was worth serving and obeying God. There's no point in serving God if there is no judgment and no resurrection. As apostle Paul says, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19). If there is no judgment and no resurrection, we can live for ourselves: "What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (1 Cor. 15:32).

Since the Lord will make a clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked, let's live for him and serve him diligently. Let us be encouraged by apostle Paul's words to the Corinthians:

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

### **Conclusion**

In this article, we've seen that: **We must serve God and obey him because in due time he will reward us.**

Saints, it's not vain to serve God. Some of you are serving the Lord, but you know that you're not giving your best to him. No matter what responsibility the Lord has entrusted to you, do it wholeheartedly as unto the Lord. Keep serving him passionately and obey him fully. In due time, the Lord will reward you!

P.S. This article is adapted from Dr. David Mende's book, *The Prophets Speak Today: Expository Sermons on*

*Habakkuk and Malachi*. You may contact him for copies of this book.



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**My flesh and my heart may fail, but  
God is the strength of my heart  
and my portion forever.**

(Psalm 73:26)





Once upon a time, there was a king who practised democracy instead of monarchy and promoted democracy in his court. Monarchy is "the rule of one", but he was no monarch.

The king had an army. In fact, it was the most powerful army (Matt. 26:53). However, he did not use his army to protect himself from abusive attacks, nor to force his will on people. As for his laws, he said that they were made "for people" (Mk. 2:27), and people didn't exist for the sole purpose of keeping laws. The laws were not there to burden people with oppressive dos and don'ts. The laws were there for their benefit. He himself lived to serve his

people, and for him serving people involved actually getting down on his knees before each one of his subjects to wash their dirty feet and dry them (Jn. 13:1-20).

### **United Nations**

About two thousand years later, in 2007 the United Nations General Assembly resolved to observe 15 September annually as the **International Day of Democracy**, to promote and uphold principles of democracy. Except for nations that are monarchic, today every country claims the democratic tag. However, democracy exists only where people are freely able to determine their way of life,

choose their own government, and participate fully in all aspects of national life. Liberty, respect for human rights and universal suffrage are basic to democracy.

India is reputedly the world's largest democracy because of the sheer size of its population. However, the use of the sedition law to arrest those who express dissent toward the government (whether at the centre or at the level of the states), imprisoning them indefinitely without charging them, and denying them basic legal rights have brought into question our democratic status. Apart from that, the upper classes (whether by caste or wealth) from time immemorial took advantage of those they deemed lower than themselves and abused or oppressed them, and these upper classes have continued to claim that "right" even in Independent India where all are supposedly free and equal. Of course, India is not the only so called democratic country that allows such atrocities to occur. Unlawful arrests and imprisonments, racism, and the abuse of the have-nots by the

haves, are things that happen in many countries, even though every nation claims to be democratic.

What about the United Nations that appears to champion the cause of democracy? If anything, the UN is a prime example of how a very few bullies and rule the vast majority. There is certainly nothing democratic about the Big Five (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) being the only permanent members of the Security Council, with each individually having the power to veto even what the majority in the world body favour or want. These five are despots disguised as democracies. Methinks the reputation of the UN is similar to Ancient Greece being regarded as the birthplace of democracy.

## **Ancient Athens**

Many historians and sociologists believe that democracy originated in Athens around 508 BC, when a nobleman named Solon laid the foundations for democracy, by introducing a new constitution based on the

ownership of property. Accordingly, Athenians were divided into four classes. The highest offices went to those people whose land produced well, while the lowest class comprised labourers. While labourers could not hold office, they could vote in the assembly along with the landed rich and this is why Solon is credited with sowing the seed of democracy. Importantly, under Solon's constitution, native-born citizens could not be enslaved by their fellow citizens. However, only a very small group of men resident in Athens were allowed to vote. Women couldn't.

Athenian democracy demanded a lot of time from the male citizens, who had to put their own work on hold to take up positions of authority according to a rota. Dedicating so much time to civic duties was possible because many of these citizens had a good number of slaves working for them. The ancient Grecian form of democracy was not at all of all the people, by all the people, nor for all the people. Instead it was a case of some of the people

holding office, voted by some of the people and for the benefit of some of the people. It favoured the haves. It favoured men. Essentially, the practice of democracy was thus the pursuit of an elitist club that excluded the many.

### **Lincoln and Wycliffe**

After the American Civil War ended, Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Speech talked of the "government of the people, by the people, for the people". Today, everybody thinks that Lincoln coined this pithy phrase encapsulating the essence of democracy. However, Lincoln, in fact, borrowed it from John Wycliffe, who wrote in the prologue to his translation of the Bible (1384), "The Bible is for the Government of the People, by the People, and for the People" (John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations, 1951).

Wycliffe was a forerunner of the Protestant Reformation. He was famous for the first complete translation of the Bible into English. His theological views pressed the church to give up its

worldly possessions. In 1378, he began a systematic attack on the beliefs and practices of the church. In doing so, he set himself up against the greatest and most powerful organization on earth, because he sincerely believed that the church was wrong. He genuinely and earnestly sought the reform of the Church.

Wycliffe's view that the Bible promoted "the government of the People, by the People, and for the People" was definitely derived from the teachings of Jesus.

### **Lord, Yet a Servant**

Though Jesus was Master, and kingly heir to the throne of David, He was no monarch. Instead, He practised democracy and urged those who followed Him to practise it too.

His disciples were children of their age and culture. They lusted for high office and privilege. Each wanted to be the one at the top whenever Jesus got around to setting up kingdom. They fought about it bitterly among themselves. In their quest for the

highest position, they schemed against others (Matt. 20:20-21) and raged against each other (v.24). They returned to this fight again and again (Mk. 9:33-37; 10:35-45; Lk. 22:24-27).

In the end, because they were fighting so much, they ended up dishonouring their Master. When they gathered for the Passover meal, even though they sensed that things were coming to a culmination for their Teacher, none of them thought of honouring Him by washing His feet so that He could recline at the supper table with clean feet. Each of them was intent on protecting himself. None of them wanted to pick up basin and towel even for the sake of their Lord. Each was afraid that if he started to wash the Master's feet, all the others – his fellow-disciples, his equals – would take advantage and line up in front of him, the one holding basin and towel. To save themselves from what they imagined could happen, each of them failed to serve Jesus.

Christ Jesus was the acknowledged Teacher of the

group. He was positioned as their lord, no less. To get an idea of the kind of power a teacher had in the ancient world, consider the legend of Dronacharya demanding guru dakshina (tribute) from Eklavya.

Drona was the teacher of the royal Pandavas and Kauravas, while Eklavya was just a tribal. When Eklavya asked Drona to teach him archery, he refused. Undeterred, Eklavya collected the mud outside Drona's ashram, went home and made a statue of Drona. He began a disciplined program of self-learning accepting the statue as his guru. One day, when Drona and his royal students were in the forest, they came across a dog that had its mouth shot full of arrows to prevent it from barking incessantly and annoyingly. However, the dog was not injured. On enquiring, they found out that Eklavya was the archer who had accomplished this remarkable feat. Quite obviously he had surpassed Drona's best student Arjuna in archery. When asked who his guru was, Eklavya showed Drona the statue. Drona

had promised Arjuna that no one would excel him in archery. So, to make sure that no one would be better than Arjuna, Drona demanded guru dakshina as Eklavya's teacher. He demanded that Eklavya should cut off the thumb from his right hand and place it at his feet. Eklavya did just that knowing at the time that he would be unable to continue as a skilful archer.

That is the kind of power gurus and rabbis had over their disciples in ancient times. So, Jesus could have given an order that would have humiliated loudmouthed braggart Peter or humbled James and John who thought they were fit to sit on either side of Jesus in the kingdom. But Jesus didn't do that. Instead, without saying a word to express displeasure or sadness, without making them feel guilty even slightly, Jesus Himself left the table to wash the feet of his followers who had shown Him no respect. In the end, Jesus confronted them: "Who is greater, the man who sits down to dinner or the man who serves him? Obviously, the man who sits

down to dinner—yet I am the one who is the servant among you" (Lk. 22:27, Phillips).

As the rabbi of the group, Jesus was well within His rights to have given an order to anyone of them, but He did not. He did what He had been teaching them: don't lord it over others; don't be the boss, but be the servant.

### **Following Jesus**

After Jesus left the earth, the Church was born. It had no priestly class. There were messengers who were called "apostles". Their role was that of retelling what Jesus taught. They didn't see themselves as those who were originators of anything that the Church was to believe and practise. They certainly didn't think of themselves as high officials with privilege.

Those who had fought with each other for supremacy, while Jesus was with them, no longer sought supremacy. They thought of themselves as brothers, and regarded all believers as their brothers and sisters. They held that view because that was what

Jesus had taught them: "You have only one Lord. All of you are brothers" (Matt. 23:8).

Peter had taken the lead in voicing views, like a spokesperson for the group. He was the one who articulated what they believed about Jesus. Christ acknowledged his leadership in this and gave him the keys to the Kingdom (Matt. 16:16-19). However, after the Resurrection, Jesus gave all the apostles the same authority that had been given to Peter – that of throwing open the Kingdom to people and declaring that those who refused the gospel of Jesus would be left out (Jn. 20:23).

At Pentecost, Peter had continued as the lead spokesperson for the believers, but the others stood beside him (Acts 1:14) proclaiming the gospel that brought people into the fold of believers. Peter continued to have the role of lead spokesperson and representative for some years, but when the first Church Council was held, James, the brother of Jesus, who was not a follower



during the time Jesus walked this earth, was the one who steered the Council (15:13) and even gave a chairman's ruling on the issue at hand (v.19). That was democracy.

Every time a group of people tried to have supremacy over others in the Church, they were stopped. In no uncertain terms, it was taught that "in Christ" all were equal and one (Gal. 3:28).

Sadly, the Church departed from that. Christians did exactly the opposite of what Jesus had said. He had said, "It shall not be so among you..." (Matt. 10:26). He didn't want them to do what happened in the world of power politics.

After that first generation of primitive Christians had passed, succeeding generations of preachers didn't want to be just messengers like the apostles. They wanted to be like the powermongers of the world. They

wanted hierarchy and ranks of office. They wanted to be robed in grandeur and have the pomp and show of the courts of royalty. They wanted to bully and boss subordinates. They wanted people to bow to them. They wanted...they wanted...

The Church was the only place that imitated and replicated the kind of democracy that Jesus had demonstrated. But now the world is left without an example of democracy. When will the Lord's heritage be recovered?



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I am he who  
will sustain you.

ISAIAH 46:4



# Tending to our wounded

Dr. Shantanu Dutta

Some time ago, I volunteered for several months at an online emotional wellness helpline. It functioned 24/7, but most volunteers as well as paid professionals preferred to serve reasonable hours. By the time I signed up and was onboarded, the slots in the "reasonable" hours had been taken and anyway as a working professional, volunteering in the typical working hours would not have been possible for me. So, I was assigned a very late-night slot. The platform was not a suicide helpline and very clearly mentioned this. When I volunteered for the late-night slots, I was not expecting a particularly busy routine. I was surprised on two kinds. Firstly,

the number of people who called in at that hour. And secondly, at the number of people who called in then with suicidal tendencies inspite of the clear advisory, simply because suicide helplines were not functioning at that hour.

The prevalence of suicides has been increasing in recent years. The number of persons who attempt to die by suicide is 25 times that of the number of those who die by suicide every year. Indian Government passed the Mental Healthcare Act (MHCA), 2017 in the middle of 2018. Section 115 of the act decriminalized the attempt to die by suicide, thereby reducing further stress on the victim. This has legal implications with regard

to abetment laws of Sections 109, 116, 306, and 309 of Indian Penal Code. It can be argued that the Victorian era law criminalising attempted suicide is the contribution of the colonial past. And, they would not be wrong. A lot of our laws are a vestige of the world view that existed in the 19th century England. The concept of mental illness was little understood or explored then. Human conduct was either all black or all white.

From a Christian perspective, Genesis 9 v 5 says, “And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning.” This means that humans are accountable to God for the choices they make. From this perspective, life belongs to God and is not ours to take. A similar perspective shaped Christian teachings about suicide. St. Augustine of Hippo, an early Christian bishop and philosopher, wrote that “he who kills himself is a homicide.” While it is true that life is sacred and it should also be emphasized, it is most certainly the case that such prohibitions against suicide provide little comfort to those who contemplate taking their own life, not to mention to the loved ones

who will be left behind.

Today, of course, there is a lot more that is known about suicide. There are many factors that can influence a person's decision to commit suicide. The most common one though is severe depression. Depression can make people feel great emotional pain and loss of hope. This makes them unable to see another way to relieve the pain other than ending their own life. Most people impulsively decide to attempt suicide shortly before doing so. Planned suicides are relatively uncommon. The good news is that today, there are more talks about suicide prevention resources for talking about and preventing suicide. The church has now established extensive outreach programs to those who suffer from suicidal thoughts. Such efforts recognise that God especially loves those who suffer in the darkness of depression. Suicide then is not an act that calls for divine punishment, but an all-too-common threat that calls us to reaffirm hope in life as a precious gift given by God.

Suicides in India often come to light when a celebrity commits

suicide or attempts one. The coverage then raises more sound than substance. Take for example, the suicide of the actor Sushant Singh Rajput who hung himself last year in his home. The initial media conversations focused on suicide prevention a bit. Soon enough though, the conversation shifted to his possible involvement with drugs and drug dealers. Now films are being made on the late actor's life but how many will focus on suicide prevention issues?

Farmers suicides also have been getting some traction, though not directly connected to suicides. The focus has been on the phenomenon of rural indebtedness due to many reasons - some of which highlighted in Project Marathwada. Needless to say, these issues need addressing too. In fact, they actually throw light on the complex causality of suicides which mental health professionals don't have the bandwidth to address.

Can suicides be prevented? The answer is again complex. The immediate remedial measure is usually having the suicidal

person talk to someone; ideally a friend or close confidant. This is not easily found in the atomised society that we live in. The challenge was magnified during the Covid lockdowns as people remained confined to their homes and social contact disappeared. Many sprung to help by offering free counselling as well as setting up suicide helplines. As was to be expected, the system limped. Helplines often went unanswered or worked for a certain number of hours every day. India has a shortage of trained mental health professionals and even para-professionals. In their absence, enthusiastic volunteers were often given a crash course and put on the job. Often, they were not upto it.

Helplines and timely counselling can bring a person back from the brink. Regular therapy and counselling can treat, if not cure depression and other mental illnesses, if the cause is purely clinical. But often people dial into these helplines or seek counselling at a fairly late stage when someone intervenes on their behalf. There is no telling as to how many people have no one to intercede on their behalf and die unsung. As usual, in India, the

numbers are likely to be much higher than in urban India.

While the church has been fairly unequivocal in taking a stand against suicide, it is also important to say that sections of the christian community have come out actively to offer support and counselling, mostly online. They have worked to address mental illness not just clinically but also socially, taking the sting of the stigma around not just suicide and suicidal thoughts but also depression, anxiety, panic attacks and other attacks that often precede it.



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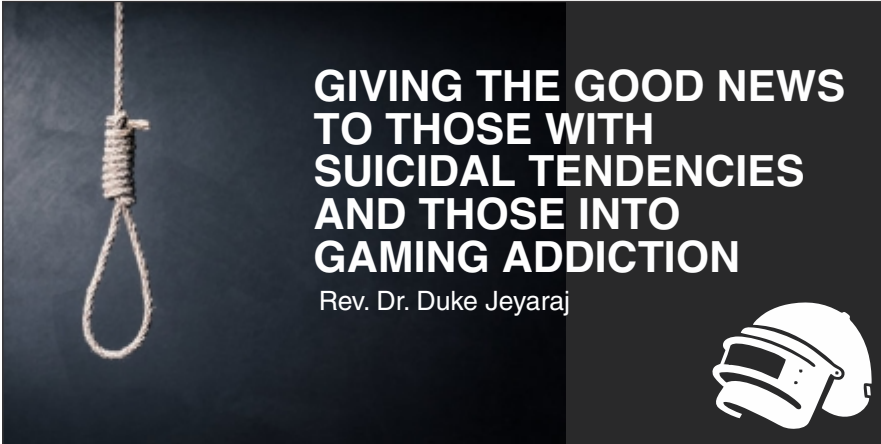
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On September 10, the World Suicide Prevention Day is observed. We live in a world where we meet a lot of people who show suicidal tendencies. And we also meet a lot of people who are into gaming addiction. What I present below is one way we can bring the good news to those who show suicidal tendencies or those who are gaming addicted:

Blue Whale. We are not talking about the big fish in the sea. The "Blue Whale," referred to in this piece, is an online game that ultimately dares its players to act out a death-wish – their own! This smartphone game pushes the users of this game to carve an outline of a Blue Whale on their

skin and eventually, drives them into suicide. That's one reason this game got the name "whale" – a fish with suicidal tendencies, that is known at times, to deliberately swim towards beaches only to die. If a player refuses to obey the "dare" for a dangerous task, threats such as, "We will have your parents killed..." rapidly follows. Yes, people – including children and teens – World-over are either talking about the Blue Whale challenge or playing it.

The Blue Whale is ultimately indicative of a "true tale" – certain truths about Life – life about living with capital L. Only a person deeply disillusioned with life would take the lead from games



such as this and eventually decide to end it. But the Bible, God's Word in human words, presents Satan as the one who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. It is quite possible that Satan uses online games such as the Blue Whale, get unsuspecting folks to fall-in-line with his plan of destruction. In the Bible, we read of a demon-influenced man 'cutting himself with stones' – attempting suicide (Mark 5:5). Satan does not just sow inside of us thoughts of suicide. The Bible teaches that his primary goal is to lead us towards fleeting-pleasure offering sin – something that separates us from God and robs us of all lasting joy. "Joy" leaving our lives, when "Sin" enters is not just a fact found in the Bible (Lamentations 5:15; Psalm 51:12), but a relatable experience in our day-to-day lives.

No, we do not read of anyone in the Bible narrative playing the Blue Whale game. But we do read of some folk who ended up committing suicide. The circumstances in which they committed suicide gives us key perspectives about why people think of taking their own life.

Abimelech (See Judges 9:54 in the Bible) did not want to be killed by a woman, and so he asked a young man to kill him instead. We see here, PRIDE (the first ever sin of the universe, according to the Bible) cannot give us purpose and meaning in life. But tragically can be instrumental in the finishing of our life. King Saul feared torture by enemy forces as a prisoner of war and he decided to fall onto his sword while on a battlefield to finish his life (See I Samuel 31:4 in the Bible). In his case, PANIC (the result of sin according to the Bible), robbed him of his desire to live and he chose to put a full-stop to his own life. Ahithophel, a professional Counsellor to the king, upon discovering that his advice was not followed, decided to hang till he died. He chose to hang, instead of a life of having to hang his head in shame. However, awesome a PROFESSION is, it cannot bring that person's meaning, purpose, lasting joy in life. The fifth person as per the records of the Bible, who committed suicide was Judas. The hole in his heart became bigger after receiving a PAY for leading an arresting party to the

place, the only God-in-flesh Jesus often met with his disciples. We have talked about a number of Ps in the above paragraph in connection with suicide. However, there is another P who enables us to overcome suicidal tendencies. That is, the Prince of Peace.

When he knew for sure, the prisoners entrusted by the Government under his care - including the preachers of Jesus, namely, Paul and Silas - had escaped the prison he was in charge of, following a massive earthquake, this jailor we read about in the Bible, drew his sword and was about to end his life (Acts 16:25-27). That's when Paul shouted, 'Do not harm yourself' and introduced Jesus, the Prince of Peace to this Jailor who immediately abandoned his suicide plans (Acts 16:28-31). When Jesus really comes into your life, every thought of suicide will fly away! And life will become meaningful! Instead of choosing the suicide rope, choose hope that is only available in Christ Jesus!

This leads me to a well-known statement that Jesus made, that

is found recorded in the Bible: "I have come to give Life – Life to the full"(in John 10:10). This implies, apart from the "alone and apart from everyone" Jesus (Jesus said he was the ONLY WAY in John 14:6 of the Bible), no one can find that paramount peace, that supreme serenity, that maximum meaning, that Himalayan happiness. Apostle Paul, a Jesus-follower, wrote about the "purpose in each step" (I Corinthians 9:26, NLT, The Bible) that Jesus gave him, when he followed Jesus through the smooth and stormy phases of his life.

One of Jesus' names in the Bible is this: "Author of Life" (Acts 3:15). He is also the maker of life – this the Bible teaches (John 1:3). Human Life was made "for" Jesus Christ, the Bible notes (Colossians 1:16-17). When we wade though "the book of life's journey" with a living "for" Jesus, life will become meaningful and purposeful!

The same Jesus who said, "I have come to give you life," also mentioned that he came to die as a ransom for the sins of the World. This, the Bible records (Mark

10:45). That was how he could offer us a meaningful life – through his cruel death on the Cross. When Jesus shed his precious, sinless blood for us, he opened the door for each one of us to escape from living an "empty" life on this earth, the Bible declares (1 Peter 1:18).

Jesus rose from the Dead. Jesus promised to return again to judge the World. Those who firmly and finally reject Jesus, the name of the only person who qualifies to save humankind by the virtue of his absolute sinlessness, will live a life of "living" hell here and now, and go to a "literal" hell. This the Bible, a book which has never gone wrong when it comes to predictions, predicts.

What should we do now? Turn from sin (Luke 13:1-5, The Bible).

Come to Christ in faith (Matthew 11:28 & John 1:12, The Bible). Come now (2 Corinthians 6:2, The Bible).

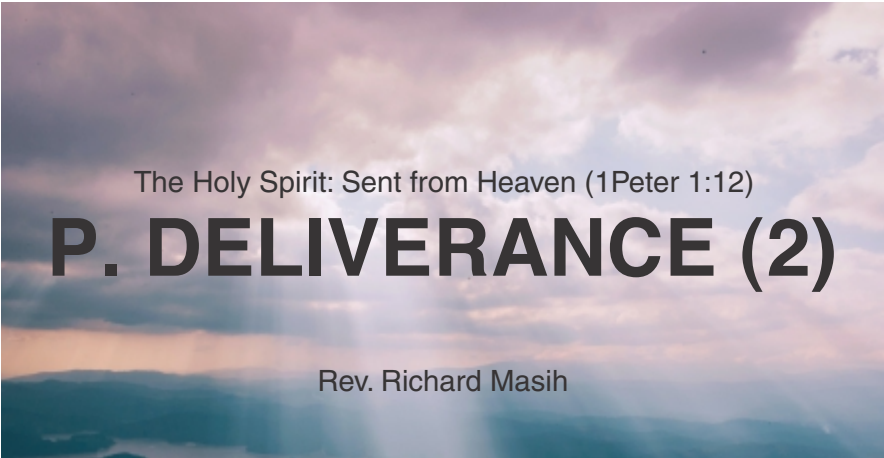


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The Holy Spirit: Sent from Heaven (1Peter 1:12)

# P. DELIVERANCE (2)

Rev. Richard Masih

Our Lord not only himself "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38), but he also sent his disciples to do the same. It says, "He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mark 3:13,14). The first requirement for them was that they should be with him, spend time with him, fellowship with him, observe him, learn from him, and be equipped by him. The second requirement was that they should be willing to be sent by him. We also need to meet the same requirements if we want to be used by him in whatever way, in the ministry.

Later, he appointed seventy-two

others. We read, "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go" (Luke 10:1). Notice here-

- He sent them two by two. There is always safety in team leadership. It saves us from falling into pride as if we are someone great. This was the problem of Simon. "...there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great" (Acts 10:8,9). It saves

us from falling into sin of sexual immorality. It brings in the principle of synergy. We produce more results than what we could by ourselves alone. It provides us the much needed encouragement and comfort.

- He sent them where he himself was about to go. We need to wait on God and get his planning and direction for our life and ministry. There are those who make no plans. There are those who make their own plans. There are those who wait on God in much prayer to get his plans. The third is the safest and the best.

The seventy-two returned with joy and gave their glowing reports. We read, "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name" (Luke 10:17)! The Lord immediately recognized their wrong source of joy. He warned and corrected them, "...he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits

are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:10-22). We also would be wise if we heed the same.

The Apostles also exercised the ministry of deliverance from the demonic oppression-

- Peter- "...they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed" (Acts 5:15,16).
- Philip- "And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed" (Acts 8:6,7).
- Paul- "And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and

their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

- Let's not neglect the healing and deliverance ministry from our preaching and teaching. If we are not gifted in this area, then let's pray that the Lord will raise others from our Fellowship and church. How many are there in the church and outside of the church who are afflicted with madness, blindness and confusion of mind because of their sin of disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:20,28)! So many are suffering from sudden terror, wasting diseases (Leviticus 26:16). They must not think that there is no balm in Gilead, that there is no physician there. "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored" (Jeremiah 8:22)?
- Let's remember that we always have our Great Physician with us, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Great Physician. He is alluded a physician (Luke 4:23). "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (psalm 147:3). He sets the captives free.
- Let's not exercise the

deliverance ministry alone but in the fellowship of the church, the believers. "And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9,12).

- When asked to pray for someone in the Camp, Seminar, in revival meetings or after the church Service, etc., never pray alone. Enlist the prayer support of other believers, God's servants/ministers present there. You will be saved from pride and downfall, depression and discouragement.
- Be strong in faith. "He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).
- Be much in fasting and prayer. "But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21, footnote).
- Be involved in the deliverance ministry only if it's your gift and calling. Otherwise, leave it for those who are especially gifted and called in this area. Remember the seven sons of

Sceva. 'Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

- Let's pray that the Lord will raise up in his church people with different gifts - preaching, teaching, training, writings, singing, making music, painting, counselling, healing, and casting out demons, etc. Let's pray that our churches will prosper under the ministry of the Pastors, Bible teachers, evangelists, missionaries and Bishops, etc.
- Safeguard your family and loved ones with much prayer. Otherwise, the demons or evil spirits will take their revenge on your family. They will be physically sick, mentally depressed, worried or anxious or troubled, and prone to nightmares and accidents, etc.

### **Q. Slain in the Spirit.**

Another phenomenon alluded to

the Holy Spirit is 'Slain in the Spirit'. Or, 'Falling in the Spirit' or 'Laughing in the Spirit', or 'Vomiting in the Spirit.' A gentleman went around and around in a meeting hall for two hours driving an imaginary bike, making sound like brrrrrm, brrrrrm. This was his way of getting rid of pent up emotions. Certain preachers make people fall on the stage, then get them picked by their men, only to make them fall again. It's supposed to be the power of the Holy Spirit. What happens? Is the person healed, filled with the Holy Spirit and sanctified? Or, nothing happens? From where do the practitioners of the falling/slain in the Holy Spirit have got their method?

In Daniel 8:17, Daniel falls to the ground and goes into deep sleep. The phrase 'slain by the Lord' appears in Jeremiah 25:33. The word slain is used 51 times in the Bible in different contexts. But the phrase, 'slain in the Spirit', doesn't appear anywhere.

Those who had gone to arrest Lord Jesus fell to the ground backward when he said, "I am he" (John 18:6). Those who 'fall in the Spirit' on the stage, always fall backward like these people who had gone to arrest our Lord (incidentally, the videographer



never falls). He doesn't come under the spell of the Holy Spirit (interesting). In the Scripture, the true worshippers have always fallen forward. Cf. "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead" (Revelation 1:17); "...the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb" (Revelation 5:8); "...the elders fell down and worshiped" (Revelation 5:14; "...they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God" (Revelation 7:11).

"And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God" (11:16); "And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God (Revelation 19:4); "Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that. Worship God" (Revelation 19:10); "...I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me,

but he said to me, "You must not do that! Worship God" (Revelation 22:8,9). Let's fall down before God on our faces and worship him.



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Take delight in the Lord,  
and he will give you the  
desires of your heart.

Psalms 37:4



# ARE YOU TRULY A FAST FORWARDER?

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

In the age of WhatsApp, people are eager forwarders. When we like something, someone has forwarded, most people eagerly forward whatever they have received. Many don't bother to check up whether or not what they are forwarding is authentic. Before WhatsApp, it was on Facebook that people liked and reposted whatever impressed them.

That's not the kind of forwarding that I want to talk about. Peter wrote that Christians should hasten the day of the Lord's return. Yes, you read that right. He said you are to make it happen sooner:

... what sort of people ought you

to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! (2 Pet. 3:11-12, NASB).

The New International Version says, "look forward to the day of God and speed its coming", and the New Living Translation says, "looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along".

## Feeling Good

For many years, I have been devotionally reading through the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation annually. From year to

year, I would switch from one English version to another. When I came to 2 Peter 3, my focus was always on how some people would mock the teaching that the Lord will come back, by pointing to the fact that years and years have passed without it happening:

...in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth, and following their own desires. They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created" (vv.3-4).

I would then feel good and quite satisfied with myself that I was not one of the mocking sceptics, but someone who believed that the Lord's return, though delayed, is certain to happen. I would then jump to the fact that the exact day and time of the Second Coming of Jesus would be uncertain and unknown, and that was that. There ended all my reflections about the return of Christ.

I never paid any attention to the

apostle urging believers to hasten the Lord's return. Because I had read the phrase so many times, it was definitely stored away among the archives of my mind as a faint and vague recollection. If anyone had ever used the phrase, I would immediately have been able to identify it as a concept that was there in the Bible. However, I didn't pay any attention to the phrase and therefore, I didn't think that there was anything I could do about Christ's return.

Often when we read the Bible, we are like that – nothing what we want to and ignoring lots of stuff, especially whatever we find unpalatable or off-putting. James said that when we pay no attention to what the Word of God teaches, we are like the man who looks at his face in the mirror, and then forgets what he has seen. James implies that such a man does nothing about grooming himself, even though he has seen what his condition was (Jas. 1:23-24).

Sure, I want Jesus to return – and return soon, when troublesome times come. But that's more like

wishful thinking, because I just carry on with my life and plans for the future. When I make plans, they are about seeing our son and daughter and their families, or about travelling to see old friends in places we've lived in, or about moving to a retirement facility if my wife and I find ourselves infirm and unable to cope with running our home. What I am saying is that all my plans don't actually or actively include anything to speed up the coming of the Lord. Facing this truth has made me realize that it's not only the wicked of the earth like in the days of Noah and Lot, who carry on with life without a care about the coming of Christ drawing near (Lk. 17:26-29).

It is true that our Lord Jesus said that no one can know or predict the date of His return (Mk. 13:32; Acts 1:7). However, He also said that when we see certain signs, we will know that the time is near (Mk. 13:28-30). The signs that would herald the return of Jesus are false messiahs, wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, floods, famines and epidemics (Lk. 21:8-11). Some people

dismiss these signs because they are things that have happened throughout human history and will keep on happening.

### **One Indisputable Sign**

In the course of His end-time prophecy, Jesus gave one sign that cannot be dismissed:

Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (v.24).

This prophecy was fulfilled in 1967. The "Six Day War" took place from June 5-10 that year. The tiny nation of Israel was outnumbered and outgunned, and yet won the war. Some journalists described the Six Day War as a Miracle War, which it truly was.

Arab neighbours Egypt, Syria and Jordan mobilized for a joint war against Israel. To counteract the joint forces, Israel launched pre-emptive airstrikes practically destroying the air forces of its neighbours. Without air cover, Arab armies were left exposed and endangered. Israel's army

was overwhelmingly victorious. Israel drove Syrian forces from the Golan Heights, gained control of the Gaza Strip, captured the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and drove Jordan out of the West Bank, gaining sole control of their historic Holy City. Jerusalem was no longer under Gentile heels.

After listing all the signs that would precede His return, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened".

Many liberal scholars of the Bible have said that Jesus (and the apostles) erroneously thought that He would come back while the disciples were still around. But surely, what He meant was that the generation that would witness these signs would not pass away until all is fulfilled. That is why I have for long thought and taught that the generation that witnessed the end of Gentile rule over Jerusalem would not pass away before Jesus returns. While some would die because of illness or accidents, the entire generation would not pass away

before the end. I'm not setting a date. I'm simply looking at the biblical data and drawing a logical conclusion.

### **A Sign to Fulfil**

False messiahs cropping up, wars, floods, earthquakes, famines and pestilences, the end of Gentile rule of Jerusalem are all signs that have occurred without Christians doing anything to make them happen. But there is one sign that Jesus gave that is dependent on the performance of believers. Jesus said, "The gospel must first be preached to all" (Mk. 13:10). That is not going to happen without the efforts of Christians, churches and missions.

We have come to define preaching as sermonizing and therefore, think that preaching is only the work done by church and mission professionals. The Greek word that is translated as "preach" or "preaching" refers to the act of making announcements. Thus, a preacher was not a professional speaker, but just an announcer. What I am saying is that you, my

reader, cannot hide behind the claim, "I am not a preacher."

A n y o n e c a n m a k e announcements and it need not be made to large numbers. You can make the announcement one person at a time. We do it all the time when we "share" gossip about someone: "Did you hear about what so and so did?" And when we announce the juicy detail, even though we swear them to secrecy, our listeners in turn announce everything to others and there is ripple effect in how the news spreads.

Think of it. The disciples of Jesus were not religious professionals. They were "working class" folks – fishermen, a taxman, all unlearned. Jesus didn't ask them to be like the priests, and the scribes. He asked them to announce to people the news that Jesus had come to save people.

Another word that Jesus used to task His disciples was the word "witness" (Acts 1:8). Witnessing isn't a profession. In fact, "professional witnesses" are hirelings and would therefore be

dismissed as unreliable when it's found out that they do this often. The only qualification for being a witness is that one should have personal, firsthand experience. One has to be able to say, "I myself saw...I myself heard..."

Look at it any which way. The task of spreading the gospel of Jesus is yours if you are a follower of Christ. So, the question is what have you done to announce to family and friends that Jesus is the Saviour they need? What have you done to "hasten" the return of Jesus? Assessing Christian performance in the light of this Word from our Lord, we would have to conclude that the Second Coming of Jesus is delayed because most Christians don't announce the good news of Jesus.

Christians must also support those who make it their business to announce the gospel to numbers of people – professional preachers and evangelists – since they spend their time announcing the gospel and do not have the time to earn a living.

Our Lord said, "Give Caesar what

is Caesar's and give God what is God's" (Mk. 12:17). Whenever people face personal financial crises, though they will not hold back on taxes, they plead inability to give God what is His. No one dares tell the income tax officials, "Sorry, I will not be able to pay the tax this time because I had to pay my son's medical college fees...I had to spend a lot on my daughter's wedding...I had to pay for my wife's hospitalisation..." Whatever may happen, we know that we have to pay taxes in proportion to our incomes. Well, giving to God is also a matter of proportions. God's Word says that we are to tithe or give one-tenth of whatever we have or earn. It belongs to God in token of how blessed we are by His grace and benevolence. The tithe is not ours to keep or divert. The late Sam Kamaleson always announced collection time as presenting God "His tithes and our offerings". He once explained that the tithe is God's and it's only after we have given Him what is His that we can begin to make a freewill offering.

The Word also talks about giving

God, the firstfruits (Ex. 23:16,19), so give off the top, before you do anything else with your income.

### **Watch for Jesus**

When the Lord talked of His return, He urged His followers to "watch", to look out for the returning Master (Mk. 13:33-37; Matt. 24:42-43; 25:13). Looking out for someone is first a matter of being alert and ready for the arrival of that person. In the case of believers, waiting for the return of the Saviour, it is not watching out so that one is not caught on the wrong foot, but an expression of longing and wanting the Lord to return.

However, when the Lord did warn His servants about failing in watchfulness, He connected it to being abusive toward those who are placed under them (Matt. 24:48-51). We do have a tendency to think that all that matters is to believe the right doctrines about God and be faithful in personal devotional exercises (read the Bible, pray, attend church, take communion). But how we treat others matters to the Lord. He takes it personally.



He says that whatever is done to others is done to Him (25:41-46). According to Jesus, all inhuman, unequal, unjust treatment of others – it's all against the Lord Himself.

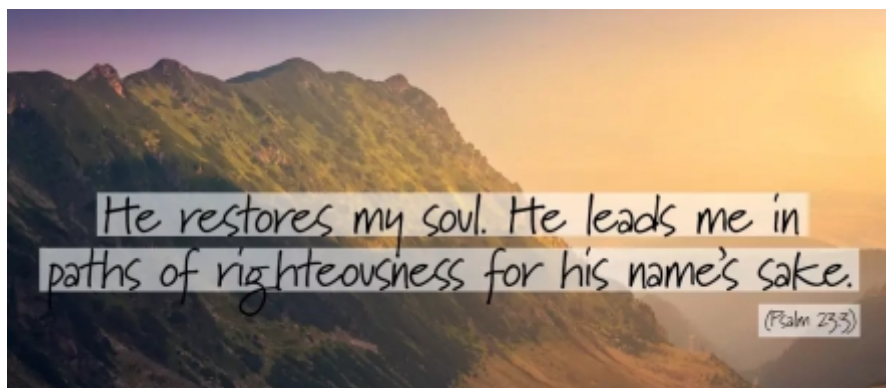
When God gave His commandments, they were all details of how to treat neighbours, and God prefaced His commandments with the declaration that He is their LORD, their God (Lev. 18:4 and many more). When the word lord is all in caps, it means that in Hebrew the covenant name Yahweh is in the original text. God was telling His people that because they were in a covenant relationship with Him, they have to treat their neighbours right. In the same way, when the Lord Jesus talked of looking out for return, He said

that we are to exercise care in how we treat others. It's part of getting ready for the Lord's return.

As a believer, you need to face up to the following questions: What have you been doing to hasten the Lord's return? What will you be doing to speed forward to the Second Coming of Christ?



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# The Deliverance of God from the hands of the enemy.

Dr. Sanjay Avinash Mall



The Book of Isaiah is one of the very important books of prophecy in the Old Testament. It is a very absorbing book that tells us of the great love God had for the Israelites. We also read of the frustration He had when the people whom He loved so dearly were unfaithful to Him. God however is a faithful God who comes to the aid of His children. He does not want His children to be defeated and despised by the enemies as that would tarnish His own image as their Heavenly Father.

In Chapters 36 and 37 of the Book of Isaiah, we read of the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib King of Assyria. In the story, we read how Sennacherib sent his field

commander to King Hezekiah to force him to surrender. The high-ranking military official sent by Sennacherib was known as the Rabshakeh or the Chief Cup Bearer. There are four distinct things that we come across as we study this story which stretches across two chapters.

- The strategy of demoralising the people.
- The strategy of deception
- Despair of the king and the people.
- God's strategy of Deliverance.

## **The Strategy of Demoralising the King and the people:**

We read that the officer sent by Sennacherib was a very high ranking official of the Assyrian empire. He was under orders

from the King of Assyria to call for a total surrender of Judah. The speech made by the Rabshakeh displays the finesse that he had acquired in the art of psychological warfare. It is also indicative of the fact that he was soaked in power being the emissary of Sennacherib. We can also assume that he was possibly trained in this art or had learnt it along the way as his career path evolved. King Hezekiah sent three important officials to negotiate with the Assyrian emissary. They were Eliakim, Shebna and Joah. These people were next to the king and held the highest offices in the land. When they came out to meet him, the commander started talking in a loud voice so that everyone could hear him. This was done purposely to insult King Hezekiah and to erode the confidence of the people in their king. When the three officials of Hezekiah realized the potential effect of his speech, they interrupted the commander by requesting him to speak in Aramaic and not in Hebrew (vs.11). In those days, Aramaic was the recognised diplomatic language, and the commander should have followed diplomatic

protocol. He was however, trying to stir up the masses and so he and or his interpreter continued to speak loudly in Hebrew. He turned down their request saying that he has been sent by Sennacherib to convey all these things not only to them but to all the people sitting on the wall as well. In verse 4 - 10, the emissary pretended to speak to Hezekiah, but in verses 13 – 20 he openly addressed all the people.

The Assyrian started by first of all ridiculing the military strength of the King Hezekiah, (Isaiah 36: 5). In the very next verse, he speaks poorly of the foreign policy of the kingdom (vs 6). He speaks in a very derogatory manner of the foreign relations that Judah had with Egypt. He calls Egypt, a very unreliable ally which did not live up to its commitments. He further insults the people for their faith in God. In vs 7, he goes on to ridicule the people of Judah for their faith in the Living God. In vs 10, he justifies his mission to come and destroy Judah on the command of the living God. In saying this, he claims to be God's self-appointed servant carrying out His commands. In verses 12 - 17, the general spelt out the

alternatives that the residents of Jerusalem faced. In his pride, he gives them two options. They had the choice of eating the grapes and the figs and drink clean water (vs 16) or eat their own human waste (vs12)v during a long siege. The final choice rested with them.

### **The Strategy of Deception:**

Once the commander had finished demoralising the people, he then resorted to the strategy of deception. He started sowing seeds of doubt in the minds of the people against their king. Following are the ways in which he tried to do this.

- In Isaiah 36:14, he tells the people – Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. In this way, he tried to convince the people that their king was a deceitful man.
- In vs 15, he goes on to tell them not to let the king persuade them, most probably because of his position.
- In vs 16 and 17, he encourages total disobedience to the king. He is enticing the people to show their allegiance to the king of

Assyria. If they exchange their loyalty from Hezekiah to Sennacherib, then they are assured of food security in their homes. He also promises them greener pastures where they will enjoy corn and wine. The land would be one of bread and vineyards.

- In vs 18, the commander once again speaks disgracefully about King Hezekiah. He portrays him as one who misleads his people. He also tries to compare the Living God with the gods of the other kings.
- In Isaiah 37:10, Sennacherib sends a message that not only disgraces God but also calls Him a deceitful God. He further reminds Hezekiah that none of the gods of the other people have been able to deliver them out of the hands of the kings of Assyria. In other words, he is threatening Hezekiah that his fate would be no different from that of those kings. What he did not realise was that he had spoken too much and too soon. In fact, he had bitten more than he could chew.
- In Isaiah 36:21, we read that the people however, are

obedient and loyal to their king and do not give any response as they had been commanded.

### **Despair, Distress and Disgrace:**

After listening to the Assyrian, Hezekiah's officials return to him with their clothes torn. On hearing what has transpired, Hezekiah too tears his clothes and puts on sack cloth and goes into the temple of the Lord. He sends the officials to the prophet Isaiah who has encouraging news for them. We see that God has already given the message to Isaiah which needs to be conveyed to Hezekiah. In Isaiah 37:14, Hezekiah approaches the throne of the Most High God rather than any human being. He takes the letter that he has received from Sennacherib and spreads it out before the Lord. In doing this, he is showing God what has been written and asking him to read it. It is a very symbolic gesture by which he entreats God to see how His name is being disgraced.

### **God's strategy of Deliverance.**

The bible says that it is a dangerous thing to fall in the

hands of the Living God. It also says that Pride goes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction. The pride of Sennacherib is seen in verses 10 – 13 of Chapter 37. The word of God also mentions that our God is a consuming fire. If Sennacherib had a strategy, our God had a better one up His sleeve.

God honours the prayer of Hezekiah. This is mentioned very clearly in the message Isaiah sends to Hezekiah, what God had told him about Sennacherib. The deliverance from the Assyrians is celebrated before the king was defeated. We read in verses 36-38, how God settles His account with Sennacherib. One hundred and eighty-five thousand of his soldiers are killed by the angel of God. This is followed by the assassination of Sennacherib himself by his own sons when he is worshipping his god who cannot save him. His own god could not deliver him from the Hands of the Living God.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus, we see that when we approach the throne of God, He reaches down and delivers us

from the snare of the enemy. In Psalm 91:7 - 8, we read that though a thousand may fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand, but none will come near us. As mentioned in verse 8, we see the punishment of the wicked at the hands of the Lord. What needs to be appreciated is that Hezekiah spread out the letter in the presence of God as if asking Him to read it. This was something which God would have appreciated. All of us take our problems to God but how we present our problems to Him is what matters. Hezekiah and his officials put on sack cloth to show the distress that they were in. How many times have we put on sack cloth when pleading with God about a rough situation we may have been going through?

All of us face many challenges in

our lives every day. Let us approach the throne of God with all boldness to see the deliverance of the Lord. The same God who delivered the Israelites from the hands of Pharaoh and King Hezekiah from the hands of Sennacherib can deliver us also. All that we need to do is approach Him with all humility and give all the glory to Him.



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*Psalm 119:105 KJV*

**THY WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET,  
 AND A LIGHT UNTO MY PATH.**

# THE AROMA OF A TEACHER

Ms. Vahneinem Haokip

Listening to a song on 'making a difference', I've thought about all of those moments that have brought a significant difference in my life because of my teachers. To me, they are the pillars of education that bring out significance or the essence of a person from within.

I've always thought of teachers to be like perfumes. Even the littlest amount of the essence, produces an aroma that compliments even the things considered musty and can improve the environment. Perfumes and teachers are honestly the best combination because both of these bring out the aroma of the environment, they're surrounded in. Even the worst of the children that are

labelled as a 'nuisance to society' and are disregarded by everyone else, can change because of the teachers they're blessed with. I've come to realize that teachers can have an immense influence on the lives of the people (not only children but adults too) they not only teach but are acquainted with. They can either make or break the lives of others because of their status as a 'teacher'.

Of course, the greatest Teacher that ever existed on this planet earth was Lord Jesus, but one person I think was a great influence to a youth, Timothy, was the Apostle Paul. Apostle Paul and Timothy had a close father-child-like relationship, and I believe Timothy was constantly



being influenced by Apostle Paul, knowingly as well as unknowingly. Apostle Paul was like the perfume in Timothy's life. He accentuated the aroma he found in Lord Jesus in Timothy's lifestyle, thus, creating a bold and dynamic young pastor who he writes the Epistles of First and Second Timothy to.

To me, a lot of teachers and adults have influenced who I am today, if not tomorrow. My parents, my Sunday school teachers, school teachers, adults I've met so far, and my older relatives who I've conversed with, have brought within me their own fragrances that are now accentuated by me as a cluster and I believe that is the same case for a lot of children. Who we are right now, at this moment, is because of all the experiences and the influences we've encountered until now and I believe, I can honestly testify that I've achieved who I've wanted to be, at least for now. I'm proud of all the values I've been taught, the love I've been shown, the criticism I've received to improve myself and the compliments to boost my self-esteem to strive

towards becoming a better me, with faith and endurance. The aroma from my teachers have truly influenced my life.

In conclusion, what about you? Have you retrospected yourself to say that the fragrant aroma of the perfumed lives of your teachers have influenced you to become a better you? Have you truly thought about the sacrifices of the teachers in your life to mould you into a beautiful human being?



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# Intercessory Prayer Points



September 2021

**1 WEDNESDAY** Thank God for the month of August 2021. Praise God for His sustenance and providential care for each one of us.

**2 THURSDAY** Pray for the state of Andhra Pradesh today. Pray for growth in all areas. Pray for the political leaders to govern the state with integrity, love and understanding. Pray also that the Churches in Andhra Pradesh would desire to imitate Christ in their ministry.

**3 FRIDAY** Pray for Arunachal Pradesh. Pray for safety and protection for the land and its people. Pray also for the Church that it would grow in loving Christ and serving him without reservation. May Christ's kingdom come to every person in the state.

**4 SATURDAY** Pray for the state of Uttar Pradesh. Pray that development would reach the most inner part of the state. Pray for the political leaders to work with the best interest for the people. May

God shine His face towards the people of UP and show His unceasing love for them.

**5 SUNDAY** Teacher's day. Praise be to the Holy Spirit, our best Teacher who has taught us, remind us, guide us and lead us to Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Thank God for the teachers who patiently and lovingly teaches our children at Schools, Sunday Schools, colleges etc. Pray for them that they would impact many lives. Pray also that they would find satisfaction and fulfillment in their services.

**6 MONDAY** Pray for Assam today. Pray that Assam being the gateway to the North-East would be a blessing economically and socially to the neighboring states. Pray also that the Church in Assam would grow, and Christ's kingdom would spread far and wide.

**7 TUESDAY** Pray for Chattisgarh today. Pray for the persecuted in this state. Pray that they would have the courage and strength to stand

through this storm. Pray that their suffering would bear much fruit and magnify God.

**8 WEDNESDAY** Global Literacy Day. Pray for awareness about the significance of education today. Pray that every state in India would see growth in literacy rate.

**9 THURSDAY** Pray for Sikkim. Pray that the Holy Spirit would move people's hearts and minds and draw multitude to Christ and His Word. Pray for the strengthening of the Churches in this state to be the salt and light in their communities.

**10 FRIDAY** World Suicide Prevention day. Pray that you would be available for someone who is needy. Pray for God's intervention and help to those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts that many suicides would be prevented.

**11 SATURDAY** Pray for the state of Bihar. Pray for the upliftment of people who are economically and socially backward. Pray for the protection of tribals. Pray for equality for all the people in all areas. Pray also that God's love may reach everyone in this state.

**12 SUNDAY** Pray for God's Holy Spirit to move hearts and minds of the people in your Church to encounter Christ and know him in His fullness. Pray also for nearness to God and confidence in His love for yourself.

**13 MONDAY** Pray for West Bengal. Pray for spiritual renewal and strengthening of the Churches in the state. Pray that they would be the agent of change. Pray that the state would flourish and be a blessing to many people.

**14 TUESDAY** Pray for the state of Tripura today. Pray for Christian maturity for the believers in the state. Pray that Christ and his kingdom would be lifted high, and people would have a high view of God.

**15 WEDNESDAY** World Democracy Day. This special day is celebrated worldwide to make people aware of democracy and its importance for a sustainable life. Thank God that we are a democratic country. Pray that this privilege should not be taken for granted. Pray also that the political leaders would honor and value and safeguard democracy so that all the people would enjoy the benefit.

**16 THURSDAY** Pray for Uttarakhand. Pray for God's Spirit to work mightily in this state. Pray that God would meet the people in the place of their need.

**17 FRIDAY** Let us remember those who lost their loved ones to Covid19. Pray for God's comfort and peace to flow into their hearts. Pray for their full restoration (physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually).

**18 SATURDAY** Pray for safety and protection of the followers of Christ especially in the remote villages. Pray for courage, wisdom, and strength for Christian workers. Pray for religious liberty in our country.

**19 SUNDAY** Pray for your Church to boldly share their faith in Christ. Pray that the power of the Gospel would change people's mindset that would result in their changed behaviour.

**20 MONDAY** Pray for Telangana. Pray for the gospel to be effectively preached and lived out by believers in this state. Pray that those who have heard the Gospel would put their faith in Jesus.

**21 TUESDAY** Pray for the state of Gujarat today. Pray that the land would flourish both physically and spiritually. Pray for those who are spreading the Word of God to be encouraged and strengthened.

**22 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Goa. Pray that Jesus and His Words would impact the lives of the people in a new way.

**23 THURSDAY** Pray for Haryana. Pray for peace and prosperity for this state. Pray also that the people of would desire to know and seek the truth.

**24 FRIDAY** Pray for Himachal Pradesh. Pray that God would raise many Christian workers to reach all the remote places in this state. Pray

for receptive hearts and willingness to turn to God.

**25 SATURDAY** Pray for hunger and thirst for God's Word to increase. Pray that every believer would be equipped with the knowledge and power of the Scripture.

**26 SUNDAY** Pray for revival for your Church. Pray that God would use you to touch people's lives with Christ's love and concern.

**27 MONDAY** Pray for Mizoram. Pray for the people of Mizoram to be alert spiritually and be firmed in their faith so that Satan will have no footholds. Pray that they would continually work tirelessly for the cause of Christ in India and around the world.

**28 TUESDAY** Pray for Jammu and Kashmir. Pray that God would meet the people's need and reveal Himself to those who are seeking Him. Pray for peace and prosperity for this state.

**29 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Karnataka. Pray that the believers will have a vibrant personal relationship with the Lord. Pray that the Holy Spirit would inspire believers to live actively for Him.

**30 THURSDAY** Thank God for His marvelous grace and patience towards us. Thank Him for His protection and provision during the month of September 2021.



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Published date on 25 August 2021  
Posting date 26/27 August 2021

RNI. Regd. No. 19728/70 / Postal  
Registration No. DL(S)-01/3241/2018-20  
Licensed to post without prepayment at  
NDPSO New Delhi -110 002 / U(SE)-9/2018-20



*One in God; Together for Good.*

## Introduction

Evangelical Fellowship of India, founded in 1951, is the national alliance of Evangelicals in India. As a central network of evangelicals and a service organization, it is the custodian of Evangelical faith, movement and values in India, representing the Evangelical voice, building capacity and promoting participation in nation building.

EFI is a charter member of the World Evangelical Alliance. Its membership includes over 65,000 Churches, over 150 Church related mission agencies and organisations and thousands of individual members.

## Our Vision

To see evangelical Churches, institutions and individuals effectively witnessing the good news of Jesus Christ in word, deed and transforming nation.

## Our Mission

As an evangelical alliance, serve churches, institutions and individuals through strategic initiatives, capacity building and forging solidarity, thus facilitating the mission of witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and nation building.

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- CEEFI (Christian Education Department of EFI)
- EFI Publication & Media
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- EFI Women Commission
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Printed & Published by Mr. Vijayesh Lal, on behalf of EFI Publication Trust,  
805/92 Deepali Building, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110 019.  
Printed at Royal Press, B-82, Okhla Phase -1, New Delhi - 110 020.  
Editor Mr. Vijayesh Lal