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# aim

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A Journey of Faith



But those who hope in the Lord will  
renew their strength. They will soar  
on wings like eagles; they will run and  
not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:30-31



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Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

# NO MORE SCAPEGOATING

The crucifixion of Jesus was a result of crowd management, mob mobilization and brilliant propaganda. It was the mob that shouted: "Crucify him".

Pontius Pilate bowed down to what he perceived was the collective conscience of the people. Justice was effectively subverted by a voice vote, the noise of the brute majority.

Pilate as a viceroy representing an imperial or colonial power possibly did not want to get embroiled in the internal faith issues of the people, and yet had to uphold the pretence of constitutionality. He said he could find no fault in Jesus. The mob would have nothing to do with the

legal code. A desperate Pilate thought he could mollify the mob which was not restless but positively rebellious by meeting them half-way – overlook the Roman code, but not succumb to the bloodthirsty mob. Would flogging satisfy their roused passion for the blood of an innocent?

By letting the mob see that this man who was beaten up, scourged, publicly humiliated, and ridiculed was no threat, Pilate perhaps thought he could keep Jesus from the death sentence. It would not.

Jesus had to endure the flagellum, the whip of several thongs, each with metal pieces or



bone splinters attached to it, was designed to lay bare the bones of the victim, piercing the skin, and reducing muscle to a pulp. Pain, not death, was the idea.

The crowd was made up of many individuals. Separately, each individual had a mind of his own, a personal motive and thought process, some of them possibly pacific. But they were composed as a mob, their individuality subsumed in an inflammable entity, malleable in the hands of manipulative leaders. Their hands on the levers of such mass power, they knew they could manipulate Pilate. As the viceroy, he was but a cog in the machinery of governance, and vulnerable. If he did not accept their demands, they would accuse him of the high crime of treason, of being unfaithful to Caesar. The one who controls the mob, controls the system. Pilate knew it then if he had not known earlier.

The judicial murder of Jesus was a subversion of the rule of law, the very code which had supposedly brought peace and order to the then known world. The mob had hacked the code, usurped authority, and bent the system to

its collective will. It would choose its victim, and mete out its own punishment.

Abdicating power to the mob, alas, is predestined to disaster.

This simple, bitter, axiom is familiar to most nations. We in India recognise it too. The violence during the partition that saw a million innocent children, women and men die at the hands of the mob on both sides of the line on the map, the many massacres in the land, the 1961 Jabalpur riots, 1969 Gujarat riots, 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom, the 1989 Bhagalpur riots, 1989 Kashmir violence, the Babri Masjid demolition and its violent aftermath in 1992, Godhra train burning, 2002 Gujarat riots, 2008 anti-Christian pogrom in Odisha, 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots and 2020 Delhi riots are all grim reminders of mob manipulated to subserve a political agenda.

There can be several triggers and flash points to weld a mob, but of them all, religion is the most potent. Nothing brings together a mob like religion, and the need to protect "something" from the perceived or manufactured

"other". And nothing is more powerful if that "something" is a god we worship, or a country we claim to love. It becomes a power-keg if god and country become one. Vigilante mobs become the new high priests, defenders of the faith and protecting guardians of land.

Rene' Girard, the French sociologist, explains the phenomenon of mob violence in society, in his book 'The Scapegoat' published in 1986.

Broadly, in the first stage in any society, a social crisis is invoked by the majority. In the second stage the society, now represented by the majority, looks for someone to be the scapegoat for the crisis, since they cannot blame themselves. The final stage is the selection - where usually the weak, the minority are chosen as victims. They are attributed with charges and identified as the source of the crisis and are then subject to punishment by mobs representing the majority. Girard says, "Ultimately, the persecutors always convince themselves that a small number of people, or even a single individual, despite his

relative weakness, is extremely harmful to the whole of society." Germany saw it between the two world wars. China and Japan saw it too. And the Americas.

Over the past few years, we as a nation have seen mob violence and religious hate crimes erupt with criminal regularity. Media assessment is that religious hate crimes now average at least one every week. There is concern expressed in the media and in various forums. Sometimes even the honourable judges express concern while speaking in law universities or public functions, though not in their formal rulings. The mob's hearing is selective. Its disregard for such concern, total. The mob rages. The violence continues.

Till very recently, mob lynching was regularly reported in the media. Most victims were from religious minorities, Christians included. A few were widows whose inheritance was coveted by relatives or neighbours. A few were of a different race, or spoke a different tongue. The Covid lockdowns perhaps put a brake on the frequency of such crimes, or on their reporting in the media.

But targeted violence continued despite the lockdowns and the curfews.

Social media nurtures hate, and precipitates targeting with an intensity and accuracy never seen before. Armies of trolls, their salaries bankrolled by the rich and the powerful, pounce on scapegoats nearly every day. There are innumerable examples of this including Rhea Chakraborty and the Muslim women targeted by the 'Buli Bai' app and others. And flash mobs can be mobilised on WhatsApp.

The Church in India finds itself as a target all too often. Every time a worship service is disrupted, a pastor beaten and paraded, a woman threatened, or a school attacked, we see the mob in action. We also see whose hand is on the levers controlling the mob.

It is axiomatic that targeted hate will lead to physical violence. And social media has placed itself as the most effective dispenser of hate. Inevitably, ambitious political and social leaders will find social media a useful handmaiden. The 2020 Delhi violence

was preceded by hate speech calling to "shoot the anti-nationals". The culprit was not punished. He was rewarded with a promotion.

As a nation we have to decide if we want the mob to think and act for us. A couple of years ago, an article in BBC cautioned us: "What many Indians who choose to remain silent do not realise is that small-scale and large-scale violence are intimately connected. The perpetuation of hate crimes can easily lead to wider violence." Several books in recent years have indicted the German middle classes and intellectuals, women among them, for their silence even as they heard the noise of the cattle trains carrying victims to the extermination camps.

Girard too had a word of warning on the outworking of the scapegoating. He describes the aftermath of the sacrifice of the scapegoat as false peace that descends on the mob as myths are created to justify the violence. However, the cycle of scapegoating inevitably repeats itself as tensions must be managed and a sense of stability

must be achieved. This false peace means that no one will be safe eventually for there will always be a next time and a scapegoat will always be found.

There is only one way to defeat scapegoating, and that is by exposing it as a lie that it is. And for Girard there was only one religious text that did it: The Bible. In all his work he found the Bible different than any other text, as it condemns and criticizes scapegoating.

Jesus was a perfect scapegoat between the tensions that existed between the Jews and Romans. He was accused of sedition by the Romans and of blaspheming by the Jews. The mob is convinced that He must be crucified and even His followers go silent because of fear even though they know that Jesus is innocent. And so, the New Testament uncovers for us the myth of scapegoating while maintaining the guiltlessness of Jesus.

The false peace after the crucifixion persists because the mob still thinks it was justified, and the followers of Jesus,

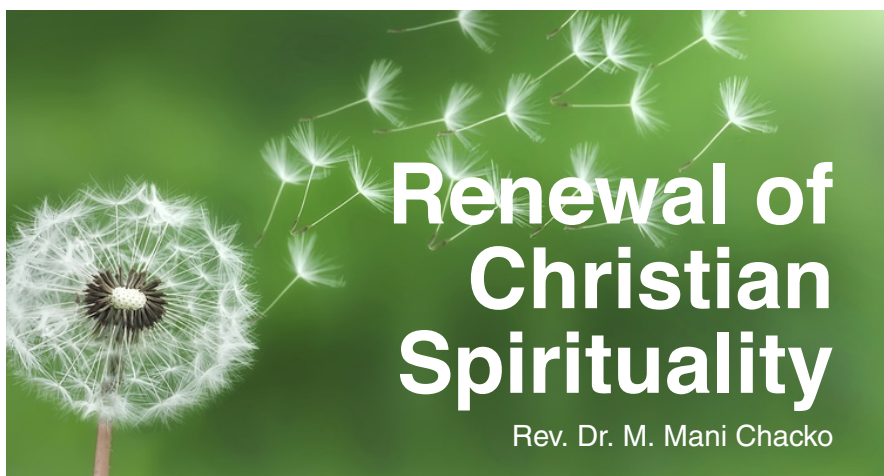
though they maintain that he was innocent, are still silent because of fear. That false peace was broken by the resurrection.

It is God who intervenes and delegitimizes and condemns the act of scapegoating by raising Jesus from the dead, thus proving His innocence.

The community of Jesus followers then is counterculture, as it is "dedicated both to the innocent victim whom God has vindicated by the Resurrection, and to a new life through him without further sacrifice." The Church does not need to resort to scapegoating but has another way to overcome conflicts without resorting to sacrifice – the communion table. "There forgiven sinners gather to remember Christ's sacrifice 'once for all,' and to seek no more victims."

How can the outworking of this understanding and this new life be applied to our nation in the context in which it finds itself is a question for the Body of Christ in India.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal



Lent is a season when we are invited to a life of renewal, renewing our understanding of Christian Spirituality. Of the many definitions of Spirituality, Sandra Schneiders provides one of the most encompassing: Spirituality is "the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives" (Schneiders, Sandra, "Spirituality in the Academy", Theological Studies 50 (1989): 676- 697). For Christians, the ultimate concern is God revealed in Jesus Christ, and experienced through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Self- transcendence moves one out of compulsive, addictive, obsessive patterns of behavior

toward more healthy relationships with oneself, other persons, and God. In short, Christian spirituality is the conscious human response to God.

Biblical scholars like Anne Patrick in "Ethics and Spirituality: The Social Justice Connection" (1988): 107-112) deal with ten aspects of Christian Spirituality which are helpful to renew our understanding of Christian spirituality and to practice it in today's broken world deeply crying for liberation.

- **Immanence of God**

Christian spirituality is underpinned by the understanding that God is



immanent – involved in the world, and acting through people. God is immanent in all relationships. By contrast, there is the view that experienced God as remote, outside of the world, and acting over people – and spirituality was seen as a matter between the "soul" and God. For the believer today, then, God is both transcendent to this universe and immanent in it. This God, present through grace, is the backdrop and the horizon for the believer's everyday life. Because of God's immanence, God is always encounterable. The experiences of grace in life are experiences of God in that they are movements within of the Holy Spirit, and they are the ways in which the immanent God speaks through persons and events.

## **B. Liberating God-Consciousness**

Christian spirituality involves a relational, liberating God-consciousness. The notion of respect – rather than only control – for created reality is fundamental. In this context, men and women are equal partners in the human community. Formerly, a "patriarchal" God-consciousness influenced

spirituality, marked by patterns of domination and subordination. It refers to an understanding and integration of one's life in terms of participation in the saving mission of Jesus, sent by God for the life of the world. At Nazareth, Jesus had proclaimed his mission: "He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives . . . to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18). Christians participate consciously and explicitly in the mission of Jesus, sent by God to bring the human race to God's intended fulfillment and liberation.

### **• God's Relation to Creation**

Christian spirituality recognizes that God's relation to creation is one of energizing and nurturing. The focus of religious devotion involves a stance of on-going commitment to the well-being of oneself and others. This entails concern for building social relations of respect, equality, and mutuality, thus emphasizing the virtues of solidarity and justice. On the contrary, the older view saw God's relation to creation as one of domination and control and the focus of religious devotion was the directing of one's energy to controlling bodily

impulses and other people. Furthermore, God's grace is mediated through created reality, as well as through the Church and its official sacraments. Christian spirituality is therefore sacramental.

#### **D. Grace**

Christian spirituality is the life derived from grace which implies God's presence and empowerment. In the past, grace was essentially something needed for admittance into heaven. It is through grace that God initiates a personal relationship in and through Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. In this context, the model of all Christian spirituality must be Jesus himself. Christian spirituality is reflected in how one responds to God's initiative in the challenges of daily life. Consequently, it is both Incarnational and Trinitarian – that is, it concerns how a person lives in partnership with the action of the triune God in their life. In short, grace is God communicating himself to us in the Spirit, freely loving us, forgiving us, and inviting us into relationship with him. This gift of God, present in grace, is an

integral part of Christian spirituality – the experience of a God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- **Historical Affirmation**

Christian spirituality is "this-worldly" since God values humankind's existence, which in turn fills history with intrinsic meaning. The older perspective, by contrast, emphasized otherworldliness – denigrating earthly existence to mainly a "testing period" preliminary to "real" fulfillment in the afterlife. From a faith point of view, spirituality must form part of the history of divine-human interaction, a breakthrough of the spirit into history. Patricia Natali summarizes this thought: "If we are following Jesus who became involved in history and all its conflicts, we cannot just follow him in quiet places like deserts and mountaintops. Jesus went from quiet places to situations of turmoil" ("Integrating Spirituality and Justice", *Review for Religious* 48, no.3 (1989): 432). If God is in all things, then He is present in history.

- **Totality of Christian Experience**

Christian spirituality is an activity of human life as such and therefore concerns the whole of human life at depth – rather than being concerned mainly with prayer and spiritual exercises in an elitist and individualistic manner. Specifically, for Christian spirituality, there is a religious dimension to a person's total experience which is supplied by the subject who believes and by the Mystery encountered. Any experience, therefore, can be religious for the person because God is everywhere and because the religious person believes this of God and wants to meet him. This supports the premise that Christian spirituality is experience-based. In sum, Christian spirituality refers to the whole of the Christian's life oriented to self-transcending knowledge, freedom, and love in light of the ultimate values and highest ideals perceived and pursued in the mystery of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit – that is, spirituality concerns everything that constitutes Christian experience.

- **Contemplation in Action**

Christian spirituality embraces contemplation in action, which

stresses the social constitution of the person and the social dimension of human freedom – as opposed to privatization and individualism. For some in the past, the pursuit of spirituality occurred in the cloister – a separation from mainstream society. Today, the locus of sanctification is seen in ordinary life in the world with its day-to-day relationships and responsibilities. However, a contemplative attitude is not incompatible with action, with creative work, and with dedicated love. In fact, traditionally, the ideas of prayer, meditation, and contemplation have been associated with a deepening of one's personal life, and this expansion has resulted in the greater capacity to understand and serve others. Contemplation of Christ and a personal encounter with neighbor, especially the poor, become one spiritual act. In looking ahead, the spirituality of the future must permeate the personal and political, it must animate our thought, action and imagination so that we can work for the transformation of the whole world and all life within it. Only a transformed action-oriented spirituality can respond to the hopes and agonies of our

suffering world. In sum, contemplation must blend with the Christian ideal of love in action – an engaged, compassionate, forgiving, courageous, and effective care for human beings in need. In other words, an integral spirituality always connects interior renewal with active service to others.

- **Social Justice**

Christian spirituality has at its heart a concern for social justice, recognized as everyone's responsibility – rather than relegating spirituality to the cloister and letting individualism supply a rationale for avoiding concern for social change. Reflection about justice recognizes that it can no longer be assumed that social and economic patterns are basically good, much less divinely established. Economic and social relationships that are far from respectful of the humanity of persons in subordinate positions cannot be left uncriticized. Christian spirituality, one's relationship with God, becomes the unique element in Christian ethics – it can enrich ethics with a transcendent, holistic focus

based on our essential relatedness to God and consequently to all of life. In fact, spirituality and justice are two ways of talking about the same thing, twin aspects of the way we respond to God. Christian spirituality is not simply private devotionism. Micah 6:8 exemplifies this integration by instructing one to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God. God is the God of pathos – active, engaged, involved, combining absolute selflessness with a supreme concern for the poor and exploited. Both spirituality and justice are journeys into freedom, moving from being bound to a freer state. Interestingly, both are needed in conjunction with each other to have true justice and true spirituality – because either of these in isolation from the other is destructive. However, when these two are integrated, the world and the Christian community are graced with life-giving energies.

- **Reconciliatory Approach**

Christian spirituality is reconciliatory in its approach – it affirms both poles of tensions. For instance, contact with the

transcendent God in prayer and other cultic activity does not "leave the world behind" but rather bestows a depth and seriousness precisely to one's life in this world. Likewise, body-soul dualism is rejected, and spirituality is seen as involving bodily existence in the world according to the Spirit of God. Also, the individual is not emphasized without due regard for social context.

The divine reality and transcendence, is held in tension with the more subjective side of experience, immanence, inwardness, spiritual awareness, and the discovery of the true, spiritual self. Christian spirituality does not affirm one half of a polar tension at the expense of the other – God's divine transcendence over God's immanence; the spiritual over the physical and material; contemplation over action; and the individual over the social context. In Christian spirituality, both are held in healthy tension.

- **Inclusiveness**

Christian spirituality is a broad, inclusive term. There is and there should be appreciation for an

inter-faith, ecumenical spirituality – that is, the spiritualities of Catholics and Protestants, non-theistic religious traditions, and even friends of other faiths. Spirituality no longer mainly refers to the spiritual life of a religious minority who are striving for perfection through a life of prayer and virtue beyond the "ordinary" believer. Rather, it now focuses on the human spirit of believers and non-believers, on their lives as a whole – that is, on the physical and emotional, the intellectual and social, the political and cultural, and the secular and religious dimensions of their lives. In fact, there is a growing consensus in recognizing that Christian spirituality is a subset of a broader category that is neither confined to nor defined by Christianity or even by religion. To clarify, however, if spirituality involves engagement with the Absolute, then it is religious; if the engagement is in the person of Jesus Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit, then the spirituality is Christian.

## **Conclusion**

The challenge is to maintain a balanced Christian spirituality



that has a proper sense of the transcendence of God. Today, humanity has a profound and authentic desire for wholeness in the midst of fragmentation, for community in the face of isolation and loneliness, for liberating transcendence, for meaning in life, and for values that endure. It is through an integral Christian spirituality that hungering and thirsting of humanity can be satisfied and quenched. For this, our understanding of Christian

Spirituality needs to undergo a process of renewal.



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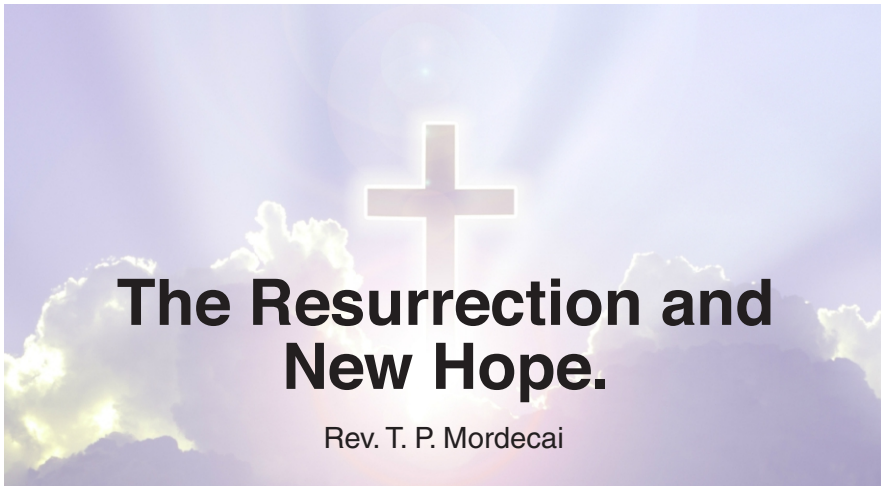
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### **Introduction:**

Christian faith is unique, for they believed in the risen Lord Jesus Christ. There is no one in the history of humankind resurrected from the death and live forever, except Jesus Christ. So, Christians believed that they too will be resurrected as Christ had risen from the dead. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though he die, will live" (John 11:25). What a great assurance? Jesus gave his followers the hope for future glorious day when he comes again. Because the truth of Christianity rests heavily on the resurrection. Those who claimed to have seen the risen Jesus went on to turn the world upside down. Most of them also died as followers of Christ.

### **Evidences of Jesus' Resurrection:**

In the Bible, there are many evidence of Jesus' resurrection. Let us cite some evidence of the resurrection of Jesus from the Bible.

**1). The Empty Tomb:** The Synoptic Gospels recorded the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 28; Mk.16; Lk.24). After the Sabbath day, when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. *He is not here; for he has been raised*, as he said. Come and see the place where he lay" (Matt.28:5,6). The statements, "He is not here" and "*come, see the place where*

*he lay*", signifies the tomb where they laid him was empty.

### **ii) The Post Resurrection Appearances:**

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and followers in different occasions and places. Jesus met the two travelers on the road to Emmaus. When they came to the village and was at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. (Luke 24:30,31). Again, Jesus appeared to his ten disciples behind the closed doors. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you" After he said this, *he showed them his hands and his side*. Then, the disciples rejoiced *when they saw the Lord*" (John 20:19-20). Again, he appeared to his seven disciples while fishing. Peter and other disciples went for fishing but that night they caught nothing. Just after the daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "*Children, you have no fish, have you?*" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find

some". So, they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "*It is the Lord*" (John 21:3-7). Again, eleven disciples were on the way to Galilee where Jesus directed them to go. *When they saw him, they worship him* (Matt.28:16-17). After his resurrection, Jesus repeatedly appeared to His disciples over a period of 40 days, and then ascended to heaven.

### **The Significance of Easter (Resurrection):**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very heart of Christianity. In 1 Corinth 15:14, St. Paul reasoned, "If Christ has not been raised, our proclamation has been in vain, and your faith has been in vain". The resurrection of Jesus Christ demonstrated the power of God" (Eph. 1:19) and also, vindicated Jesus' identity as God. (Rom.1:4). His resurrection also demonstrated that all the teaching of Jesus Christ about the eternal life and promise to raise the believers on the last day is true. (John 6:40). His resurrection proves true that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be the son of God (John 19:7).

### **Impacts of the Resurrection in the NT Period:**

When Jesus was arrested, only Peter and another disciple followed Jesus (John 18:15). That means all the other disciples had left Jesus because of fear. But after Jesus' resurrection, his disciples and followers were strengthened again. Many changes had taken place after they met the resurrected Jesus Christ.

**i) His Apostles were dramatically changed:** Peter was changed – Apostles were unstoppable. After imprisonment, threatening and forbidden to speak in Jesus' name, Peter and apostles answered to Jewish leaders, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Even though the apostles were beaten for disobeying the orders of Jewish council, they "did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as Christ" (Acts 5:42).

**ii) The Disciples Died for Their Belief:** After Christ was resurrected, we see the disciples abandoning their occupation, regathering, and committing themselves to spreading a very specific message – That Jesus Christ was the Messiah who died

on the Cross, returning to life, and was seen alive by them. They faced hardship, without food, slept, ridiculed, beaten, imprisoned, and were executed in torturous ways.

**iii) The Conversion Of Skeptics:** The Gospel tells us that Jesus' family, including James, was embarrassed by what he was claiming to be. They didn't believe him (John 7:5). Later, the historian Josephus tells, that James the brother of Jesus, the leader of Jerusalem Church, was stoned to death because of his belief in his brother (Jesus). Later on, Paul also was converted on the way to Damascus.

**iv) The Emergence of the Church:** The resurrection led to the start of the Christian Church. Within a period of about twenty years, it had even reached Caesar's Palace in Rome. Not only that, but this movement triumphed over a number of competing ideological and eventually overwhelmed the entire Roman Empire.

**v) The Institution of Resurrection Day (Sunday):** For a Christian, the Lord's Day, is



a special day consecrated to the service and worship of God. It is "the day the Lord has made" (Ps.118:24). Sunday is the day on which we believe God acted decisively to liberate the world from tyranny of sin, death, and corruption through the resurrection of Jesus.

**vi) Continuation of Jesus Movement (Christianity):** The ongoing encounter with the resurrected Christ is experienced by Christians all over the world, in every culture, by people from all kinds of backgrounds and personalities – well educated and not, rich and poor, thinkers and feelers, men and women. They all testified that Jesus Christ has changed their lives. They encountered the resurrected Christ personally in a very real and ongoing way. Many experienced His presence and their prayers answered in many ways. In this way, the numbers of believers are increasing day by day.

**New Hope for Christians Today:** Christianity is the religion of hope. Because Christ in whom we put our faith gave many promises in his words.

**i) Assurance of a Living Lord:** Jesus before he was crucified on the cross and before he raised Lazarus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though he die, will live" (John 11:25).

**ii) Assurance of Resurrection of the dead:** The Apostle Paul wrote, "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from dead will give you life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom 8:11).

**iii) Hope of Victory over Evil :** The coming of Christ, his death and resurrection has given victory over sin and the devil. The Bible says, "the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). The apostle Paul also assures of Christian victory when he writes: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet..." (Rom. 16:20)

**iv) Hope Even in the Midst of Suffering :** Christians have living hope even in the midst

of suffering. Jesus said, "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" (in Matt. 10:28). James also wrote, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (James 1:1 & 3). Peter also said, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6 & 7).

### **Conclusion:**

Only through Jesus' resurrection can believers have the assurance of a future resurrection. Through their union with him, they can look

forward to an entirely new order of existence where sin and death have no more power. (1. Cor. 15:20-26; 1. Peter 1:3,4). This new order of existence will begin at the return of Jesus Christ, when the resurrection of the believers will take place. (John 6:40; 1. Cor. 15:52; 1 Thes 4:16-17). Therefore, the Bible says, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1).



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*"Be joyful in hope,  
patient in affliction,  
and faithful in prayer."*

*Romans 12:12*



# The Super-Exaltation of Christ

Rev. Dr. David Mende

## Introduction

A few years ago, the South Indian music veteran, Ilaiyaraaja stated that he doesn't believe in the resurrection of Christ. In one of his speeches, he claimed that he watched a few documentaries on YouTube which supposedly prove that Jesus didn't resurrect from the dead. Several Christians in and around Tamil Nadu protested his remarks on social media. Well, I believe that one day, Ilaiyaraaja will bow his knee before Jesus and confess that Jesus is Lord! In fact, one day, all the enemies of Christ will recognize his Lordship and tremble before the resurrected and glorified Christ. Philippians 2:9-11 talks about this very fact. In this article, I want to talk about **"The Super-Exaltation of Christ."**

Philippians 2:9-11 is part of Apostle Paul's exhortation given in 2:5-11 to the Philippian Church. Though this passage has profound Christology, the primary purpose behind this passage is to exhort the Church at Philippi to be united and humble (2:3-5). In this passage, Apostle Paul says that the Father highly exalted Jesus and gave him the name above every name so that all creation can worship him to the glory of the Father. In this article, I have adapted Dr. John MacArthur's outline on Philippians 2:9-11.

## 1. The Source of Christ's Exaltation Is the Father (Phil. 2:9).

In verses 5-8, Apostle Paul explains that Christ humbled himself through incarnation (by

adding human nature to his divine nature) and by dying on the cross for our sins. Since Christ humbled himself, God highly exalted him and bestowed (wholeheartedly, generously, graciously gave) on him the name above every name. Now notice that it is God, the Father who exalted Jesus. In verse 7, Paul says that Jesus "emptied himself." In verse 8, he says that Christ "humbled himself."

Since Christ humbled himself, the Father exalted him. Christ didn't elevate himself, but he waited for the Father to exalt him. So, God "highly exalted" Jesus. This phrase can also be translated as "super-exalted" or "hyper-exalted." Acts 2:33 also conveys the idea of Jesus being exalted by the Father. So, the exaltation of Christ includes resurrection, ascension, and glorification. In Acts 5:31, Apostle Peter says, "God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." So, it is God who exalted Jesus. And please understand this—it is God who exalts us too. That's why, Matthew 23:12 (cf. Lk. 14:11; 18:14) says, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be

exalted." Humbled by whom? Exalted by whom? By God!

The Bible repeatedly affirms that it is God who humbles and lifts people: "For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another" (Ps. 75:6-7). Here, we need to answer the question as to why Jesus was exalted. Isn't he already exalted? Isn't Christ the eternal God?

I think the key to understanding this question is in verses 7-8, where Paul says that Christ "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Since Christ "emptied himself," "humbled himself," and died on the cross, God restored all that Christ gave up and he gave Christ much more than that, especially the complete authority referred to in verses 10-11. Since Jesus humbled himself, one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord (vv. 10-11). So, it is God who exalted Jesus and it is God who exalts his people too.

## **2. The Title of Christ's Exaltation Is "Lord" (Phil. 2:9, 11).**

Paul says that God bestowed on Jesus "the name that is above every name." Based on verse 11, some scholars say that probably this name is "Lord." Though the word "Lord" was used for owners, Roman emperors, and pagan gods, scholars point out that the word "Lord" (Greek: kurios) is the equivalent of the Hebrew word, "Yahweh" (that's the Greek word in the Septuagint as well).

This clearly affirms the deity of Jesus. Jehovah's witnesses cannot explain how Jesus can be given the name "Lord." "Name" also implies that Jesus has authority over all. So, the Father gave Jesus the name above every name. In Scripture, we see that God gave a new name to people who entered into a new stage in their lives. God changed the name of Abram to Abraham after he received the promise (Gen. 17:5). Jacob's name was changed to Israel after he wrestled with God (Gen. 32:28). Jesus gave the name, Peter to Simon before he became his disciple (Jn 1:42). Even Jesus is bestowed the name above all names after he humbled himself. Jesus is far above all!

In verse 11, Paul is alluding to Isaiah 45:21-23. When Paul declares that Jesus is Lord, he is clearly stating that Jesus is the Lord, who is "a righteous God and a Savior." And there is none beside him! In fact, the phrase "Jesus is Lord!" is said to be the first creed of the church. Early Christians believed that Jesus, not Caesar, is the Lord! That's why Apostle Paul says, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Elsewhere, Paul says that he proclaimed "Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5). And many early Christians paid with their lives for confessing Christ's name.

Jesus is our Master. He is the sovereign Lord who has complete authority over us. Jesus is not just our Savior, who gives us a ticket to heaven. Jesus is also our Lord and we are obligated to submit to him.

## **3. The Response to Christ's Exaltation Is Worship (Phil. 2:10-11).**

Since Jesus is Lord, what must be our response? Worship! God exalted Jesus "so that" (a purpose clause) every knee



should bow and every tongue confess (v. 10). Paul is not teaching universalism (the doctrine that God will ultimately grant salvation to all) here. But he's saying that one day everyone will recognize the lordship of Christ and bow their knees before him.

We must bow down before the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Notice that every knee "in heaven and on earth and under the earth" will bow before Jesus. This demonstrates the absolute sovereignty of Christ. The millions of angels and the saints in heaven will bow down before Jesus. Those of us who are on the earth will bow before him as well. God's people joyfully adore him. But one day, the rest of the people will recognize his lordship too.

Some will joyfully bow their knee before Jesus and others will bow their knee before him with terror and regret as they didn't submit to his lordship. Here, "under the earth" probably refers to hell. One day, all beings in all the universe will recognize the authority of Christ. Every tongue will confess, acknowledge, and affirm that Jesus is Lord! Even Christ's enemies will acknowledge his sovereignty. Hitler will bow before

Jesus, Stalin will bow before Jesus, Osama Bin Laden will bow before Jesus, all the ISIS terrorists will bow before Jesus, all the religious fundamentalists who oppose Jesus and his Church will bow before him!

#### **4. The Purpose of Christ's Exaltation Is God's Glory (Phil. 2:11b).**

God is glorified through Christ's exaltation. As I mentioned earlier, in verse 11 Apostle Paul is alluding to Isaiah 45:21-22. This is what the Lord says in that passage: "Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. 'Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.'"

Apostle Paul says that every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord "to the glory of God the Father." The Father and the Son don't compete with each other. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal within the Godhead, the Trinity. In John 5:23, Jesus says that if anyone does not honor the Son, they do not honor the Father. In

John 13:31, Jesus says that the Father is glorified in the Son.

God often uses the lowly and despised things to bring glory to his name. That's why Apostle Paul says, "God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:28-29). Even when the Lord lifts a humble saint, it's for his glory alone!

## Conclusion

Philippians 2:9-11 has rich theology. But why did Apostle Paul talk about the glories of Christ in this passage? To teach the Philippian church to humble themselves like Christ and to consider others more significant.

So, the main message of this article is: **Put others first!**

Let's humble ourselves, count others more significant than ourselves, and look at others' interests. When we do that, the Lord himself will lift us. Let's humble ourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt us (Jas 4:10). Apostle Paul gives the deep theology of Christ to emphasize the need for humility and unity in the church. If we try to

lift ourselves, the Lord will humble us. But if we humble ourselves, the Lord himself will lift us, for his glory! As we celebrate Easter, let's make a commitment to reflect Christ's humility and sacrificial service. Let's put others first!

P.S. This article is adapted from Dr. David Mende's book, *Powerful Sermons for Special Occasions*. You may contact him for copies of this book.



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# Me, Crucified – Life's Greatest Privilege and Blessing!

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

When M. S. Dhoni gave up his position of being the Captain of Chennai Super Kings just before the Indian Premier League 2022 started, people were asking this question: What is one image that stands out the most as Dhoni retired as CSK captain? The answer without a doubt was his goosebumps giving heroics in Dharamshala in 2010. CSK had to win this match they played against Kings XI Punjab to go to the knockout stages. 16 runs were still required off the final over which was bowled by Irfan Pathan of Kings XI Punjab as CSK chased a mammoth 190-plus score in this must-win T20 game. It was a nerve-wracking situation. That's when Dhoni stepped up to do it for his team. The first ball, nearly a yorker, was hit for a boundary. The next ball,

top-edged by Dhoni yielded a two as there was a misfield as well. 10 runs had to be scored off 4 balls for CSK to remain in the IPL, now. When Pathan missed the yorker length off the next ball, Dhoni hit a Himalayan six in this stadium located in the Himalayan mountains! It was easily the biggest televised six from Himachal Pradesh at that time (as the ESPN commentators put it). Now 4 were required off 3 balls. That the next ball went for a six was no surprise. Dhoni would be known for winning matches with sixes with the crowd roaring as his career ended! But what Dhoni did after that ball – the fourth of the final over – resulted in an image for all ages! Fully pumped-up, He punched himself on his face! Completely charged-up he landed a boxing-type hit on

his helmet visor in the face-area! It was as if Dhoni was scolding himself through this gesture saying this: Why did you have leave matters till the very last to qualify for the knockout stages? CSK not only qualified for the knockouts but also won that IPL under Dhoni's leadership, the first time they did so. They would repeat this feat three more times under his captaincy. But no other victory matched this moment for the sheer drama or the eyeball grabbing power or the spine-tingling effect it had on the CSK fan or the Dhoni fan!

What is the single-most standout moment from the life of the One who is far more important than Dhoni or anyone you will care to name, even Jesus, the only God-in-flesh? It is the Cross on which he was crucified beyond a doubt! Paul implies this in I Corinthians 2:2 where he writes this: For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). If Paul gave Jesus a new second name with a theological spin, it would be this: Crucified. Jesus was 'Christ Crucified' for Paul. And he also says that he would not boast about anything except the Cross of Christ elsewhere in the New Testament (Gal. 6:14). So, the Cross of Christ is the most

important event in the life of the most important person in history! And the biggest privilege for us, comes from this: we are invited to be part of this single-most important event in our lives too! Yes, Life's biggest blessing is to be part of the biggest event in the life of the most important person ever, our Lord! There are four Scripture portions that call us to do this. This shows how important this Bible truth is. And from each portion, we learn different truths about our crucifixion and its connection with Christ's Crucifixion.

First, We are CHOSEN to be Crucified (Rom. 6:6): Apostle Paul writes in the English Standard Version of the Bible this: 'We know that our old self WAS CRUCIFIED with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would be no longer be enslaved to sin'. Notice the past-tense used in the phrase, "was crucified", in the above verse! This means long before we were born, God chose us to be crucified along with Jesus who was also chosen before the foundation of the world to be crucified (Rev. 13:8). So, let us tell ourselves this: "I am already crucified with Christ. I don't have to obey what the body of sin

wants me to do – watch porn with its eyes and commit sexual sin with his members!" The context of this portion of Romans where Romans 6:6 appears, is the believer's ongoing struggle with sin despite being swept by the Grace of God. And the grip of besetting sin in our life can be broken through Cross-Identification.

Second, We have a CHOICE to be crucified (Gal. 5:24). Paul writes here this: "Those who belong to Christ HAVE CRUCIFIED the flesh with its passions and desires". While Romans 6:6 speaks about 'WAS CRUCIFIED', Galatians 5:24 talks about 'HAVE CRUCIFIED'. This means, even though we are deemed as already crucified with Jesus, we must make a choice here and now to be crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. So, today tell the Lord this: "Lord, I choose to crucify my flesh today - the flesh which seeks revenge without waiting for God to execute justice. Lord I choose to crucify my flesh today - the flesh that seeks shortcuts to the top without waiting patiently for God to act."

Third, We have to be CONSISTENT in our choice to be crucified (Gal. 2:20). Here Paul

writes, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me". Our problem is this: we are not consistent in this discipline of self-crucifixion. We do it when we feel like doing it. Otherwise instead of crucifying our flesh, we caress our flesh. Otherwise instead of nailing our sinful tendencies, we hail it as our 'weakness'! The discipline of self-abnegation or crucifixion should be consistent thing in the life we live NOW (Gal. 2:20) not only in a thing from eternity past (Rom. 6:6). So, when we hit the rewind button on what Jesus endured for us on the Cross, we will not hit the forward button on yielding to temptation in our life! In fact, we will see yielding to temptations consistently and sinning deliberately as the horrific, to-be-shunned act trampling on the blood of Jesus underfoot (Heb. 10:26-29) when are consistent in our choice to be crucified.

Fourthly and finally, We are given COURAGE for crucifixion from our Lord itself (Gal. 6:14). Let me quote from the King James Bible what Paul wrote in Galatians 6:14 – 'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the

world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' It is not by our strength we can crucify the world and its pleasures. Paul makes it clear that it is made possible by Jesus (notice the phrase, 'by whom'). Jesus gives us the courage and enablement for this pain-staking process of self-abnegation for he endured the Cross scorning its shame for the joy set before him (see Heb. 12:2). Jesus endured the Cross as he saw with eyes of faith, the unmatched blessings the Cross would bring: people coming to the foot of the Cross from every tribe, language, people and nation in repentance and receiving forgiveness of sin. We too focus on the joy set before us inspired by Jesus and go about this painful process of self (Gal. 5:24) and world (Gal. 6:14) crucifixion. What is that joy? It is the joy of becoming more and more like Jesus. It is the joy of a lived-out holy life. A holy life is a jolly life! I would not agree with many of the things that Richard G. Scott, a nuclear engineer who was one of the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints said. But I agree with this statement he made: 'Don't give up what you want most for what you want now!' Let us analyse that loaded sentence: What do we want the most? To be transformed into the likeness of

Jesus! What is that we sadly tend to want now? The satisfaction of our sinful passions! So, let us say bye to the satisfaction of our sinful passions through the painful process of self-crucifixion which the Bible calls us for in four places – Romans 6:6, Galatians 5:24, Galatians 2:20 and Galatians 6:15 - empowered and emboldened by the living example of our Master who, for the joy set before Him, endured the Cross!

Yes, crucifying one's self on the Cross, is indeed life's greatest privilege! And it ultimately results in the biggest of all blessings – becoming more like Jesus!



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# DOES EVERYTHING DEPEND ON MANTRAS?

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

Roman Catholic priest Andres Arango who served in Arizona for 16 years resigned because Roman Catholic officials invalidated thousands of baptisms performed by him on the grounds that he used incorrect wording. He had served three parishes in metro Phoenix from September 2005 until his resignation Feb. 1. The Diocese of Phoenix said other sacraments received by a person may have to be repeated after he or she is re-baptized properly.

Roman Catholics have seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders. The solution of redoing baptism and confirmation could

work. But those who had Holy Communion for all those years, how does one roll back on that? Can the anointing of the sick be undone rendering them unanointed? Those who got married are out of wedlock according to this idea and any children born after marriages that are null and void are rendered illegitimate. And, what of those who went to the grave without any opportunity to get it right?

What happened in Arizona was not an isolated case of one priest erring in the mantra or formula he used. In 2020, Detroit church officials said a deacon used the wrong words while baptizing people from 1986 to 1999. The most dramatic consequence in that case involved a priest who



was baptized by the deacon as a boy: the invalidity of the baptism made his ordination wrong and that meant that all the marriages he performed were null and void. The priest Matthew Hope himself had to be baptized again and ordained as a priest, a second time.

That happened in Oklahoma too in 2020. A new priest, the Rev. Zachary Boazman, learned that his baptism was invalid. Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul Coakley subsequently validated the marriages performed by Boazman, who himself had to be baptized and ordained again.

What did the men get wrong? They had said, "We baptize you..." instead of "I baptize you..." That according to the officials of Roman Catholicism is what makes it wrong. Really?!

### **A Formula?**

Our Lord said that people are to be made disciples "baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Was our Lord giving a mantra or was He saying that those who baptize need to act in the name of God, that is, on behalf of God? Would it be wrong

to drop the prefacing words "I/we baptize" and simply say, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," or to say, "In the name of the Father and of the Lord Jesus and of the Holy Spirit"?

The Vatican in June 2020 issued a directive because some unnamed priests were using the "we" formula making the baptism more of a communal affair involving parents, godparents and the community in welcoming a new member into the Catholic Church. "The issue with using 'We' is that it is not the community that baptizes a person, rather, it is Christ, and Christ alone, who presides at all of the sacraments, and so it is Christ Jesus who baptizes," according to what Bishop Thomas Olmsted posted on the Arizona diocese's site after Rev Andres Arango's error was discovered.

Christina Moishe Collins, a parishioner, said Arango was beloved and helped boost the congregation's dwindling membership. "Father Andres came in and he just was just like a breath of fresh air. He's so filled with the faith in this positive, uplifting manner," Moishe Collins

said. At his last service, she said, he received a standing ovation and people waited outside with banners to thank him and show support.

Matthew Travisano, 45, a practicing Catholic member of another parish, said that the ruling to "invalidate" Father Arango's baptism is "another example of an archdiocese that has forgotten its core mission and has distracted itself with something petty...The wording of the baptismal sacrament is not nearly as important as the intent of the sacrament and the sacrament itself...The 'error' is a single word. If you look at the New Testament, John the Baptist didn't have a script to follow when he baptized Christ. The act itself was the most important thing."

However, the diocese did say that Father Arango "has not disqualified himself from his vocation and ministry" and is still "a priest in good standing." What does that even mean, when the man has resigned?

### **Body of Christ**

The objection to using "we" was that it suggested baptism is "a communal affair." If baptism and

communion are not communal affairs, then it stands to reason that a priest can conduct them without anyone else being present. No witnessing community is needed to affirm the acts. But that is not true and that is why, from the standpoint of pure logic, it is absolutely wrong to assert that the community of believers cannot be involved in an executive role in these sacred rites.

Significantly, the Word of God describes the Church as the Body of Christ. Thus, according to both logic and Scripture, a minister of the Church using "we" cannot be wrong.

While it sounds very pious to say that "it is Christ, and Christ alone, who presides at all of the sacraments, and so it is Christ Jesus who baptizes", it implies that the priest alone represents Christ. It suggests that a priest all by himself is standing in for Christ in relation to those he ministers to. While the Roman Catholic Church reserves the title "Vicar of Christ (Lat. Vicarius Christi)" for the pope, implying his supreme and universal primacy, both of honour and of jurisdiction, over the Church, in a sense there is

the subconscious or below the surface notion that all clergy are vicars of Christ.

From a biblical point of view, this is an obnoxious idea. The word vicar is derived from the Latin word *vicarius* meaning 'substitute'. Christ was our substitute on the Cross and suffered vicariously for us. But no one can do the reverse and substitute for the Saviour. As Scripture asserts, "there is...one mediator [intermediary] between God and humans, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Thus, for those who are Christians there is only priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary, the saints and all the clergy of the church cannot take the place of Jesus or plead with Jesus on behalf of others considered to be less spiritually acceptable.

### **One Mediator**

The Lord Jesus did not belong to the priestly clan, and in that much wasn't a priest. When Jesus started to teach people about God, He didn't appoint any priests to assist Him. The Lord of the Church did not institute a priesthood. He gave the Church no priests because when He sacrificed Himself, He ended the sacrificial system of atonement.

Without the need to offer sacrifices there was no need for priests.

In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews elaborates on the theme of Jesus being our high priest and declares that He is the most highly suited high priest we can have. First of all, He is one of us: Jesus was made "fully human in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (2:17-18).

Next, He sympathises with us: "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (4:16-18).

He is perfect for the task because He is sinless: "Such a high priest truly meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself. For the law appoints as high priests, men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect for ever" (7:26-28).

Jesus replaced the old covenant with a new one: "...in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people...because they did not remain faithful to [His] covenant, and [He] turned away from them..." (8:6-9). The features of the new covenant in Jesus were that God would write His laws on people's hearts (v.10), they

would know God personally without needing intermediary priests (v.11), and there would be forgiveness from God (v.12). "By calling this covenant 'new', He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear" (v.13).

Jesus did it all once for all. His sacrifice was perfect. He didn't have to keep on offering sacrifices again and again: "Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God" (10: 11-12). We do not have priests because Jesus performed the ultimate priestly act. He sacrificed Himself. He finished it all, leaving nothing for any priestly class to do.

### **Priesthood of All Believers**

Given what Jesus did to reconcile us to God, it was inevitable that the Church should come up with a totally new and revolutionary doctrine: that of "the priesthood of all believers". It was spelt out in the following passages in the

Bible: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet. 2:9-10). "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father – to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen (Rev. 1:5-6).

The doctrine was largely lost sight of until the Reformation, however, John Wycliffe, a forerunner of the Reformers, did hold the view that priests were unnecessary as confessors. Martin Luther and John Calvin vehemently asserted that there was no basis for a priestly class among Christians who follow Jesus, the only Mediator.

The Bible sets forth the aim and purpose of all Christian ministry as follows: "Christ himself gave

the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13). The aim is to turn every member into someone serving God united in faith, knowledge and maturity in Christ. Paul counselled Timothy, "...the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2). What we have received we have to pass on (1 Cor. 15:3).

All are priests. No specially chosen persons stand between other believers and God as intermediaries. They are not needed because all are priests. Each and every believer can approach God's throne of grace directly and personally.

### **No Mantras**

Those who put their faith in Jesus, need no mantras nor do they need any brahmins. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He didn't

teach them any spells or charms. He said, "When you pray, say, 'Father...'" (Lk. 11:2). It wasn't a mantra that He taught. He asked them to affirm God as their Abba/Papa/Daddy. To approach an earthly parent or to make a request to a parent, one doesn't need another to mediate or have a powerful mantra.

The second thing that Jesus taught disciples was that they should pray in His name. Though Christians have tended to use "in Jesus' name" as a mantra to tag on to their prayers, that wasn't what Jesus meant us to do. He wanted us to know that while sinners had forfeited all rights to approach God who is utterly holy, we can stand before the throne of

grace and say that because Jesus took our place on the Cross, we have been given the right by Him to take His place before the Father.

Come to Jesus. Your salvation doesn't depend on any brahmin getting the mantra right.



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*"The Lord delights in those  
who fear him,  
who put their hope in  
his unfailing love."  
Psalm 147:11*

## **EFI PUNJAB MOBILE BIBLE TRAINING (PMBT) From Struggle to Blessing**



PMBT (Punjab Mobile Bible Training) is a program initiated in the year 2012 to address the need of the churches in the northern Indian region. There is an immense need to address the lack of teaching of the word of God. Out of the Christian workers / leaders in Punjab, around 80% possess a literacy of below 10th grade with no form of theological training to equip them to understand the word of God.

EFI PMBT addresses this issue by providing systematic Bible training to these pastors on different subjects of the Bible such as Bible Interpretation, Minor prophets, Inter Testamental period, New Testament background etc.

EFI PMBT has impacted the ministry in Punjab effectively and some changes or growth are observed as follows:

- Participants value the programs as we have 80% of them as regular attendees.
- PMBT has helped them to get rid of their wrong beliefs and changed their value system.
- Participants share their learning in their churches and as a result the churches are strengthened.
- Participants encourage and invite others to join the classes.



- Many pastors interacted with us, asking questions, and clarifying their doubts.
- Pastors learned the value of spending time in their personal studies.
- Participants have become aware of the value of books and Bible study materials now. Earlier, they never wanted to spend on Bibles and books but now they are willing to buy any training material (Eg. Study Bible, Bible Dictionary etc.) to gain more knowledge. PMBT has changed their perspectives.
- At most of the places, participants arrange for their

own lunch. This is a great blessing to the ministry.

- PMBT is conducted in nine districts of Punjab. There are around 650 pastors/leaders enrolled in this training program. We need and covet your prayers.



**Reported by Rev. Isaac Dutta,**  
EFI Asst. Secretary, North-West  
India

*"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."*  
*Romans 8:18*



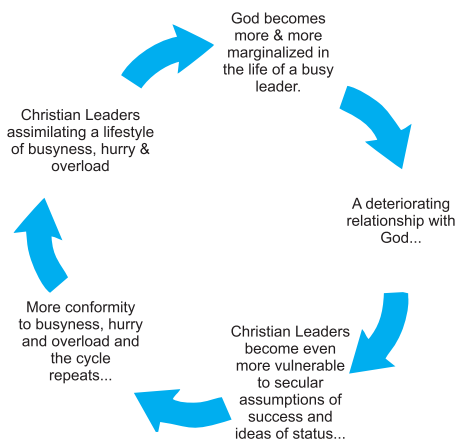
# Reflections on Soul Care and Renewal.

Rev. Aldrin Bogi

More and more people are reading less and less of the Bible today. In North America, a survey says that about 1700 people are giving up reading the Bible every day. Another study done in a South Asian context suggests that 80 % of Christian youth go to the Bible only in times of crisis. Some people describe this as a severe but silent crisis in the Church. If we are brutally honest, "motivational" sermons often lacking Biblical depth have taken over our pulpits, resulting in severe biblical illiteracy & spiritual malnourishment.

There is an urgent need to get back to the Bible - not just for an average Christian but even for those serving for a long time in Christian ministry. Dr J. Robert Clinton, professor of leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary, believes that more than 70% of leaders do not finish well. One reason is that leaders can get enslaved to the tyranny of schedules, busyness & hurry. Today, many are serving from a place of stress and a deep sense of fatigue, resulting in a slowdown of progress, impact, and personal effectiveness.

Christian workers can easily get entangled in a vicious cycle of busyness as described below:



This kind of lifestyle can damage our well-being and health. The solution is not very complicated. In fact, the opposite is needed - the need to shed complexity from one's life. More often than not, the real solution is going back to basics. When anyone adopts a 'back to basics' emphasis in life and work, they focus on the things that make the most difference. An approach of getting back to fundamentals enables them to build or rebuild their lives on a firm foundation, leading to a lasting impact that is sustainable and enjoyable.

Let's look at three particular fundamentals one can cultivate for a sustained sense of being

renewed, refuelled and refreshed:

## Scriptures and Renewal

We should commit to ground our leadership by an ongoing commitment to personal discipleship. As leaders, we should never forget that we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ first. Ministry should flow out of who we are on the inside. This involves following, learning, and imitating our Lord and Saviour. We need to practice the habit of immersing in scriptures regularly. Not out of legalism but motivated by our love for Jesus Christ, our Guru. Today, many people in the Church have picked up bad Bible reading habits. Philip Yancey rightly points out, *"We've essentially reduced our engagement with the scripture to eating Bible McNuggets."* Bible absorption is more than just snacking on God's Word; instead, it is helping people get on to a more wholesome diet. It is a way of hearing and reading the Bible with an awareness that it is in the Scriptures that we primarily meet God. It is a marinating, mulling over, reflecting, dwelling, & pondering on the Scriptures, resulting in a transformative

engagement with God.

It is time to ask God sincerely to help us take this journey of renewal. The Apostle Paul pleaded with the Church in Rome when he wrote,

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)*

We have great examples from some Old Testament characters like Josiah. He experienced a deep sense of spiritual renewal in his times. It was not just personal in nature but also led to corporate spiritual renewal. Take time to read King Josiah's story in the Bible and commit to returning to the Bible.

## **Soul Care & Renewal**

Another essential truth we all need to remember is that only God is the infinite one. The rest of

us need to learn to live within the physical limits of time and space and human limitations of strength and energy. God is the one who can multi-task and be in several places at once. Not us. God is the one who neither sleeps nor slumbers, not us. And with all this, even God worked six days and rested from work on the seventh day.

Last year, many of our team members were extremely tired and exhausted by the many hours per week spent dealing with the challenges of work, personal lives, and the pandemic's pressure. Hundreds of hours on Zoom & the lack of in-person social interactions had a toll on many. We called our people to take time out for themselves. We initiated Soul Care Fridays, where we took off from work every Friday for two whole months. The result was fantastic. We all came back rejuvenated on each of those Mondays simply because we took time to renew ourselves intentionally.

Richard Foster said it right, 'The desperate need today is not for more intelligent or gifted people but deep people.' Deep people

recognize the difference between a journey to spirituality versus a journey of spirituality. In this journey, Men & Women of substance need to make time for personal renewals.

Here are some ways to take care of ourselves.

1. Don't overdo too much. Stick to reasonable working hours – evaluate how you view your work? Reflect deeply on where do you get your identity from? Is it from Christ or from your work?

2. Structure your work and learn to delegate them well.

3. Keep listening to your needs and attend to them. Give yourself decent amounts of time – eat with your family and engage in a meaningful conversation without being hooked to your smartphone.

4. Believe in yourself – poor self-esteem or self-neglect could contribute to a burnout.

5. Keep clear boundaries between your professional and private life. Don't let matters at

work encroach on your mood and in the rest of your personal life.

6. Enjoy your weekends doing something different & refreshing. Make the most of it by meeting friends and planning outings. Take it easy, refuel and come back on Mondays with a greater sense of energy for the work you care about.

7. Maintain a journal taking time to honestly express to God how you really feel on the inside. Most Psalmists did this. In fact, there are times in life when our soul can be deeply troubled. If we don't take care of ourselves it can cause us to become weary. Someone rightly said, 'To whine is human but to lament is Christian.'

## **Small groups & Renewal**

Be proactive about being a part of a small group. Do all you can to cultivate friendships with genuine & honest truth-tellers in your life. As I look back on my journey so far, I'm grateful for the many truth-tellers in my life right from the time I got into ministry. About seven years ago, four of us (all holding significant roles in Christian ministry) got together

and decided to meet regularly. The goal is simple. To offer to one another encouragement, insightful perspective to any difficult situation in life and leadership, fun-filled fellowship. The more we do this the more love, trust, respect and understanding is formed. The more this is formed the more mutual accountability forms. After all, accountability is best reflected in the context of trusting relationships. The discipline of small groups can go a long way in creating an avenue where God can truly renovate our hearts and sharpen our perspectives.

## Conclusion

May we be totally open to the Spirit and the Word, not only in our hearts but also in our minds and acts. These practices reinforced with the disciplines of prayer, worship, and personal Bible study can be used by God to bring renewal to our lives and the Church in all its dimensions.

May it allow us to discover ourselves – our deepest attitudes, ego, pride, insecurities, desires, and longing. And in this discovery process, may we all have the Holy Spirit's power to name each of these issues in genuine repentance. When we do that we also get refreshed.

*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord (Acts 3:19)*

May God's Word become flesh in our lives, and may we bear fruit and fruit that remains.



**Rev. Aldrin Bogi**

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Biblica.*

*"There is surely a future hope for you,  
and your hope will not be cut off."*

*Proverbs 23:18*



# The Nicodemus Question

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

Old Nicodemus had a point. How does an old man (like myself) get born again? "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely, they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" (Jn. 3:4).

Jesus clarified that He wasn't talking of the old life at all. The old one was "of the flesh". The new birth was "of the Spirit" (v.7). The new life would happen when the Holy Spirit would breathe new life into a person: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (v.8).

When he came to Jesus, Nicodemus was looking for some easy steps to becoming a man of

God like Jesus. He acknowledged that Jesus was different from all his peers. Jesus was definitely filled with the power of God (v.2). The below-the-surface message was that Nicodemus wanted what Jesus had.

## **Becoming New by Abiding in Jesus**

Spiritual renewal starts with getting a new life. That's what Jesus told Nicodemus. You can't be renewed as you are. You have to be born again. The old life can't be repaired. It has to be discarded for a new one.

Usually, when people talk of renewal, they are talking of personally engaging in some sort of spiritual exercise: "take the following steps, and hey presto, you've got yourself renewed", is



the mantra. Not according to our Lord Jesus. The only way to be renewed is to be born again/anew from above.

Scripture says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17).

There's just one problem. The spiritual life is trapped in the old body. Paul screamed in despair, "...I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So, I find this law at work: although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?" (Rom. 7:14-24). Paul's answer to his question is that the deliverance comes from the same one who saved us from the wrath of God (5:8-10) is the one who will deliver us: "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin" (7:25).

Paul went on to assert that the secret is to allow the Spirit control instead of being controlled by the self/flesh: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death...Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires...You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of

righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you (8:1-11).

However, we are like people in Galatia who thought that they had to do their bit in securing spirituality. Paul asked, "Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3). He contrasted the "works of the flesh" with the "fruit of the Spirit" (5:19-23). The efforts of the flesh can only produce what is fleshly. Along with gross depravity, which are what we categorise as "sins of the flesh", he listed "hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy", which we regard lightly. By calling one "works" and the other "fruit", Paul contrasted not only between the flesh and the Spirit, but also in the nature of the products of the flesh and the Spirit. What the flesh produces is manufactured by self-effort, while what the Spirit produces is an outgrowth dependent on the nutrients supplied by the Spirit.

That's exactly what Jesus told His disciples: "I am the true vine, and

my Father is the gardener... Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (Jn. 15:1-8).

### **Becoming Clean**

All this is good, but how do we experience renewal after we sin? "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." That's what John said when he had lived long and grown old. He was the last surviving apostle of the Lord. Yet, he included himself in that confession that he could not claim perfection while living in the flesh. However, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate

with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (1 Jn. 1:8-2:1). Jesus our Advocate will plead for us at the Father's throne of grace, and we will experience both forgiveness and cleansing. In the words of Isaiah, our sins will be blotted out and our slate will be wiped clean. When we were in Sunday School, we used to sing this old Scripture song based on what Isaiah said:

God has blotted them out, / I'm happy and glad and free; / God has blotted them out, / I'll turn to Isaiah and see; / Chapter forty-four, / Twenty-two and three; / He's blotted them out and now and I can shout, / For that means me.

We can make a new start. That is what David discovered after he sinned in a big way. Though, according to the way human courts would have judged kings, he couldn't have been faulted. He did what he had the power to do. He exploited a lone woman, taking advantage of her vulnerability. She was terrorised by his power and could not refuse him. When she got pregnant, he got her husband killed, so that he could marry her and legalise everything. After all, he was king, and he could write the laws of the land to suit himself. Or, so he thought. Then the prophet of God

confronted him, and according to God's Law he had done wrong. David confessed, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge" (Ps. 51:4). Then, he prayed to be made new. He didn't want to continue as the old David, who was selfish, exploitative and cruel.

David recognised that he himself could do nothing to be free of guilt. He asked God to take over. He said that he had only the broken pieces of his life and he could not mend them himself. God had to do it all for him: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow...Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (vv.7, 10-12).

### **A New Start**

Generations after David, the prophet Jeremiah wept over the ruined state of Jerusalem. Then he brought the Lord's word to the people: "This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient

paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, "We will not walk in it." I appointed watchmen over you and said, "Listen to the sound of the trumpet!" you said, "We will not listen" (Jer. 6:16-17). Today, many Christians are like old Jeremiah's audience. They have lost their way by refusing to pay attention to what God has to say. Many say that what the Bible says doesn't fit the scientific frame. One by one, they have given up old beliefs as myths and fables because they think that they are better informed.

There is a need to ask for the ancient way and walk in it.

When the Lord looked at the Church, He deplored that it had lost its "first love". He said to the members of the First Century Church: "Yet I hold this against you: you have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place" (Rev. 2:4-5). The Christian cannot afford to reject renewal, when the Lord Himself counsels that repentance and renewal are in order.

Paul said that believers needed to do a few things to be free of the

bondages (Col. 2:16-23) that had entered their lives:

- Kill your natural likes/inclinations (vv.3:5-9)
- Put on new clothes, your new self (vv.10-14)

But it all starts with,

- Fixating on Christ and heaven (vv.1-2)
- Hiding your ego/self in Christ (v.3).

Andraé Crouch, the gospel songwriter has given us the song, "Take me back":

I tried so hard / To make it all alone / I need your help / Just to make it home.

Take me back, take me back dear Lord / To the place where I first received you. / Take me back, take me back dear Lord where I First believed.



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# Renewing Our Mind

Dr. Shantanu Dutta



From the moment we are born until the moment we see Jesus in heaven, we are being transformed to become more like God. How does this happen? If we look at Romans 12:2, we see that He does this by renewing our minds. That is because most of life's battles are in our minds. Possibly that is the reason that the Apostle Paul says, "*Do not be conformed to this world,*"; rather he says, "*Be transformed by the renewing of your minds*". In many ways, this is a pivotal Pauline verse. After all, we have come to believe that we can stand or fall by our own efforts, and we are all inclined to reduce our faith to a series of rules and practices and an effort to be "good" – whatever that is. "Don't do that," Paul says. "Dispense with the

idea that your decisions are at the heart of everything, and give yourself up, give yourself away. Let God into your mind and start from there."

The Greek word for renew is "metamorphosis". A rare New Testament word used four times only. Twice of Jesus at his transfiguration, in Mark and in Matthew – who tells us, "*his face shone like the sun.*" And, twice of us. Here, and when Paul tells us we are transfigured into the likeness of Jesus, "*from glory to glory.*" Well, it is interesting to note that the word translated "be transformed" is the very word from which we get the English word 'metamorphosis'! Metamorphosis happens when a caterpillar is transformed into a

butterfly. It is, as if Paul is saying, "be no more a caterpillar, but be metamorphosed! Be the butterfly you ought to be!

Paul does not explicitly say what he wants us to be transformed into. But it is clear that he wants us to be transformed from being earthly-children of the world into heavenly-minded children of God. He wants us to be transformed from being the kind of persons that the world loves to the kind of persons that please God and glorify Him. A caterpillar that has been transformed into a butterfly will no longer love to munch on leaves. It would never again do so. It would spend the rest of his days drinking nectar and frolicking in the sun. So, too it must be with us.

A caterpillar is not transformed into a butterfly simply by growing wings though. No, the caterpillar first becomes a pupa and then an amazing transformation happens within the shell of the pupa. If we ever cut open a newly formed pupa, we will not find a caterpillar inside. And there within the outward shell,— unseen to the naked eyes,— and this caterpillar soup is wonderfully reshaped by the hand of God into a butterfly

with all its internal organs, tissues, legs, proboscis and wings. So, it is with us: We must be changed from within. We need a radical personal transformation, an inner change, a renewing of the mind. It requires a new attitude, a new perspective, a new disposition, a new way of thinking. In other words, we are to be totally changed from within.

From the earliest days of Christianity, the butterfly was associated with the celebration of Easter. The symbolism is clear enough really. Jesus was born and lived among us (the caterpillar stage), he died and was buried (the chrysalis stage), and he rose in a new and transformed state at Easter (the butterfly stage). The butterfly is not only symbolic of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, but also of our own. We too are born, will die, and are assured of resurrection to eternal life. The butterfly is a symbol of hope in Jesus' everlasting promise of salvation. It is also a reminder that we are called to renew and transform ourselves; always seeking to more fully live into God's call to us as sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ.

Paul is suggesting that Christianity is not a mindless, emotional, or mystical religion. We cannot live the Christian life without thinking. Our mind is the citadel of our soul. Every Christian must be a thinking person. We must be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We are metamorphosed from one kind of being into another kind of being that is completely different.

The result of having renewed mind that transforms us into the image of Christ is that our lives prove out the will of God, that which is good, acceptable, and perfect. The popular phrase, WWJD, *What Would Jesus Do?*, is lived out in practical example because we are living according to God's will. As people watch our lives they will see what is good, what is well pleasing to God, and what demonstrates godly maturity.

The mind, then, is one of the central issues of Biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity is concerned with what is thought, for it is what is perceived by the mind as truth that will determine belief, values,

emotion, and action. The goal of Biblical Christianity is to bring what is perceived as true into conformity to what the Bible declares as true. It is in that way that the renewed mind results in an utterly transformed life.

Having a renewed mind means that we press on past the difficulties and past the emotion to come to grips with the truth, and then in humble submission to our great God, we give yourself to Him to be used as He sees fit for His glory. That is why we were created. That is why we were saved from our sin. That is why we exist.



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# Youth Ministry: Renewal of Preaching!

Rev. Ashish Hirday

In youth ministry, often various strategies are being adopted to attract youth and make them listen or follow what we have to say. In any youth ministry, the end goal is to bring the young people to Christ and strengthen their walk. And to do that, our central resource is the Bible. Apart from that, we do not have anything to offer. The Scripture develops any young person to grow in Christ holistically. The communication of the Gospel is a pivotal and inseparable arm of the youth ministry. The remarkable fact of human history is that God has chosen to make himself known (Col. 1:26-27). In the words of apologist Francis Schaeffer, "He is there, and he is not silent." Today, there is a need for Biblical and faithful preachers who would preach, teach the Word of God to

the youth in its entirety, with all sincerity and without any delusions. The core of preaching and teaching that changes young lives is biblical. You and I don't change lives; God transforms lives. For 2,000 years, God has used the power of this Word to convict stubborn hearts of sin, move cold spirits to repentance, and lift faltering lives to hope.

Often people think what makes preaching biblical is a particular style or structure. Usually, preaching or sermons are categorized into three types: topical, which was often regarded as not very biblical, textual, where the main point comes from a Scripture verse, which was considered more biblical, and expository, which is challenging to get a clear definition of.

Expository is a word that gets thrown around a lot. Some people think of it as verse-by-verse preaching, or where points and sub-points are from one text in Scripture. There are several problems with thinking one particular style or structure of preaching is the only kind that's biblical.

One problem is Jesus didn't do that kind of expository preaching. Mostly he told stories and the implications for listeners' lives. The apostles didn't do that kind of expository preaching. We don't see any sermon that goes verse by verse through an Old Testament text in the New Testament. I'm not saying that kind of preaching is a bad thing. People must become biblically literate. But what makes preaching biblical is not its structure. To be biblical does not mean the preacher follows a particular form that, after all, human beings created. William D. Thompson, author of "Preaching Biblically," writes: "Biblical preaching is when listeners are enabled to see how their world, like the biblical world, is addressed by the Word of God." It is essential not to be superficial regarding what makes preaching biblical in youth ministry. How many Bible verses a sermon has

does not determine whether or not it's biblical. We can have a hundred verses in a sermon and misinterpret them. It is not the structure. Biblical preaching occurs when young people listen, are enabled to hear that God is addressing them as God addressed the world of the Scriptures, and are enabled to respond.

Today, the youth leaders need to consider the following convictions to be Biblical preachers:

### **1. The Bible is the Word of God**

As Augustine put it, "When the Bible speaks, God speaks. "This is the conviction that if I can understand a passage in its context, then what I know is what God wants to say. (I don't believe that many evangelicals, as well as liberals, really believe this.)

### **2. The entire Bible is the Word of God**

Not only Romans but Leviticus, not only Ephesians but Esther. Not merely the "hot" passages but the cold ones.

### **3. The Bible is self-authenticating**

If young people can be exposed to an understanding of the Scriptures regularly, then they do

not need arguments about the integrity of Scripture. Therefore, a listener or reader doesn't have to buy into the first two commitments before God can work in a person's life through his Word.

#### **4. This leads to a "Thus saith the Lord" approach to preaching**

It is not about the homiletical method but a desire to open up the Scriptures so that the authority of the message rests on the Bible.

#### **5. The preacher of the Bible must try to get at the intent of the biblical writer**

The first questions are "What did the biblical writer want to say to the biblical reader? Why?" "The Reader-Response theory embraced by many literary scholars today will not work for studying the Bible. "The Bible cannot mean what it has not meant."

#### **6. The Bible is a book about God**

It is not a religious book of advice about the "answers" we need about a happy marriage, sex, work, or losing weight. Although, the Scriptures reflect on many of those issues, they are above all about who God is and what God thinks and wills. I understand

reality only if I have an appreciation for who he is and what he desires for his creation and from his creation.

#### **7. We don't "make the Bible relevant "; we show its relevance**

Truth is as relevant as water to thirst or food to hunger. Modern advertising creates needs that don't exist to move the merchandise.

Today, if we want young people to grow in the maturity of Christ, then we will have to take preaching and teaching of the Gospel seriously. Only the Word of God can transform young lives. Not our games, music, adventures but only the Word of God. The fact is that God doesn't need flawless communicators, just faithful ones. Whatever you are feeling about your ability to speak to young people, whether it's eager enthusiasm or some combination of dry heaves and hacking cough, I want you to know that good speaking has never been a flawless performance. Moses led the people of Israel out of bondage, and from all we can tell, he was a reasonably mediocre communicator (Exodus 4:10). When Isaiah received his call from God, his first response was,

"Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). And about half the time Jesus spoke to people didn't have a clue what he was talking about (Matthew 13:53-57). And the Apostle Paul could hardly speak in public without starting a riot or getting arrested (Acts 17:2-5).

The good news is God is not waiting for your perfect youth to talk to do mighty work through you. For centuries, men and women of God have been announcing the good news of new life through Jesus Christ, and many of these people were untrained, uneducated, and probably unskilled (Acts 4:13). That's why the most crucial element of preaching and teaching the Word of God comes back to prayer: "God, breathe on the dry bones of this message, and make it come to life."

Finally, always remember these words from the apostle Paul, And so, it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my

preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

May the Lord enable you to renew your commitment to the preaching of the Word of God and enable you to bring many more young lives into His loving fold.



### **Rev. Ashish Hirday**

*Serves at Evangelical Fellowship of India as National Director for Youth Commission. He is also serving at Asia Evangelical Alliance Youth Commission as the Executive Director. He holds post graduate degree in Missiology and Family Life Education. He is married to Rachana and has two lovely kids Anugrah & Aradhana.*

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# **The Unfinished Preaching About The Finished Work Of The Cross We Hear From Hyper-Grace Cult Preachers.**

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

There is a lot of focus on the "finished work of the Cross" among hyper-grace/unscriptural grace preachers. While speaking about the "finished work of the Cross", they focus only on the privileges of the Cross. This is what I call as the "unfinished preaching about the finished work of the Cross"! A careful reading of the New Testament reveals that the Cross calls us towards responsibilities as well. In this essay, I want to point them out.

Along with the Cross comes a biblical clarion call for SANCTIFICATION. Yes, the Cross of Jesus calls us to live a holy life. To go on "sinning willfully" is the same as trampling

under foot, the Son of God who shed his blood for us on the Cross (Hebrews 10:26-29). Part of this sanctification process is to constantly regard that we are "crucified with Christ and we no longer live but Christ lives in us" (Gal. 2:20). Apostle Paul writes, "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). Being crucified with Christ who was crucified for us sounds very spiritual. What is the meaning of this? It is to respond like Jesus would when we are tempted. We quote Scripture when the Devil tempts, and we come out as winners (Matt. 4). We pray in the face of temptation (Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane did that). When we

are tempted to watch porn, we quote Scripture. We quote Job 31:1 in The Message version which goes this way: "I made a solemn pact with myself never to undress a girl with my eyes..." When we tempted to be lazy and hug our pillow and sleep on, we quote John 9:4 where we read, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work." This kind of Jesus imitation causes to walk in "newness of life" post our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (water baptism) (Rom. 6:1-4).

What is sin for a believer? It is trampling on the blood of Jesus! Hebrews 10:26-29 teaches this. When we consider sin that way, falling back to the same old sinful habits becomes difficult. This thought - deliberate sin by a believer is trampling on the blood of Jesus - has a holy effect on us, a sanctifying effect on us.

Have you heard a modern-day preacher who brags about the finished work of the Cross talk about sanctification – holy living – before he finished his message?

If really, he believed in all the Bible and in declaring the whole counsel of God like Apostle Paul did, he would (Acts 20:27)!

Along with the Cross comes a biblical clarion call for MISSION. You will have to be stone blind to miss this in the New Testament. John 3:16 we all know. But do we know I John 3:16 which goes this way: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (I John 3:16). While sharing Christ with the perishing through our life and lips, there could be times when may have to suffer and, who knows, even die. But that should not deter us! The writer to the Hebrews put it simple and straight: "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured" (Heb. 13:12-13). We need to be willing to leave our comfort zones and go to tough places to share about what Jesus did for us on the Cross.

We must not only SIT BACK and ENJOY the privileges of the

preaching has only  
privileges/blessings sans  
responsibilities. A half-truth is a  
full lie and a total nonsense.

I want to clarify that that fulfilling the responsibilities of SANCTIFICATION and MISSION do not save us! But having tasted the privilege of God's grace, we respond in gratitude with these (staying holy and doing mission) empowered by the Spirit of God with whom we actively cooperate, day in and day out.



is the founder of Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission, a ministry that reaches out to present day people via writings, pulpit preaching and counselling. Find out more at [www.dukev.org](http://www.dukev.org) or by [WhatsApp to +91-8886040605](https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/0029va833333333333333333).





## **EFI mourns the passing of Mr. Satish Meshramkar**

We mourn the passing of Mr. Satish Meshramkar, General Director of Prakash Institutes of India and a member of the Executive Committee of Evangelical Fellowship of India. He was lovingly called Joy and was Dada (elder brother) to many across India.

He succumbed to a massive heart attack on the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The funeral was held yesterday i.e. 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at Nagpur.

Brother Joy was a man of great influence and passion especially for young people. We thank God for his life and faithful ministry. Along with EFI he also served on the board of several organizations among them Vishwavani and Mure Memorial Hospital. He will be greatly missed.

He is survived by Mrs. Meenu Meshramkar, his wife and his children Mahima and Joash. Please keep the family in your prayers.

## COURSE IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

*Invest a year in learning for a life  
time of service*

### About the course

The aim of the course is to equip men and women for expository Bible ministry in the local church so that they can preach and teach God's word faithfully, clearly and effectively.

### Who the course is for?

We serve men and women from different cultures, ethnic groups, ages and academic backgrounds. You need to have a firm commitment to the trustworthiness and sufficiency of Scripture for ministry in the local church. The 'heartbeat' of the course is the teaching of a wide range of books of Scripture, coming to grips with them in order to be able to preach and teach them.

### Who can apply for the course?

- ❖ Men or women who are committed to the ministry of teaching and preaching the Bible.
- ❖ Written recommendation by the pastor or organisation leader of the candidate.
- ❖ Candidates who have appeared or passed class XII with ability to communicate in English.
- ❖ Prospective students will have a personal interview with a member of admission committee.
- ❖ Candidates from economically underprivileged background can apply for work scholarship.
- ❖ Candidates living in Delhi and NCR can apply as day scholars.
- ❖ Once a student is granted admission he or she will not be given leave to go home except for emergencies.
- ❖ The church programmes and events are designed to be practicals for the students. Sermon notes, prayer meetings, care group meetings, outreach and mission trips are compulsory. Those who are willing to commit for the descriptions above may apply.

### Internship

Internship can be applied for and deserving candidates will be accepted.

### Schedule:- (July 2022 - April 2023)

English as Second Language (ESL)

Basic Course on Expository Preaching Three months

Advanced Course on Expository Preaching Six months

#### Health Check-up:

Ensure you are healthy and prepared for a three to nine months of studying uninterrupted by health issues. Fitness certificate must be sent along with the application form.

**We adhere to COVID PROTOCOLS**

In light of the COVID situation, the course is available, offline and online, and only those who attend offline will get the tablets.

# Intercessory Prayer Points



April 2022

**1 FRIDAY** - Thank God for the new month. Pray for new opportunities to put your faith into action. Pray for spiritual growth for you and your family.

**2 SATURDAY** - Continue to pray that during this Lent season many lives would be changed and their relationship with God would be renewed.

**3 SUNDAY** - Pray for lively worship that is focused on our Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that worshippers would return home longing for more as they experienced the nearness of God in the worship service.

**4 MONDAY** - Pray for children as they start a new session this month. Thank God that the children can now attend school physically.

**5 TUESDAY** - Continue to pray for cessation of the war in Ukraine. Pray also for the protection of Christ's church in

Russia, Ukraine and the surrounding regions.

**6 WEDNESDAY** - Continue to pray for persecuted believers. Pray for healing and courage to share the Gospel boldly. Pray for freedom to choose, practice and share our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**7 THURSDAY** - World Health Day. Pray that we may be health conscious and be cautious with our health. Pray for sustenance and healing for those who are struggling with health issues. Pray for healing of the mind, body and soul in Jesus' name.

**8 FRIDAY** - Pray for the churches in India. Pray for continued strength. Pray also for the unity within the church. Pray that God's Word would be taught and obeyed by the help of the Holy Spirit.

**9 SATURDAY** - Pray that you may quieten your heart and

reflect upon your life in the light of God's great love for sinners. Pray and recommit your life to Him as a living sacrifice for His glory.

**10 SUNDAY** - Pray for your pastor's sermon to be lively, convincing and convicting. Pray that your worship service would lift our Lord Jesus Christ high above all.

**11 MONDAY** - Pray for all the churches and organizations that they may demonstrate integrity and transparency in all their financial handling and dealings. May they act as role models for others to follow.

**12 TUESDAY** - Pray for the ministry of EFI. Pray that the Lord would mightily use EFI to support and strengthen the churches and individuals.

**13 WEDNESDAY** - Pray that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would penetrate deeply and spread widely as believers witness Christ to the world.

**14 THURSDAY** - Pray for your pastor as he prepares for the Good Friday service. Pray that he would be renewed and transformed as he meditates on Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

**15 FRIDAY** - Good Friday. As we commemorate Christ's atoning sacrifice for humanity's sin, pray that you would receive Him into your life and establish a deep relationship with Him. Pray also that many hearts would turn to Jesus with repentance and gratefulness.

**16 SATURDAY** - As we enthusiastically wait for Christ's resurrection, pray that like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, we would fearlessly come out of our comfort zone and act on our faith.

**17 SUNDAY** - Easter Sunday. As we celebrate Christ's resurrection, pray that we would have resurrected faith and live triumphantly over our daily struggles. Pray for God's protection over His children as they celebrate this important day.

**18 MONDAY** - Pray that we may not be weary of doing good. Pray for fresh desire and the ability to serve God with excellence.

**19 TUESDAY** - Pray for our nation that we may be submissive to God and be a blessing to the nations around us. Pray for the leaders of our country that they would uphold integrity and honesty as they serve the people.

**20 WEDNESDAY** - Continue to pray for children in your neighbourhood. Pray for their enthusiasm, God's provision and protection on them throughout the year.

**21 THURSDAY** - Continue to pray for those whom you know are not yet in the Lord. Pray that God would draw them to Christ. Pray that the Holy Spirit would make them desire eternal life and accept Christ finished work on the cross.

**22 FRIDAY** - Earth Day. Pray that we would have the wisdom to care for the earth and till it. Pray that we would steward and care for the good of future generations and all God's creatures.

**23 SATURDAY** - Pray that the Risen Lord Jesus would become more and more real to you as you submit to His sovereignty. Pray for one another that your sins are forgiven and that you have right relationship with God.

**24 SUNDAY** - Pray that Christ's death and resurrection may bring new encouragement, strength and motivation to live a godly Christian life.

**25 MONDAY** - Pray for the persecuted Church that they

would find comfort and strength in Christ, the head of the Church. Pray that their sufferings will not be in vain.

**26 TUESDAY** - Let us pray today for those in the remote places that they would be provided with basic medical facilities. Pray for the state leaders to be mindful of their plights and work towards this goal actively.

**27 WEDNESDAY** - Pray that child labour would be eradicated and every child would enjoy their childhood. Pray for God's protection over them.

**28 THURSDAY** - Pray for the people who are struggling with drug abuse. Pray that they would turn to God who is mighty in power and experience relief and release.

**29 FRIDAY** - Pray for the people in your workplace. Pray that you would show Christ's love to them and be a good influence to them. Pray that there would be safe environment and health care at all workplace.

**30 SATURDAY** - Thank God for the blessed month that has gone by. Pray that you would be productive in all areas of your life in the new month.



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EVANGELICAL  
FELLOWSHIP OF INDIA

HAPPY  
Easter

Jesus said to her,  
"I am the resurrection and the life.  
The one who believes in me will live,  
even though they die; and  
whoever lives by believing in me  
will never die.  
Do you believe this?"  
John 11:25-26

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