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# aim

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A Journey of Faith


*Therefore, since we have been  
justified by faith, we have peace with  
God through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Romans 5:1*





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**‘They left their nets and followed him.’  
(Matthew 4:20)**

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Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

## The Light of Easter for India's Democracy

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5)

As Indian Christians celebrate the sacred occasion of Easter, we are reminded that even the darkest hours cannot extinguish the brilliance of truth and righteousness. This truth must inspire and fortify us as we approach a pivotal general election where the secular, democratic fabric of our republic faces its greatest test.

The ideals of pluralism, equality and freedom of faith that defined our republic are facing an unprecedented assault from divisive forces intent on promoting a narrow, exclusionary vision of nationhood.

The trends observed i.e. the normalization of divisive rhetoric, marginalization of minorities, weakening of democratic institutions, and the relentless push towards majoritarianism - should give all citizens committed to constitutional values reason to pause. India's vibrant diversity and secular fabric, which our freedom fighters sacrificed so much to uphold, is under grave threat.

Compounding these issues is the vexing problem of opaque political funding which was highlighted once again by the Supreme Court's recent historic decision to strike down the controversial Electoral Bonds Scheme that allowed anonymous corporate donations to political



parties. The scheme was unanimously ruled unconstitutional by the apex court. While hailed as a win for transparency, the fact remains that for the foreseeable future, opacity in political funding is here to stay, benefiting the dominant ruling party.

For the Christian community, which has enriched India as a nation and its spiritual traditions over centuries, these are particularly unsettling times. We have become regrettable targets of hostility, with our fundamental rights to freely practice our faith and access public spaces like educational institutions increasingly circumscribed.

Interference in religious affairs and curbing of personal liberties in the name of cultural supremacy have no place in a pluralistic society. We need political and social forces that respect the inviolable Constitutional guarantee to all citizens of the right to freely profess, practice and propagate their faith.

Yet the principles we celebrate at Easter - of hope conquering despair, love triumphing over

hatred, and truth prevailing against injustice - must infuse our response. Christ's teachings emphasize the importance of human dignity, brotherhood, and compassion as guiding principles to follow. These universal values were woven into the Indian Constitution to unite our wondrous diversity into one nation.

As we prepare to vote in this marathon general election over 7 phases, we must firmly reject the politics of polarization and demand a return to an inclusive vision of India. One where no citizen is rendered a second-class participant based on faith or identity. Where social fractures are healed, not deepened through insecurity-mongering. And where accountable governance prioritizes the pressing needs of all Indians - generation of quality jobs, access to education and healthcare, and above all, eradication of poverty and inequality.

This is not a matter of ideological partisan battles, but of upholding the democratic ideals of equality, liberty, justice, and fraternity that our nation was founded upon. To do anything less would be an

utter betrayal of our spiritual and constitutional values.

So let us approach the ballot box with confidence and moral clarity, for truth remains far mightier than falsehoods promoted through brute propaganda. Let us vote resolutely to reinstate human dignity, fraternity, and democratic freedoms as the pillars of the New India we wish to create.

And let the eternal message of Easter - of light banishing darkness, and love conquering all - bolster our conviction. As the resurrection story inspires, even seemingly insurmountable challenges can be overcome through faith, courage, and the unwavering pursuit of truth.

For when we sow the seeds of pluralism, compassion, and Constitutional values today through our vote, we will reap a richer, more united India for all our tomorrows. An India that celebrates its "unity in diversity",

uplifting every citizen's fundamental freedoms as sacred, inviolable rights. An India that fulfils its destiny as a shining beacon of democracy and inclusive nation-building for the world to emulate.

This Easter, we Christians must lead the way in reclaiming India's soul as a shining, equitable democracy respecting all faiths and communities as equal partners. Our vote, our voice and our actions must resoundingly reject the corrosive forces of division, authoritarianism, and naked pursuit of power through any means. For in doing so, we honour the sacrifices of our freedom fighters and remain faithful to our nation's enlightened, progressive Constitutional ideals. Ours is a vote for truth, justice, dignity, and fraternity to triumph across our diverse land and a reminder that light cannot be overcome by darkness.

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**

Whether you turn to the right or to the left,  
your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying,  
"This is the way; walk in it."  
Isaiah 30:21 NIV



# OUR REDEEMER-JUDGE

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

When you want to take health insurance, the clause that determines eligibility is that of "pre-existing conditions". If you already suffer from a disease, no insurance company anywhere in the world will cover you. They will insure you for everything you don't have, but for what you already have they offer you no insurance.

The biggest question about insurance is: can we get fire insurance against hell if we have a pre-existing condition that predisposes us toward ending up in hell? Insurance companies will not do it for anyone who is a total risk. They insure you only if you are not a risk.

Every human being is indeed suffering from a pre-existing condition that renders us entirely eligible candidates for hell. That's what Jesus said: "No one who believes in Him has to fear c o n d e m n a t i o n , y e t condemnation is already the reality for everyone who refuses to believe because they reject the name of the only Son of God" (Jn. 3:18, Voice Tr.).

## Old Testament God

Many Christians say many foolish things. One is to say that the God of the Old Testament puts them off, whereas they find the God of the New Testament completely acceptable.

Firstly, Jesus affirms the teachings of the Old Testament. That is He stood in line with the Scriptures. He dittoed it and said that anyone who denies the Old Testament will find himself or herself out of place in God's kingdom (Matt. 5:17-20).

Secondly, Jesus said that He Himself represented God, the Father. In fact, without the Father's involvement in delegating the mission to save the people of the world, Jesus would not have come into our world at all. He was sent by God. He was a deputed agent of the Father (Jn. 3:17; too many Scripture references to cite, but in chapter after chapter, the apostle John recorded that Jesus claimed to have been "sent").

That is why it is foolish to say that the message of Jesus differs from what the Father revealed in the Old Testament.

It is true, that there are aspects of the Law and the history of Israel's actions against enemy nations that we find harsh to our sensibilities which are the

product of our exposure to Jesus and the New Testament. That severity of the old order of Israel had to do with the nation needing to be entirely in protective mode in the midst of an environment of hostility bent on destroying them one way or the other—physically (Num. 21:1-3) or spiritually (22:5-6; 25:1-3ff; 31:16).

### **Judge Jesus**

In total agreement with God, Jesus recognised that humans are already under judgement. Not only that, Jesus said that the role of being judge was His. The Father was the lawgiver, but Jesus Himself was the judge: "...the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent Him" (Jn. 5:22-23).

We are used to thinking of Jesus as presently the Saviour, who will later on at the end of time come as the Judge. However, this is what Jesus said: "For judgment, I have come into this world..." (9:39).

His judgement is based on the fact that He was incarnate, the Son of Man (v.27). No man would be able to stand before God and say that God doesn't have any idea or comprehend how tough it is being good and righteous and holy under human conditions.

Our Lord made it clear that His judgement was in line with the Father. Jesus declared that He stood by what the Father had said in the Law, identifying Himself as the one sent to do what He did on behalf of the Father (8:16).

According to Jesus, our pre-existing condition has already brought judgement, and when Jesus came in the incarnation, the beginning of the final judgement had already begun. The world and people were already under judgement, and the Devil was already being driven out (9:31).

### **Judge Holy Spirit**

Even the coming of the Holy Spirit was a continuation of the judgement that had already begun in Christ: "...when He comes, He will convict the world

of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me... Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged (16:8-11, NLT). Like with seeing Jesus only as Saviour now and not as already the Judge, we largely gloss over this teaching of our Lord that the Spirit comes as the one taking His place, to declare the judgement of God. It just doesn't fit our image of the Holy Spirit as our encourager and enabler. We tend to concentrate on the Spirit's role of imparting power, and endowing His fruit and gifts on followers of Christ Jesus.

### **Judge and Saviour**

Though we are not used to thinking of Jesus as already the Judge or describing Him thus in our preaching, it is because He is presently the Judge that He is presently our Saviour. The Judge is the Saviour. The Saviour is the Judge.

Jesus being Saviour and Judge at the same time is an essential truth of the gospel. Only the

Judge can write the pardon, and this Judge does it by taking the punishment on Himself and paying the penalty Himself. Yes, the Judge is our Saviour.

Though our pre-existing condition makes us eligible for the full judgement of God, Jesus was not sent by God to condemn the world: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him" (3:17). The Judge was sent to save people. In love and with love, God sent Jesus to give people eternal life (v.16). It's the done deal, but realising and experiencing the salvation of God depends on people believing it to be already accomplished and guaranteed: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life... Whoever believes in him is not condemned" (3:16, 18). Jesus said, "...whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" (5:24, emphases added). Incidentally, this is the

verse that is taught to new believers so that they can have the "assurance of salvation", and the word "assurance" is sometimes used by insurance companies to affirm the insurance they offer).

### **The Gift**

Jesus is God's gift, and since He is a gift, it follows that you and I cannot earn our gift by doing good works. All over the world people think of earning salvation, but no one in their right mind could imagine that they can pay for Jesus and buy Him to be our Saviour. If we accept that we cannot pay for Jesus, the absurdity of trying to earn our salvation becomes very clear. You and I can't pay for Jesus and that is why we can't pay for our salvation. Eternal life comes to us all wrapped up in Jesus.

When we receive Jesus, we are automatically saved. Salvation follows. Salvation just happens. Modern evangelists are not the ones who came up with the notion that the moment we accept Jesus we are saved. This is what Jesus said, and the

apostle John recorded it very simply and clearly.

In one sense, God has not offered salvation or eternal life to anyone. He has made humankind only one offer: Jesus. You take Him, the rest of what God has in store, His entire Kingdom, follows in the train of Jesus and becomes ours.

People who don't believe in Jesus have the pre-existing condition of being already condemned, already hell-bound. But the pre-existing condition gets wiped out by believing in Jesus and we are saved and destined for heaven. That, in a nutshell, is the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

### **Life Eternal**

The Lord also described Himself as the Bread of Life (6:35, 48). We experience eternal life by feeding on Him: "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood

is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them" (vv. 53-55).

Jesus was not spouting mysticism or spiritual mumbo-jumbo. He was saying that we would be able to sustain our spiritual life by living in dependence on Him: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me" (vv.56-57; that, by the way, is how we are to understand what transpires when we have Holy Communion. Plain common sense tells us that there is no transubstantiation or consubstantiation. The bread of the Lord's Table remains bread, and wine remains wine. Thomas Cranmer, who was burnt at the stake for his faith, aptly said, "Feed on Him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving").

Judge Jesus came to give people life in all the fullness (10:10) of eternal life (v.28). When He talked

of eternal life, Jesus was not talking of the quantity of endless life that we will receive in the hereafter. He was talking of the quality of life we can have when we "know" when we are in a relationship with God in and through Jesus (17:3).

The Saviour and the Judge are one—have been one from the very incarnation. Whether we experience salvation or judgement depends entirely on how we relate to Him. If we don't believe in Him that He can save us, then He doesn't have to do anything more to condemn us. Being condemned is our pre-existing condition.

Judgement and eternal life both start now in this life. It's here and now. Either you continue in your pre-existing condition or you can receive Jesus now.

Jesus is the only way to escape our pre-existing condition. He is the Judge who is our Redeemer, and He has said, "I will never turn away anyone who comes to me" (6:37, God's Word Tr.). And that is one of my favourite verses in the Bible. It gives me great assurance to know that even when I have failed Him and grieved Him, He will not reject me. This word of Jesus tells me that I am insured for this life and for all eternity.



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Search me, O God, and know my heart!  
Try me and know my thoughts!  
And see if there be any grievous way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting!  
Psalm 139:23-24





# A Forgiving God

Mr. Chacko Thomas

"Praise, my soul, the King of  
heaven;  
To His feet thy tribute bring;  
Ransomed, healed, restored,  
forgiven,  
Who like thee His praise should  
sing?"

## **Ransomed, healed, restored, Forgiven:**

Radha, my wife, met an Indian lady at a bus stop near us and both were pleasantly surprised to know that the other is a follower of Christ Jesus. Some weeks later, we were at her home for a meal. While enjoying a good Indian meal, I was curious to find out how she and her husband came to know and follow the Lord from such a non-Christian background. The husband who

spoke last had a one word for an answer for me: "Forgiveness".

Easter is a good season to reflect on what God has accomplished for us on the Cross. Who can forget the prayer of the Lord Jesus from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" Luke 23:34. The thief on the cross too was forgiven.

## **The Prophet Micah exclaimed:**

"Who is a God like You, who  
pardons iniquity  
And passes over the rebellious  
act of the remnant of His  
[a]possession?  
He does not retain His anger  
forever,  
Because He delights in  
[b]unchanging love.

He will again have compassion  
on us;  
He will tread our iniquities under  
foot.

Yes, You will cast all [c]their sins  
Into the depths of the sea.  
You will give [d]truth to Jacob  
And [e]unchanging love to  
Abraham,  
Which You swore to our  
forefathers  
From the days of old." Micah  
7:18-20

God's forgiveness is a very rich  
theme that runs right through the  
Bible, expressed by various  
terms both in its teachings and in  
the experiences of God's people:  
"Justification", "Redemption",  
"Covering", "Sanctification",  
"Atonement", "Grace" and more.

The Lord Jesus himself portrayed  
God as a forgiving Father in the  
very important story of the  
prodigal of son who squandered  
his father's wealth. The son finally  
returns to the Father to be  
received as a servant just so he  
can get some food to eat. On the  
contrary, the Father welcomed  
him home with a joyous  
celebration, as though he had  
never sinned against him. That is  
how loving and forgiving our  
Heavenly Father is.

### **King David's experience:**

King David experienced the  
depth of God's forgiveness after  
his adultery with Uriah's wife and  
the subsequent murder of Uriah,  
one of David's able and loyal  
soldiers who loved God. David  
covered it up before the people  
and before God. He continued to  
carry out his royal and spiritual  
duties, albeit hypocritically, for a  
year or longer.

God waited long enough for  
David's next move. Finally, He  
sent His prophet Nathan to  
confront him. David was stricken  
and confessed his sin to Nathan:  
"I have sinned against the Lord".  
God's response was swift. He  
said to David through His  
prophet: "The Lord has taken  
away your sin, you shall not die."  
What a dramatic experience it  
was! David did not forget it.

David went on to write two  
Psalms in response, expressing  
his remorse publicly and for all  
times. Psalms 51 and 32 are two  
of the most loved Psalms in the  
Bible for people stricken by guilt.  
Those Psalms contain great  
lessons in God's forgiveness and  
our getting right with God.

***Psalm 32:1 and 2 are my hope***

***for spending eternity with God:  
"How blessed is he whose  
transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered! How  
blessed is the man to whom  
the Lord does not impute  
iniquity, and in whose spirit  
there is no deceit!"***

We are all familiar with the story of the woman who was caught in adultery and brought before Jesus to be condemned to death. What a relief it must have been for her to hear from the mouth of the Lord: "Neither do I condemn you". I feel like singing:

"I stand amazed in the presence  
Of Jesus the Nazarene,  
And wonder how He could love  
me,  
A sinner condemned, unclean."

### **Psalm 51 in Punjabi:**

Rev. Dr Imam-ud-Deen Shahbaz (1845– 1921) was born in Zafarwal, Sialkot District in Punjab (now in Pakistan). Although raised in a Muslim family, from the age of ten he was attracted to the Christian message. He accepted Christ and was baptised by Robert Clark in 1876. He was also a gifted teacher, serving at CMS

Schools in Amritsar and being engaged in evangelistic activities from 1876 to 1880.

In 1880 the Presbyterian Church announced a poetry competition in their magazine, *Noor Afshan*. Many scholars and writers wrote poems but I. D. Shahbaz was declared the winner. He was invited by the Church to begin translating the Psalms into the Punjabi language. For I. D. Shahbaz, this became his lifelong passion and a source of untold blessing to millions of Punjabi speaking Christians.

He then set the Punjabi Psalms to popular folk tunes with the help of some Indian musicians and missionaries. He made them the most popular songs of the whole church of Christ in the Punjab. Today, the *Zabur* (Psalms) are sung everywhere where Urdu or Punjabi Christians congregate to worship.

"Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great  
compassion blot out my  
transgressions. Wash away all  
my iniquity and cleanse me from  
my sin."

## **Revival in the Sialkot Girls' boarding school**

Around 1896, some of the girls from the Girls' Boarding School in Sialkot met together to pray. Maryam, the youngest daughter of Kanaya said: "Sisters, let us sing Psalm 51, prayerfully, every head bowed,"

"Wash me wholly from my sins,  
Cleanse me from my guilty  
stains."

Maryam continued to lead. "Let us ask God's Holy Spirit to show us clearly where we have failed to overcome sin today." Several girls began to weep and confess their sins. Two girls confessed that they had stolen something from the store room. Some of the older girls also began to confess their failures and pray for forgiveness.

One girl, Nasiban, had never given her heart to Christ, but on that night, at midnight she broke down. "Sisters rejoice with me," she said. "Your prayers are answered. I have given my heart to Christ."

(Stories taken from Michael Wakely's book: *The Amazing*

*Story of Pakistan's Christians*, published in 2024)

## **God says, "I am alright":**

This phrase is the literal translation of "Justification" in PNG English (known as Pidgin English). The International Children's Bible translates it "made right with God" in Romans 5:1. Justification, although the meaning is not exactly the same as forgiveness, is one of several Biblical terms that explains God's righteous act of forgiving a sinner who deserves to be condemned to eternal hell.

"To justify means to declare righteous. God's problem in redeeming man was to justify the sinner without condoning or justifying his sin. ... [Justification] is being accounted righteous before God; the sinner puts on the righteousness of Jesus Christ and God sees him perfect in the righteousness of Christ."

(Taken from *One Hundred Bible Lessons* by Alan Douglas, available in India, at least in English and Hindi)

"It is a judicial acquittal. It is 'the accounting as righteous' of a

believer. It is a 'free gift of God', the God against whom we have sinned. 'It is the Judge Himself who thus declares: The justified believer has been in court, only to learn that nothing is laid to his charge.'

(Taken from *Every Man A Bible Student* by J. E. Church)

That is how loving and forgiving our Heavenly Father is.

Forgiveness, Justification, Salvation, redemption, atonement, eternal life, new birth – you name it – all are ours because the Lord Jesus Christ has borne our sins on the cross; it is entirely a work of grace; these gifts are ours and are available to all who would admit their guilt before God.

As we approach the another holy season on the Christian calendar, this Easter, may the Lord open our mouths to declare God's free offer to any who would call upon the name of the Lord. By God's grace I made my choice in 1962, and have known the blessings of God's gift of righteousness in Christ.

"If any man is in Christ he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Yes, *"any person"*. God has no favourites. You and I and all India have the same access to God's grace and mercy today. King David was not an exception. He was a forgiven sinner who continued to enjoy great fellowship with God. The privilege is open to all. Let us make sure that all India knows this. Forgiveness is found in no one else or nowhere else. Just read John 14:6, Acts 16:31 and 1 Timothy 2:5.



**Mr. Chacko Thomas**

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# Amazing Journey through the shadow of death

A cancer survivor narrates how the grace of God  
and the prayers of so many behind the  
scene helped him win the battle!

Rev. P. C. Muanthanga

“Sir, you have Cancer in your system and need to be treated urgently”! Wuao!! That was the shocking announcement by the Doctor at NEIGHRIM Hospital, Shillong after my casual health check up in 2014. I was shocked because, I had no pain, no complaint whatsoever during that time. After discussing a few details, my wife and I came out of the hospital and silently jumped into our car and soon merged ourselves with the gospel song that was being played. *“The God of the day is still the God in the night”*. Another lovely song quickly followed 'Ten thousand reasons to thank you for. Strangely enough, we found ourselves joining the music and started celebrating the goodness of the Lord in our hearts. Another

Wuao!! Unconsciously, we both started singing and waving our hands in the car on our way home as we both felt the presence of the Lord right there! Amazing! So much so we did not even talk about cancer at all till we reached home.

When we arrived home, two of us first of all decided to kneel down on the old wooden floor of our small sitting room and began praying like Jehoshaphat of old, *“Lord, we do not know what to do now, we just turn our eyes upon you”* (2Chro 20:12). While we were yet in prayer, we both could hear telephone calls ringing nonstop, because the news had already spread far and near through our doctor's daughter about my cancer. But we felt we

need to talk to the Lord and hear something from Him first. Just then, in the middle of nowhere the Lord spoke to me, ***“I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord”***! This is from Psalm 118:17. What a great assurance! Peace flowed like a river into my soul. So, I suddenly jumped up and shouted as loud as I could “Yes, Lord, *I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord*”. Hallelujah! All fears and doubts have gone. My heart was flooded with peace through the assurance given to me by the Holy Spirit. My wife also felt like 'somebody poured a bucket full of water upon me and the peace of God flooded my souls like a river' she said.

### **Different reactions from different people!**

So, we picked up our phones, some cried on the phone, some declared healing, some comforted us with some Bible verse and so on. Meanwhile, a few friends started pouring into our house and in a moment our house was like a mad house. We knew though the Lord was in all these things. One good friend of us one Khasi lady we call Kong Lin also rushed in and said, “Muanthanga, take my money

whatever you need, will talk about it later” Such lovely friend God sent to us. Of course, we realised we have no money when we started thinking about flying to CMC Vellore and getting operated etc. However, we know who has all gold and silver in every hill. One group came the night before we left ministering to us through worship songs! We praised God for all these dear friends who come to share and care for us during this very difficult situation.

By God's grace, I had never been in the hospital for the past 72 years except once, but here I am under a new dispensation of having cancer in my system not even knowing how long my life would last, humanly speaking. The amazing thing though is the peace of God that filled my heart and the love and support of all my family members and fellow ministry friends. I knew then hundreds and hundreds of people had already been praying for me from different churches and prayer groups! What a tremendous consolation for me. I knew these dear ones are ministering angels God sent to us to encourage us in our time of need! (Heb 13:2).



## **Walking through the valley of the shadow of death**

Accompanied by my wife and daughter (Esther), after arrival at CMC Vellore, doctors decided I should undertake chemotherapy and radiation course and so, I was admitted to the hospital where another patient from Ethiopia was already there in the same room. Realising he happened to be a believer, we became good friends. In two days time however, he was discharged and when he was leaving, he thrust one clip of 500 notes of Indian money into my hands saying, "Take this and God bless". I said, "No please, you are going a long long way and you are a patient too". But he said, "The Lord told me to give you, please take", so he rushed out. Meantime, my doctors had already trooped in, so I had no chance to follow him. Much earlier, the Lord gave a passage from Isaiah - *"I will give you hidden treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places so that you may know that I am the Lord"* (Isaiah 45:3 NIV). The money was just enough for our one-week bill. Praise be His name!

Then, after almost a month, we

were released and told to come back after some time. But the Head of the Department called us to meet her before we leave. When we entered her room, she beckoned us to sit and then she said, "You have been given strong medication for a month and you have no reaction whatsoever. You are 72 already. I am amazed and so I am going to take your picture so I can share". Truly, that was the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes. During this break period, the Lord gave us opportunity to minister in Aizawl and Lunglei Mizoram, on the '**The challenge of 10/40 Window World and the 7 Mountains of Cultural influence**'. It was a good time to meet with Church leaders and Prayer groups.

## **Surgery and the aftermath**

Then after we got back, surgery was done as planned. However, while I was in the recovery room, doctors suddenly found that because of infection, my BP, and my heart rate and all my system began falling apart so to say. I was then hurriedly moved to the ICU room for observation and emergency intervention. My wife could see all these as she was with me and knowing our grim situation, messages were sent to



churches and family friends via whatsapp to urgently pray for me as I could go at any time so to say! It was united, urgent prayers everywhere that really changed my situation. One prayer group in Myanmar sent a message that they are going to fast and pray all night. Several people in India and outside started praying for my speedy recovery as I was unconscious for some time. One lady called and said, “Bro Muana, the whole world is praying for you”. Such was the prayer mobilization for me. Indeed, it was a time of 'walking through the valley of the shadow of death' (Psalm 23). But, as David said, 'my help comes from the Lord' (Psalm 121); so, after four days of struggling between life and death, I was moved back to the ward as I recovered, and my condition improved.

Later, there was a block in my intestine and so, by midnight me and my wife celebrated the Lords' supper for praise and worship so that the Lord would do a miracle healing for me. As my situation did not improve, the doctors finally decided to operate me again. However, my ministry partner Dr Joshua Pillai and his wife came from Bangalore in the

afternoon, laid their hands upon me declaring healing in the name of the Lord and the Lord and later in the evening as my condition improved, the doctors changed their plan. We learned the power of prayer and God's faithfulness to His word. 'He sent His words and healed them' (Psalm 107:20). What a great God we have!

### **Deep called deep (Psalm 42)**

Another year went past, so it was time to report back to the hospital as I was also gaining strength. In the month of September, me and my wife went down to CMC Vellore hospital for reporting as per the schedule, and as everything was normal, we proceeded to Hyderabad to attend **International Ethne meeting** hosted by IMA. After three days of meeting, we went back to Vellore to pick up the report of the tests that my wife had got done earlier, before returning home. However, the report was kind of shocking, as the doctor in charge declared that my wife has a high-grade cancer in her uterus requiring immediate surgery. We went to the chapel to really cry out to the Lord for His intervention as both of us were not mentally prepared to go

through another operation trauma. Many thoughts passed through my mind like, 'why my wife also needs to have cancer anyway?' Why Satan is bent on attacking, stealing, and destroying God's people? Can this be God's will etc? The spiritual battle was intense indeed.

Very soon, the time for operation came and as she was being carried to the OT, few of us who were standing near the door just waved at her as there was no time to even pray for her. That was close to 10.30pm and so, I hurriedly proceeded back towards my room at the hospital annexe close by. But, since my daughter Joanna was about to arrive from Chennai airport, I was waiting for her at the Annex entrance. After her arrival, we both went to my room and that was the last thing I remembered because I suddenly collapsed after moving into the room. It was one Mizo lady doctor who visited us in late afternoon the next day that saved our emergency situation. I was all wet and unable to tell anything that time. With the help of her and her friends, I was moved to ICU immediately and for me everything was just blank

for the next two three days. I didn't know about my wife and her latest condition either. It was so painful to see both of us becoming cancer patients. Indeed, only God could tell the depth of our feeling in our family circle in that situation.

### **Angels came to refresh me in my room**

While I was in my deep sleep moment, somehow I saw several light balls entering my room and coming towards my bed and then after that, three settled down on my left and three on my right and one next to my feet and suddenly, they all turned into beautiful angels! What a strange but beautiful sight! Another Wuo!

These angels then bowed towards me with a loving smile and then raising their hands and heads up, they started singing with such beautiful voices, the like of which I have never seen or heard before! I was made to understand that the beautiful song they sang was **To God be the Glory** - '*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*', I felt their voices went upward like a smoke coming out of the altar towards the heaven. After they finished, they again sang another song with such

beauty that no song on earth could ever compare. This time, the music did not move upward like before, but spread as it were across the length and breadth of the globe. The theme of the song they sang according to my understanding was '**Glory to the Lamb that was slain**' and the beauty of their song was so incomparable with any other earthly music you ever hear on earth. I felt so uplifting in my spirit and sure God must have sent them to refresh me then. I was even reminded of the vision of Isaiah!

Then the angels lifted me up with their hands twice but the third time, I was carried way way up in the sky above and I even thought I was going to be taken into the Lord's presence at that point of time. But thankfully I was carried down and they put me gently on my bed again. There were several things shown to me about the heaven and one was the prayers of believers that goes up like arrows being shot upward. Some of them did not reach very high while very few go right into the throne room of God. I saw the throne room of heaven opened and closed again too.

Then, the angels bowed towards me with a smile and turned into light balls as before and rolled out of my room just as they came in. Tears flowed from my eyes when I thought about God's special care and grace on me by sending even His angels to refresh and heal me even in my weakest moment. I thought to myself, 'Why me Lord'. Like Daniel experienced new strength through the touch of God's Angels, I was refreshed and strengthened in no small measure (Daniel 10: 18). I felt like singing....

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!*

*That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found...*

### **Saviour YOU can move the mountain**

Many things happened in the realm of physical repair and spiritual warfare in 2015 till beginning of 2016 which includes brain surgery following my black out experience. Surely, it was painful and expensive, but as the Psalmist said, '*He prepares a table in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over.*' (Psalm 23: 5), I often felt God's

goodness in no small measure. I am told by my doctors that there is nothing to worry now.

Let me give you just a glimpse of it. Unexpectedly, one evening *Hillsong* group suddenly showed up in Vellore out of nowhere, so to say. They arranged one special programme for the staff and the students only. One Khasi chaplain somehow got four tickets for our family to participate in that event, so we all went there to enjoy the refreshing moment. I must not forget to tell you my wife was treated and discharged already much before this event. Doctors, nurses, administrative staff and all their families crammed into this medium size auditorium. Right from the start of the programme, you could sense the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. Then they sang '*Saviour, you can move the mountain*', almost everybody took to their feet, young and old doctors including us, joined them worshipping the Lord excitedly, clapping, jumping and shouting Hallelujah! Well, at that particular moment, I forgot I was a patient because I felt so lifted up by the Spirit of God! Indeed, I got a new anointing from the Lord right there through the ministry of the

**Hillsong people!**

### **God's people shall not lack good things**

I must not forget that my family members, even my sons-in-law came to visit me off and on to care for me during all those troubled times and that is something I can never forget. Towards the end of the year (2016), just before Christmas, my wife and I decided to visit our mission field in West Bengal which we wanted to do that for a long long time. Looking back, I wondered how we ever dared to travel that dusty road by car, stream boat, auto rickshaw, thella, and finally on foot to reach the venue! The area being a collection of Islands, we have to do that way. Anyway, we reached the venue with our team where around 300 men, women, children gathered for Christmas celebration, singing, dancing joyfully in their own way! They are poor no doubt, many of them living in mud house; but they have joy within them! After the main program, we went to the nearby lake for baptism. They sang with joy while around 30 or so took baptism, which was followed by a community feast. By God's grace, we were able to provide for the feast. What we have heard

through reports became alive! We also visited another gathering of believers who were celebrating Christmas not very far from that location. Our hearts were full of joy to see so many of them accepting the Lord and lives changed as a result. To God be the glory for great things He had done!

### **Year of thunder, year of lightning!**

The Lord graciously allowed me and my wife to participate at the *Global Mission and Prayer Leaders Summit* at a place called Hernnhut in Germany, convened by *International Prayer Conference, IPC* (July 2017). That was a breathtaking experience to see and hear the reports of those who are in the forefront of mission fields in closed door countries where no one is allowed to preach the Gospel. Besides, to sit together at the birthplace of world renowned **Moravian Mission**, initiated by Con Zinzendorf was something most exciting. For me and my wife, it was indeed a time of spiritual refreshing and rekindling of our mission vision and intercessory experience. We will never forget the experience we had there in Hernhut, the venue

where Zinzendorf preached three long hours the love of God, followed by the Lord's supper only intervened by a sudden visitation of the Holy Spirit bringing about Revival, which gave birth to a *hundred years prayer chain* and the unforgettable *Moravian Mission*.

The New Year of 2018 started with the passing away of my dear sister who had been sick with cancer since 2010 and finally, we had to say goodbye on 14th February 2018. For the children and the family members, it was a tearful parting as she has always been a networker in the family circle.

As it were, the storm gained momentum as I had to do hernia surgery right after the funeral in Aizawl. So, we left for Shillong. I thought that was the end of the story for me, but it turned out to be only the beginning of my problems as I had to be hospitalised five times in succession the same year. The last one being a serious one, as I had to be taken to CMC Vellore ultimately almost in a half dead situation. To be honest, my entire system had collapsed while I was in Bethany Hospital, Shillong. As

my doctor did not have much hope of my recovery as he could not do anything, I was referred to CMC Vellore for urgent operation. That was the time my wife and my close relatives including our prayer partners really fought the toughest spiritual battle. My wife knelt down beside me time and time again, claiming the words of the Psalmist, *“And they drew near the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them.”* (Psalm 107:19-20)

Somehow, after safe arrival at CMC Vellore, I recovered speedily. But one day, as my wife took me slowly to the bathroom when suddenly, blood came out and my wife called the nurse, and the nurse called the doctor and so on. In the meantime, I collapsed while my wife was still holding me in the bathroom and was unable to respond to my wife's desperate call to me, *“Bawihte, Bawihte”* (Darling, Darling). With the help of the nurse and my son in law Michael, followed by a group of doctors, I was somehow moved to ICU as my pulse was only found in my neck at that time. Somehow, I recovered in the ICU,

after locating the spot from where the bleeding started after almost two days, I was finally taken to operation theatre to be operated for fixing the bleeding point.

As I was wheeled into the operation theatre, I prayed 'Lord why is it that I have to go through operation all the time?' Then, amazingly, the Lord Jesus suddenly appeared in front of me and said, **'I will heal your wounds and I will make you healthy again'** (Jer 30:17). The Apostle Paul also one time said, *“But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me”* (2 Tim 4:17). What a tremendous joy and comfort it was for me to see the Lord in person! All my doubts and fears seem to go so far away now. I was also so thankful to Jesus that He was right there with me!

Anyway, after successful surgery, I was released from the Hospital before Christmas and we left for home after the New Year 2019, rejoicing with my family members because of whose support, prayers and great love, my life has been spared, enriched so many times. I also want to express my gratitude and love to all those who continued to pray for me and my family till date and

that is the secret of why I am still alive today!

According to Cancer Survivorship journal, as many as 67% cancer patients have survived now in America as more advanced treatment are now being made available to the public. India also has a Cancer Survivor list even among the celebrities. To name a few, Manisha Koirala, Sanjay Dutt, Kiron Kher, Lisa Ray etc are notable Bollywood cancer survivors. So, I am just one of the many cancer survivors by God's grace. This also shows you can be a winner too.

Let me conclude with the song of Andréa Crouch because this song explains so well God's grace and His love made available to His beloved children.

### **THROUGH IT ALL**

*I have had many tears and sorrows  
I've had many questions for tomorrow  
There have been times I didn't know right from wrong.  
But in every situation, God gave*

*me blessed consolation  
That my trials come to only make me strong.*

*Through it all, through it all  
I've learned to trust in Jesus  
I've learned to trust in God  
Through it all, through it all  
I've learned to depend upon His Word.*

*I've been to lots of places  
I've seen lot of faces,  
There's been times I felt so all alone,  
But in my lonely hours, Yes,  
those precious lonely hours  
Jesus let me know that I was His own.*

***Tough times never last, but tough people does ! Robert Shuller***

**NOTE : Rev PC Muanthanga** has formerly worked with EFI and World Vision of India, he is currently the Director of NE India Harvest Network based in Mission Vengthlang Aizawl: 9436119645. He is blessed with four daughters and four grand children.

For this is my blood of the covenant,  
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Matthew 26:28





# RESURRECTION DAY+ FREEDOM TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

Mr. Hansraj Jain

## ***Why do we need Resurrection?***

To walk through the doors or boulders = steel doors and bunkers? (John 20:19). It just may be for us to become 'visible and invisible' as we please!? (Luke 24:15,31).

It sounds like children's ghost stories, doesn't it?

Are we feeling offended? Please don't be. I am not done just yet!

For that matter, why is it necessary for us to be 'transfigured' (made translucent), as being harped about at this Lent season when we live and practice what we assume is right in our own understanding and wisdom - logically and rationally

speaking, that is! [Mark 9:2-10].

## **OBSERVATION vs OPERATION**

Making observations is significant if one has that inclination. This inclination towards attention to detail makes the 'gifted' observer-to-detail (you have got to encounter these guys to believe just how frightfully accurate they can be) uncanny.

On the flip side, some folks aren't as observant. Most are 'glancers' [a casual look in the passing]. These most often derive conclusions from this bias, limited exposure, and pre-determined worldview. Time plays no role in their ability or inability to being transitory, transparent, or vigilant. If



anything, such persons are often oblivious of the changes and development taking place around them.

Not to be side-tracked, we return to observe that to a thoughtful person, [let's be a little more spiritual-sounding] – a meditative individual [who meditates on His Word day and night. (Psalm 1:2)], the prime issue is, *"Aren't we supposed to NOT die in the first place? Where would be the place or the necessity to speak and consider the notion of Resurrection if we could live forever and ever?"*

*In this 'fallen' world, to live forever and ever? "Ho! Hey! Watch out for what you wish for!"*

The everyday and the ultimate truth is that we die - plain and simple. We may not like it, but can anyone negate this reality?

The other truth is that we fight with all our might and mint, to prolong life because we want and desire to live. Forever.

Our frustration gets compounded by the fact that our scientific, engineering, medicine, space adventures to the moon and Mars, etcetera, still haven't found

and suggested a way to achieve this – "Fountain of Youth" or the magic of "eternal blissful life". Something kills us every day – be it ageing [growing up! ;-)] diseases, accidents, cancers, old age – ageing gradually and surely. Tragedy, tragedy, tragedy. Together, they spoil our lives. Even physicians who heal and help prolong life themselves die.

### ***Isn't that a paradox?***

So, how shall we live now? And is there assurance for us to live forever?

Stop. The question that begs an answer is, *"How, in the first place, did we begin dying? Who and where did it all begin?"*

The answer to the above first query is a glorious 'YES'. There is a pattern and guide to how we might live here and now in the present and the future ahead. Ours can be an assured life lived now and after life. Because of this confidence, some consider death as merely the gateway to that eternity-live forever and ever.

As for who, where and how of dying, stick around and we will have the answer. That answer will include the how and when this

was achieved – the dying and the living, that is!

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

The book of Genesis – the First Book of the Bible – presents a paradigm shift to this paradoxical parody called Death and Life (Dying and Living).

### **I. Concept of Resurrection: Its absence**

The concept of Resurrection is absent in the first two chapters of Moses' authored book, Genesis. [By the way, Moses authored first five books of the sixty six in the Bible.]

Sorry, I digress (so easily).

However, enter chapter three, and we have the narrative narrating the foundational reason for the need and essentiality for Resurrection. Please note that the term 'Resurrection' is synonymously used for 'salvation'. Therefore, our salvation war cry rises with boldness along with Apostle Paul, shouting, "O Death where is your sting?"

Death is dead! It is killed. Its plague and sting are done. Forever! [1 Cor 15:54-56; Hosea

13:14.]. Jesus killed it. Death is dead! Jesus rose from the dead, announcing his accomplishment. That accomplishment stated that Jesus had broken the fetters of Sin and its resultant outcome, death. Jesus as the Life-Giver has returned with life and abundant and eternal life, on offer, to everyone who would turn their back on sin.

You don't believe it?

Tragic, really, that choice of disbelief!

But do read on.

### **II. This is Resurrection and it is profound.**

It is profound because it does two things.

**One**, it disenfranchises the cause of our enfranchisement - Sin and Death.

**Second**, it [Resurrection] restores to the original state the destroyed humanity [sin tarnished] with its universal and global implication of separation from its Creator, to back to that original relationship with their Creator. This, again, is thanks to Jesus' rising from the dead!

To expand on the "Why" and the "How" of the notions stated in the

above paragraph, we must ask you to please stick around.

### **III. THE ORIGINAL STATE:**

**A.** Life was death-free. Fear free. Shame free. Doubt and guilt free. Choices were limitless. Here, we must quickly add, "with the exception of one". (Genesis 2: 15-17)

**B.** Life, as described to us in the first two chapters of Genesis, was worth every moment of life lived. The place was christened 'Eden'.

**C.** In and at Eden, life was harmonious. Life was stress-free. Length of life was limitless. Quantity and quality of resources were non-depleting. Responsibility and joy of labour (stewarding the creation) brought opportunities to be creative, discover the new (entrepreneurship abounded!), experience adventure, naming names of creatures first seen or met, flora and fauna wore incredible colours. For the Man, being responsible and caring, brought a great sense of satisfaction, contentment and fulfilment. Life was a pleasure to live!

All these were accompanied by joy and, of course, with an amazing sense of self-worth.

Then there was present the unspoken, with a fundamental understanding of belonging and fearlessness of relationship. This world was marked by worry-free living (don't mistake it for being a care-free notion which is pregnant with highly deprecating and intoxicating issues). The idea of doubt did not exist and was totally foreign to and absent in their vocabulary. The very idea and notion of doubt today is offensive. Sadly, doubt is a cancer present, and often found, being proactive in every contemporary relationship. If true, it, by its very nature, kills.

Eden was a world filled with love, harmony, submission and care for one another. There was a sense of mutuality and belonging. These were very self-evident and plentiful, and much more. Narrating them would fill this, and many more, pages.

### **IV. THE ARRIVAL OF AN AWESOME GIFT:**

Added to this perfect world was the presentation of a very unique and impressive gift for the 'alone' Man. Creator was ever so sensitive, perceptive and caring. The Creator has always been proactive. True to His character, He met (and meets) even (today)

the unspoken needs.

As for the rest of us creatures, well, everyone had their own 'partners' with whom they shared their lives, being fruitful and content. The Lion and the calf...Here is the actual picture painted for us. The artist is Isaiah.

***"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
and a little child shall lead them." (Isaiah 11:6; 65:25)***

***Returning to the Man:*** The Creator brought a very special 'Gift' for the Man along with him. As he presented the 'Gift', oh, how thrilled the Creator felt as He watched Man's mouth burst open in awe and saw his eyes and mouth spread a huge smile from ear to ear in response at His Gift. *"It's perfect! Just whom I needed"*, the Man whispered under his breath to himself. Poor guy, he could hardly get a sound (word) out of his pharynx just then. The Man was too shocked to shout! He was silent and in love. Head-over-heel.

As the Creator "handed-over" the Gift to the Man, the Man

stretched his hands, tenderly and gently, to accept his awesome and wonderful of a gift. Feeling the Gift, its tender softness, the beat of Man's heart got louder than ever. It raced so hard we, the creatures, feared that it would 'knock' him over.

Creator's Gift, the first and the best, was an excellent company to keep for the Man! She met him in every way. The Man named His Gift, 'Ishasha' meaning 'woman' and christened her 'Eve'.

***So the Man had his Woman, i.e., Adam had his Eve!***

The celebrations, celebrating the arrival of the add-on company for the Man, was incredible. The entire creation burst out trumpeting, shrieking, stamping, howling, hissing, hopping... Never, since, has such a celebration ever happened or been seen.

As for the Man, well, until then, a solitary creature, discovered the poetic side of his being, thanks to Eve. For the first time, everyone heard him sing out a melody unheard and unknown before. He piped, *"She is the flesh of my flesh and the bone of my bones!"* And the Man did not stop with that

couplet. Moses captured it completely in Genesis 2:23.

For the Man, the Woman was a compatible partner who shared everything. They shared their abode, intellect, physical closeness, and emotions; they went together on discovery tours, meeting and discovering creatures and creations around them (social creatures); they shared their notions, philosophised and held perspectives about births as they watched animals produce their own-kind, the clothing of the flowers and their fragrance wafting through the air, the sunsets and sunrise. They were political too - maintained order, stewarded their Eden, and the created world about them as responsible stewards. (Genesis 2:15). They were rational and logical too. They made choices within their purview and mandate.

Relationally, they were tender, gentle, sensitive, and loving. When the Creator came visiting at the 'cool of the day', they would chat away with Him. One could hear their mirth echo like fragrance - Sprayed everywhere. It was, literally, heaven on Earth.

Unfortunately, present-day

humanity tags it as having "found religion". *Oh, how we have fallen short of the original.*

## **V. THE Paradise Lost:**

And the starting point is in chapter 3's first part of verse 1. That's when it happened. Up until then, everything made life worth living as it was meant to be lived – death-free! Pragmatically speaking, it was lived in harmony, unity, trust, care, belonging and much more— abundantly. If something was absent or missing in this perfect world, then that something was Sin impregnated child called Death.

Please recall, the world of chapters one and two of Genesis. It was sin-free. Therefore, it was death-free! Why, then, would one speak or think of the notion of "Resurrection"?

**Resurrection was irrelevant here.**

Let's think and ask, *"Who would be so stupid as to throw away all these (and much more) in this perfect world of EDEN to discover the 'truth' behind the 'exception-of-one'?" (3:1ff).*

*Please do not eat the fruit of that tree in the middle of the garden. It*

*is death, if you do! (Genesis 3:1ff).*

*But Eat, they did – unanimously!*

There is an English adage, "Curiosity killed the cat."

That's where Genesis' chapter three furnishes the answer to our query (the place and cause for Death) and the reason for our need for life.

## **VI. Paradise Re-gained!**

Thanks be to God whose justice and righteousness and requirement for salvation of His Creation were met and paid for by Jesus Christ. It is this reality that we recall to remember and celebrate Resurrection Day. It is this invitation to come "live-again" that excites us to proclaim (preach) to the sin-killed world the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Lord of Freedom, author and distributor of Life & Eternal Life. The unembellished truth is that Death is dead! Forever.

God's love demonstrated and lived by Jesus Christ invites us to receive His amazing gift – an invitation to renounce sin and accept his forgiveness; like the

Father of the Prodigal son, God the Father wants to run to us and get reconciled us and thereafter, to reinhabit His eternal life!

Death is dead. Everyone is invited to life – to live eternally. Thanks to be to Jesus Christ the Saviour!

So, let's preach the Gospel! The dying world needs it more than ever before. Urgently.

And that, disciples and the Church, is our mandate. And that mandate is non-negotiable!

May the Lord and His power of His (Jesus') Resurrection be yours!

Now, that's Easter. Come let's celebrate.  
Hallelujah!!!



**Mr. Hansraj Jain**  
*Managing Director, Family, Marriage & Human Relationships, INHERITORS.*



# 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 that 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 he 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 of 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 above 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, was 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 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, and 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.

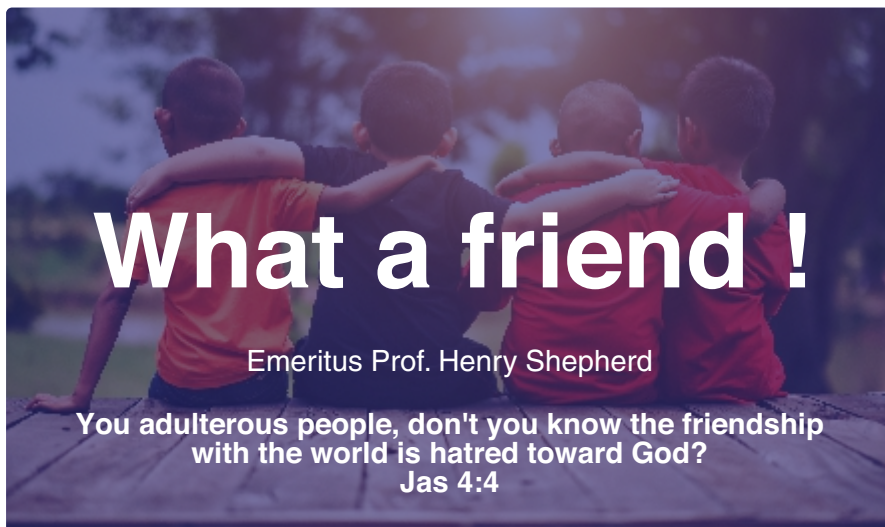


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Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,  
he is a new creation. The old has passed away;  
behold, the new has come.  
2 Corinthians 5:17



### **Some generic observations about friends,**

Everyone knows the meaning of the word, friend, yet being a multidimensional term, it is not easy to describe it in universally acceptable manner, usually, true friendship is shared by two persons having common interest, likes, and dislikes, who may or may not know a common language or from the same culture etc. An ideal friend is expected to be truthful, trustworthy, sincere, considerate, and patient etc. It is essentially a relationship free from selfishness. But unfortunately, if there are true friends, fake friends exceed them in number, due to crooked human tendencies. It is said animals are undoubtedly true friends barring

a few known exceptions. The one who has a true friend is a blessed person, for he or she is always there with you in thick and thin. Since there is a large variety of friends in this world, many innocent people being emotional bear the burnt. In our society, an adjective is usually attached to specify the characteristic of friends, such as : good friend, good time friend, bosom friend and egocentric friend etc. But greatest friend is the one who gives life for his friend. In present state of affairs, one needs to be extra careful in this matter. The importance of a sincere friend is obvious, for we expect sincere and unconditional support in this relationship. God said for lonely Adam, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper

suitable for him." The life of a friendship depends upon its type but ideally it is a lifelong relationship. In childhood, our parents remain vigilant about our friend circle and if their experience demands to warn their child, they do so. They disallow or discourage improper association, directly or indirectly.

If we search the Scriptures on the subject, we can easily find a lot in Old as well as in New Testament. Particularly, the book of Proverbs is quite rich and informative. It says - "A friend is closer than brother but a man of many companies may come to ruin", (Pr 18:24). Wisdom cautions not to go for many friends more so when the person is affluent. The wealth brings many friends but a poor man's friends desert him (Pr 19:4). King Solomon, a wise man, has given valuable proverbs on friend saying - Everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts; Do not make friend with a short-tempered man; Do not associate with easily angered; and a gossip separates close friends (Pr 22:24 and 16:28). However, fools do not care for such advices but go ahead if they see some gain. Fake friends hide reality of life, therefore, feel ashamed of poor friends or when their looks,

language, attire or social status is not up to the mark. They may be called good time friends.

The importance of a sincere friend is great as expressed by the wise man - Two are better than one because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecc 4:9-12). One should know the traits of a good friends as well as of fake friends before accepting a friendship offer. Seeing the face, a true friend can feel the pain in his friend's eyes, while others see only smile on his face and believe words. Some unknown authors have said: True friends are like street lights, they may not make distance any short but light up the path and make walk safe; Good friends are like stars, you may not always see them but you know they are there. Wisdom demands to choose sincere friends for lifetime who can tolerate weakness of each other. Since perfect friends are rare, some adjustment is a practical approach. Learn from Jesus, he sent his disciples out

two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits (Mk 6:7). He allowed sixty to leave him but tolerated Judas until last and forgave Peter for denial.

### **Negative versus positive attitude of friends in bad times**

An ideal friend should be a source of reducing stress, not causing more of it. In the case of Job, his friends came to him in his worst time and were expected to comfort. But their negative attitude rather made them bitter with time. Job was rich, God-fearing, blameless, and righteous man among all the people of East. May be his social status attracted many to make him their friend. Also, people safely make a God-fearing person their friend but they themselves do not prove to be worthy of friendship. Job was happy to see his friends in such a time and shared prolonged pain and anguish he was going through. More so, even his wife did not prove to be a faithful partner for she foolishly advised him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die," (Job 2:9). It appears, his friends came with good intention to sympathize with Job, as they sat with him on ground for seven days and seven nights without uttering a word. But when they opened their mouth, instead of

giving comfort they gave him more pain, accused him to be a proud man, also tried to prove him a sinner who had been punished for wickedness, and thus, condemned him (Job 11:14-15; 34:10-12, 35-37). Their attitude disheartened Job, and he felt dejected for the so-called friends who made him a laughing stock (Job 12:4; 19:19). However, in the last chapter, we come to know the judgement of God, who expressed anger toward his friends, but a true friend in Job prayed for the forgiveness of erring friends to save them from wrath of God (Job 42:7-9). Finally, the Lord God accepted the prayer of Job and blessed him even more than before. Thus, Job cleared the test in flying colours.

On the other hand, David was from a poor family, but his friend Jonathan was son of the king, yet he proved his love and faithfulness when David was facing death. In a worldly move, Saul wanted to kill David to save the throne for his son, Jonathan, who was not selfish, but feared God and knew that David was the first choice of God to be the next king of Israel. They had become bosom friends under an oath and maintained the relationship all through their lives (1Sam 20:16-



17). Jonathan succeeded in saving David's life. David also proved his truthfulness by taking care of Jonathan's crippled son after becoming the king of Israel (1Sam 20:30-31), God provides wisdom in choosing a good friend to his people.

### **Modern friends are friends of the world**

In the contemporary world, the concept of friend has drastically changed. Friendship with the world is a dangerous proposition, for it means enmity with God. Those who may not know the meaning of the phrase should refer to Scripture which says - People who set their mind on earthly things are friends of the world. They join the crowd, with the aim to enjoy fun and pleasure desired by flesh. The worldliness is the reverse side of godliness. Worldly people are usually rich and love to enjoy worldly pleasures by fair or foul means. Naturally, they are unconcerned about God and his Commandments for humans; so, no questions of fear of God in them. Yet, most of them live with the illusion that God is happy with them because of their involvement in rituals; or they are atheists or agnostic. Some of their traits may help us in identifying them, as they are

usually drunkard, hostile to God, sexually immoral, worshipper of treasure and gods, hot-tempered, jealous of other's progress, over ambitions and gambler etc. Believers are warned not to keep their company as they are not fit for sincere relationship. James has warned and said, "No one can be a friend of God as well as friend of the world".

In the modern electronic age, the meaning of friendship has changed. Both young and old make long distance e-friends on the basis of attractive introductory informations provided on internet. Most of them are crooks, cheaters, fun-loving without an iota of love and faithfulness. They use the media to lay a trap for opposite sex. Their friendship means: aimless chatting, dating for fun, online sexual advances, one night stand, sharing online pornography, time pass, and even blackmailing. The most dangerous part of such friendship is that the innocent party does not know the true intention and realizes the fraud too late, after the damage has been done.

Many a times, such traps are capable of ruining a life. In the

contemporary age, uncommitted type friendship is being practised for selfish gains and it lasts on the day purpose is fulfilled. Drunkards, gangsters, hackers, drug-addicts and fun lovers willingly look for it. 'Birds of a feather flock together' applies here literally.

### **How to Comprehend the divine friendship?**

In olden days, it was customary to make covenant friends. Two persons needing each other's help in any emergency used to vow and shake hands to commit mutual integrity. In those days, there were no police force or military to defuse wild animals, enemy or dacoit's attack. Such an arrangement was common particularly between two heads of tribes. However, it was not necessarily a permanent or life-time commitment. Both the partners were free to terminate it if so felt. But in case of blood covenant, two heads of tribe used to cut their palms and shake hands so that their blood will mix in the process. Such a partnership used to be for lifetime and partners could not annul it; only death of either one or both the partners used to make them free from commitments.

Now to comprehend the real

meaning of friend, it is necessary to go to the root of the word for which friend is English translation. In Greek language, the verb for the act of love is 'phileo' and from this came the noun 'philos' which so translated as 'friend'. Therefore, the literal meaning of the English word 'friend' should be understood as – 'the one who loves'. The close connection between friend and love is deep. A friend is essentially liked and loved which includes sincerity, faithfulness, and trustworthiness etc. at both ends. Plato, a renowned philosopher has said, "Those who love die for others." Jesus died for the world out of love. Even enemies shun bitterness if treated with love. Philosopher Hellenistic says, "To become someone's friend means to relate with one who speaks honestly and frankly holding nothing back. "Some fathers treat worthy adult son as their friend out of overflowing love; similarly, some mothers treat their daughter as their friend. But such privileged sons and daughters do not take advantage but treat their parents with more devotion and respect. Friend is simply a joyful expression in such cases to show profound parental love. Such a symbolic friendship is non-

reciprocating type in words.

A few saints have enjoyed this privilege, whom God the Father treated as friend. Yet, it was conditional, based on obedience of the person, God calling a person friend means, the person is truly obedient and therefore, loveable. Please note, no such a person did ever call or treated God as his friend as we do in normal friendship. They knew it was only a metaphorical address out of love. Abraham was first to have this privilege and he remained obedient and faithful to God all through his life. Then, the second person was Moses, about him the Scripture says, "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend", (Nu 12:8, Ex 33:11, 18). But he being a human was not allowed to see God's face. On the other hand, Caleb also followed whole heartedly but God did not give him the same privilege as was given to Moses, the leader appointed by God for the mission exodus. In worldly friendship, people boast of such privilege if the friend is an outstanding or a renowned person, to feel elevated in society. Even film stars and head of states do not forget to mention the press that such and such authority is

his friend. God called Abraham and Moses his friend, also both of them know it so did not take any advantage out of it, rather introduced themselves as servants of God. Yes, God has accepted us as his children so we call him Abba Father, for the Spirit prompts us to do so (Rom 8:14-17), And the reason behind this honour is love of God (1Jn 3:1).

### **Jesus' friends did what he commanded**

Jesus came to live and suffer with humans as a man and died out of love as a man, which is due to limitless love. He loved the whole world, including his critics and enemies, and save them who believe from eternal punishment, designated for the devil and his associates. Those born again are expected to love each other as he demonstrated for us to learn, how to love.

Jesus called disciples his friends. He said, "Greatest love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you my servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose me but I chose you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last," (Jn 15:13-16). Jesus' love was agape love; he said, "As the Father Loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love" (Jn 15:9). So, divine friendship means divine love due for obedience. Jesus calls weary and burdened to receive rest. Condition is only one - Do not eat the forbidden fruit (sin) when tempted but remain in him.

Jesus used the term 'friend' to express his love for them. He also said that those who are not with him are against him. i.e, they are his enemy. It is our free will to either offer obedience or enmity, for there is no middle way. He does not like lukewarm people. Our relationship is under the new blood covenant (Lk 22:20). His commandments are not hard but practicable and precise - "Love each other as I have loved you". He washed his disciples' feet and said - "Do likewise as I have demonstrated". In the name of Jesus, one can directly approach God the Father and ask him in prayer (Heb 7:25, Jn 15:16). But in the absence of obedience all this is wishful thinking. He gradually transforms believer's life in his likeness for total compatibility with himself and

God. All this is possible with the help of the Holy Spirit.

However, from our side he is Master and Lord though he does not treat us as his servant due to the magnanimity of agape love. Therefore, some Bible scholars have expressed their view that the hymn – 'What a friend we have in Jesus' is inappropriate wording. The most one can call him elder brother, or co-heir. Jesus treated Lazarus as his friend and wept for him out of brotherly love. But, non-believing Jews called him 'A friend of sinners and tax collectors', which he clarified why, with reason. Jesus out of limitless love prayed from cross, for them, who were mocking and calling him by name, spitting and provoking him to come down from the cross: Obedience should be our response for his love, he demands. Disciples expressed their love when they died for their invaluable faith in the Lord. We may call Jesus teacher and Lord as he has himself said so (Jn 13:3), and pride has no place in love (Jn 13:14-17). Apostles, out of brotherly love, addressed the Church as 'dear friends' in Epistles, which was mutual friendship as they were in one Spirit. Two friends get attached to

each other because of sincere love bond, truthfulness, integrity, and patience in ignoring each other's weaknesses. Therefore, know the person before making him your friend. Anyone who is obedient to God will prove to be a good friend beyond doubt if it is reciprocal from both sides; 'Love your neighbours with great charitable love, but befriend only those with whom you can be mutually supportive in virtues (St. Francis de Sales).



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# Time we speak up against divisive agenda

Fr Tom Mangattuthazhe

My heart bleeds when some people with divisive intents talk of Christian missionaries being responsible for all the problems in our region – the North East India, because I am a missionary myself, a priest of the Catholic. I began my journey in the state of Assam, and I shall continue to do so till as long as age and health allows me to continue working with the people. I have worked as a teacher of Dokmoka Krist Jyoti School, Assumption School Chokihola, Holy Family School Japrajan, Acting Principal of Don Bosco School, Diphu, St. Joseph School Dolomora, Principal of St. Mary's School Diphu, Principal of Little Flower School Manja, Principal of Krist Jayanti School Dhansiri, Principal of St. Marys School Daldali. All these

institutes are in Assam, and today the young people I once had the opportunity to teach, remember me as their teacher than a priest, because ours always had been teacher-student relationship, and not that of a preacher – faithful association.

It gives me tremendous joy when I meet my past pupils, some very successful in their respective fields, some not so successful, yet always grateful, loyal and respectful. They still are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhist and Christians – religions they believed in during their formation days. The most important thing is, all of them are responsible citizens of this country. During my days as a teacher in these Schools, I have always walked



the corridors and the classrooms wearing my Cassock, not as a uniform, but a symbol of my being a member of the Catholic missionary, the Church that runs and sustained these educational institutions. My commitment towards keeping the tradition of my faith through the wearing of this attire has never been seen negatively by my non-Christian colleagues, students, and parents at any point in time. Instead, it has always been received with appreciation. Not even once, had anyone construed my Cassock wearing as aimed at converting people from other faiths to Christianity.

Likewise, display of pictures of any personality in some corners of the institutes, even that of Christ, have never ever been seen as an attempt to convert, or transform educational institutions into houses of conversion as some divisive forces attempts to project. Certain personalities, such as Mahatama Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Sardar Valabh Bhai Patel etc., made significant contributions and shaped the destiny of our country. Therefore, through repeated viewing of their pictures, they inspire us of their sacrifices and

contributions. The same is also true of people who made certain achievements – in science, social, or economic that changed the lives of mankind. They have no political or cultic connotation, but simply a way of reverence. We honour these famous people, preserve their memories, and recall their contributions with gratitude when we look at their statues ad pictures. We do not worship them but we commemorate them because they have contributed to society in some important way.

In a similar way, Christians, particular the Catholic Church - lay people, Priests and Nuns honour and preserve the memory of important men and women whom the Church recognizes as saintly. These saints are notable people who are honoured and remembered for their incredible lives on earth and their immeasurable contributions to shaping our history. Strangely and disturbingly, social media posts are replete with hate messages written and circulated by people with divisive intents, people who want to see societies divided based on religion, caste, race and creed. Such materials are liberally forwarded or shared



by others who do not subscribe to the agenda, but without realising that in doing so, they are indeed succumbing to the sinister designs of divisive forces.

My sincere appeal to my students, parents, and well-wishers of Assam, particularly in the district of Karbi Anglong, would be shun and stand up against voices and activities aimed at creating division and friction between people of different affiliations. You may not necessarily speak up if you don't wish to, but at least avoid spreading these venomous messages by sharing.

Christian missionaries are accused of converting people because they educate the poor and the downtrodden. Imagine what would have been the state of Karbi Anglong district if Christians have not started missionary schools and began educating people? Men and women who had passed out from these missionary schools know well whether conversion was the objective. They know apart from imparting value education there were no other intentions. They know that churches and chapels in the school campuses are

meant only to facilitate Christians to worship, and not to force others to attend. It is time that men and women in our society, who have had the privilege of receiving quality education from these institutes, speak out against wrong narratives being spread by people who want to divide us, because it is only the enlightened ones who could defend people's constitutional rights, and safeguard human values in Assam.

For me, the white cassock is a sacred dress, the tradition of my Church, which teaches me love, compassion and service to mankind. Therefore, I shall not be intimidated by these wild threats, but wear it with pride and my head held high, because I am the follower of Christ who is the giver of real human value, and I live for him.



**Fr. Tom Mangattuthazhe**  
*is the secretary for NEIRBC  
Commission for Ecumenism*



# LENTEN PROVERBS

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

*(To read the first 18 Lenten Proverbs,  
please refer to the previous edition of Aim Magazine).*

## LENTEN PROVERBS #19

If we say (like false teachers do) that we should not confess our sins based on 1 John 1:9 verse as it was not written for believers but only for the Gnostics, then we should be willing to say that the 'blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin' verse just two verses above 1 John 1:9 is also written only for Gnostics and therefore, it is not applicable for all! Of course, 1 John 1:9 is written for believers, and they must confess their sins to Jesus with a repentant heart!

## LENTEN PROVERBS #20

The Blood of Jesus stands against modern false teachings such as Hyper-Grace (Rev. 1:5 – Jesus' blood frees us from sins) and Hyper-Supernaturalism

which says 'Believers will not die' false teaching among other things. (Rev. 17:6 – the present evil world system will be drunk with the blood of the witnessing blood-washed martyrs).

## LENTEN PROVERBS #21

The marks of 'the enemy of the Cross' (Phil. 3:18): (1) '(Blind) Body-Obeyers' ['their god is their stomach'] (2) Morally-confused ['their glory is their shame'] (3) Not Eternity-Conscious ['their mind is on earthly things']. Their final destiny: Hell ['their destiny is destruction'] (3:19).

## LENTEN PROVERBS #22

Do you feel lonely? Has peace gone away from your life? The only solution is to turn from sin

and come to the foot of the Cross where the only God in bodily form died! In fact, he who was a spirit and formless took on a body just to die for you! That is the message of Colossians 1:18-23!

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #23**

Yes, Calvary's Cross will ultimately pave way for total healing on the other side of eternity even as we experience first fruits here and now (Rom. 8:23). But the phrase 'by His wounds we have been healed' is talking about healing from 'iniquity' as the immediate context reveals (Isa. 53:5,6; 1:5-6).

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #24**

Do you grow weary and lose heart (Heb. 12:3)? Do you feel that your resolve to fight sin, be it watching porn or indulging in gossip or anything else is growing weak (Heb. 12:4)? What is the solution? It is found just above this verse: keep firm focus on Jesus who endured that shameful death on the Cross (Heb. 12:2).

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #25**

The very first reference to 'pain' in the Bible is from Genesis 3:16,

'the woman will henceforth bear children in pain' (post sin's entry). The beauty of the Cross is this: the only God in Flesh, Jesus Christ, endured untold pain and agony to make us, wayward sinners, His Children!

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #26**

The 'blood of Nile' killed the fishes, and it caused a stench (Exodus 7:17-18). But there is a fountain, drawn from Immanuel's veins; when sinners plunge beneath that fount, they lose all their guilty stain (famous hymn line inspired by Zech. 13:1) and they live to be an aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2:14).

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #27**

Hebrews 10:4, 'Not possible for blood of bulls and goats to take away sins'; when the blood flows from man to God, there will be no forgiveness of sins; Ephesians 1:7, 'in him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses'; when the blood flows from God to man (think of the Cross where God in Flesh died), there is forgiveness of sins!

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #28**

How can Jesus' Blood cleanse

sins of those who were born before His death on the Cross? How can this blood cleanse the sins of those who were born post-Cross? This is why: The efficacy of His Blood, called, 'blood of the ETERNAL covenant' (Heb. 13:20) covers past, present and future. But the candidate should personally come to the Cross of Christ in repentance and faith to be forgiven.

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #29**

"He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness' (I Peter 2:24). Our bodies sinned against Jesus: sins like masturbation coupled with porn-watching, sex outside of marriage, gluttony, etc. But the punishment went to sinless Jesus' body. Now, have we really 'died to these sins' – repented from them, truly?

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #30**

Revelation 13:8 and 21:27 both talk about 'Lamb's book of life'! Revelation 13:8 – GOD CHOSE that our names be written in it BEFORE world's START! Revelation 21:27 – WE TOO MUST CHOOSE to be clean, having been washed by the Blood, so that we can be with the

returning Lamb forever, at the world's END!

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #31**

Why did Jesus die? 1) as a PROPITIATION (as an offering to abate the Trinity's (not just God the Father's) rightful anger against our horrendous sins) – Romans 3:25; 2) as a SUBSTITUTION (as sinners we deserve Hell but Jesus took our place and He died FOR us/instead of us) – Romans 5:8.

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #32**

Why should I share 'the WHOLE counsel of God' (about both the love of God and the wrath of God) to CHURCH BELIEVERS (Acts 20:27)? Why should I warn them about 'fierce wolves' (Bible-twisters who bring hell-populating false teaching (Acts 20:29-30)? The answer is found in the middle verse: they are Blood-redeemed and therefore precious (Acts 20:28).

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #33**

We can hit our pet sins for Double Six (100+ meter six) by replaying the crucifixion along with Jesus (Rom. 6:6). Or we can choose to hit Jesus for a Double Six (throw him out of our life) by crucifying

him again and again by returning back time and again to our pet sins (Heb. 6:6). Which 6:6 defines us?

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #34**

What is one thing that Jesus did before the Crucifixion, during the Crucifixion and after the Crucifixion? It's intercession. He wept for Jerusalem in intercession (Luke 19:41-44 – before); He interceded, "Father, forgive them...." (Luke 23:34 – during). He always lives to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25 – after). Do we intercede for the lost?

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #35**

When you are always conscious of the precious blood of Jesus (I Peter 1:19) you can easily obey the command that comes three verses before the reference in the Bible which calls Jesus' blood as precious, even this command: Be Ye Holy As I am Holy" (I Peter 1:16).

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #36**

The punishment for five kings who waged war against Joshua (and thereby in effect against the God of Joshua) was that they were hung on a tree (Joshua 10).

It was we who waged war against the Living God through our attitudes and actions! But the punishment for that rebellion went to Jesus!

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #37**

Why do we need the Blood of Jesus? Nahum 3:1 has an answer: 'Woe to the bloody city full of lies and' and we deserved 'woes' (ultimately, hell)! But Jesus decided to literally become 'bloody' to save us!

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #38**

Jesus' work of on the Cross is both an "oblation" as well as an "obedience" ("He became obedient to the point of death" – Phil. 2:8)! Thanks to the 'oblation' we are BLESSED, thanks to the His 'obedience' we are CHALLENGED (to obey God even when what He commands us to do does not seem like music to our ears).

### **LENTEN PROVERBS #39**

As the long journey towards the promised land came to an end, the people got into a complaining mode. God sent snakes among them. People were bitten by these poisonous snakes. To save them from these snakes, God

told Moses to make a Bronze Snake and put it up on a pole. When the snake-bitten folks looked at the pole, they were healed. The bronze snake became a picture of what Jesus would do on the Cross (John 3:14-16). But the Bronze Snake soon became a snare as people started worshipping it. God used King Hezekiah to smash it to pieces (2 Kings 18:4). Did God use someone as an instrument, as a proverbial bronze snake, to lead you to the Cross? A pastor? Perhaps even me? Do not love the instruments that God used to bring you to the Cross more than Jesus of the Cross! That would be an abomination!

## LENTEN PROVERBS #40

What is the first time the Bible uses the word "Blood"? It does so in Genesis 4:10: "The Lord said, "What is this you have done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!" God is talking about Abel's blood here. It speaks. It accuses his brother Cain of murdering him. Abel's blood is an accusing blood. But the blood of Jesus speaks a better word than Abel's blood (Heb. 12:24). Why so? Because Jesus' blood atones! But Abel's blood only accuses! No matter what your sin is – pornwatching,

pride or prayerlessness – come to the atoning blood of Jesus now!



**Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj** is the founder of Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission, the G4 Mission. Duke is the author of three books, including, *Straight Talk*, considered as a valuable resource on what the Bible says on porn, sexting, phone addiction, and such taboo topics which are not dealt frankly from most modern pulpits. Reach this itinerant evangelist to 20 Indian States and 7 Nations, who first started preaching as a 16-year school boy, now based in Chennai with his wife and two children, via email [mailduke@gmail.com](mailto:mailduke@gmail.com) or WhatsApp, +91-8886040605. On a selected Wednesday night over Zoom (9 PM to 10:15 PM IST), each month, Duke fields live questions of people who join from all over India and beyond. Ask him to send you the Zoom link, should you desire to join this session next time out, via WhatsApp.



# Standing Up for My Belief System

Fr Tom Mangattuthazhe

In the quiet corners of Assam, where the lush greenery meets the vibrant culture of its people, lies a tale of dedication, faith, and unwavering commitment. It is a tale woven through the corridors of schools, where knowledge blossoms and futures take shape. And in this tale, I find myself as both witness and participant, a humble servant in the grand tapestry of education and enlightenment.

My journey has taken me through the hallowed halls of Dokmoka Krist Jyoti School, Assumption School Chokihola, Holy Family School Japrajan, and besides

being an acting principal of Don Bosco School, Diphu, St. Joseph School Dolomora, Principal of St. Mary's School Diphu, Principal of Little Flower School Manja, Principal of Krist Jayanti School Dhansiri, Principal of St. Mary's School Daldali and many others scattered across the landscape of Assam. As a teacher, as an acting principal, as a principal—I have walked these paths with reverence and purpose, knowing that each step I take is a step towards shaping young minds and nurturing the seeds of wisdom within them.

But beyond the titles and the



roles, there lies a deeper truth that guides me — the truth of my faith, the truth of my calling. As a Catholic priest, I wear my cassock not just as a uniform but as a symbol of my commitment to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. It is a mantle of responsibility, a reminder of the sacred duty bestowed upon me to serve others with love, compassion, and humility.

In a world where divisiveness and discord seem to be on the rise, I am confronted with a choice—to stand idly by or to speak out, to conform to the status quo or to challenge it. And I choose the latter, not out of defiance, but out of a deep-rooted belief in the values that I hold dear. For I believe that true courage lies not in the absence of fear, but in the willingness to stand up for what is right, no matter the cost.

I have seen the statues of famous figures that adorn our government buildings, parks, and memorials —figures who have shaped the destiny of our nation

and left an indelible mark on history. And just as we honour and commemorate these individuals, so too do Christians honor and preserve the memory of the saints who have walked before us. They are beacons of light in a world shrouded in darkness, guiding us with their examples of faith, courage, and selflessness.

But amidst the noise and clamor of the world, I am reminded of the simple yet profound teachings Jesus Christ—to love one another, to treat others as we would like to be treated, to uphold the dignity and worth of every human being. And so, I stand resolute in my commitment to these values, ready to defend them with every fiber of my being

To my students, to their parents, to all who call Assam home—I urge you to embrace the sacredness of our constitution and the magnanimity of Christian works. For it is through these principles that we can build a society rooted in justice, equality,

and compassion.

And as I reflect on the countless lives that have passed through the doors of our schools, I am filled with a sense of gratitude and humility. For it is in the faces of these young minds that I see the hope and promise of a brighter future—a future built on the foundation of humanity, decency, and mutual respect.

So let us rise above the divisions that threaten to tear us apart. Let us stand together as one community, united in our shared

humanity and our common purpose. For only then can we truly safeguard the values that define us as a people, and only then can we fulfill the promise of a better tomorrow for generations to come.



**Fr. Tom Mangattuthazhe**  
*is the secretary for NEIRBC  
Commission for Ecumenism*

*We were buried therefore with  
him by baptism into death,  
in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by  
the glory of the Father, we too might walk  
in newness of life. For if we have been united  
with him in a death like his,  
we shall certainly be united with him  
in a resurrection like his.  
Romans 6:4-5*

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# Intercessory Prayer Points



March 2024

**1 FRIDAY** Thank God for the new month. Pray that you would accomplish many works for the extension of God's kingdom.

**2 SATURDAY** Pray that God would enable you to be confident to share the Gospel with others. Pray that God would open many opportunities to do so.

**3 SUNDAY** Pray for Pastors and leaders who are wrongfully charged for forceful conversion. Pray that God would hear the cry of His children and work on their behalf.

**4 MONDAY** Continue to pray for children who are writing board exam. Pray God would lead them and protect them and enable them to do their best.

**5 TUESDAY** Pray for God's protection over you and your family. Pray that like Joshua you also can say "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." May the Lord use you effectively and powerfully.

**6 WEDNESDAY** Continue to pray for EFI AIM magazine. Pray for resources, increased readership, and also pray that it will impact more people and strengthen their relationship with the Lord.

**7 THURSDAY** Pray for Christian lawyers in our country who are actively involved in the wellbeing of believers and their fundamental rights. Pray for courage as they give counsel or represent them in the courtrooms.

**8 FRIDAY** International Women's Day. Pray for women's safety in our country. Pray that they are treated with dignity and honor. Pray for confidence, equality, inner strength for the women around you.

**9 SATURDAY** Pray that every believer would trust God in the difficult seasons of life and hold fast to Him. Pray for comfort for those who are struggling in life.

**10 SUNDAY** Pray for hunger and



thirst for righteousness among the people of your state. Pray that God would fill their spiritual desire with His Words and His presence.

**11 MONDAY** Pray for the general election this year. Pray that God would have mercy on His people and bring a result that would bring glory to His name.

**12 TUESDAY** Pray for EFI Children at Risk (EFICAR). Pray that children who are at risk would be helped and restored both physically and spiritually.

**13 WEDNESDAY** Pray for religious liberty in our country. Pray that every individual would have the freedom to worship without fear. Pray for strength and God's comfort for those persecuted because of their faith.

**14 THURSDAY** Pray for the leaders of our nation. Pray that they would understand the needs of the people and sacrificially serve them. Pray also that they would uphold justice in all their dealings.

**15 FRIDAY** Let us pray for all the orphans in our country. May God hear their cries and envelop them with His unconditional love. May we know God's heart and support the cause of the orphans.

**16 SATURDAY** Pray for all the

Sunday School Teachers in your church that they may love the Word of God and pass it on to the children.

**17 SUNDAY** Pray that believers would spend more time in self-evaluation and reflection. Pray that there would be repentance and change of hearts during this Lent.

**18 MONDAY** Follow up Strategy Session of EFI Consultation. Pray for God's direction and leading as leaders meet and discuss the future ministry.

**19 TUESDAY** Pray for your city today that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would shine bright, and people may enjoy His abundant blessings. Pray that the presence of God would be felt by many.

**20 WEDNESDAY** Pray for safety and protection of our country. Pray for peaceful relationship with our neighbouring countries.

**21 THURSDAY** Pray for the elderly people in your neighbourhood today. Pray that each one of them would be provided and cared for. Pray that the people who provide and care for them will have a compassionate heart.

**22 FRIDAY** Continue to pray that God would heal our land and make it fruitful so that we will be a blessing to

people around us. Pray also that everyone including foreigners are safe in our land.

**23 SATURDAY** Pray for your Church as you prepare for Good Friday and Easter Sunday services. Pray that Church members would renew their faith and commitment to follow Christ faithfully.

**24 SUNDAY** Continue to pursue personal holiness and close relationship with the Lord. Pray that your life would be a good example of personal holiness.

**25 MONDAY** Pray that the Lord would give renewed strength and commitment to all the EFI staff and bless the programs they are conducting in different parts of the country.

**26 TUESDAY** Pray that all the Group members, Life members and Individual members of Evangelical Fellowship of India would glorify God through words and deeds.

**27 WEDNESDAY** Pray for people who are struggling with their faith. Pray that the good Lord would reveal

Himself to them at their level of understanding.

**28 THURSDAY** Pray for the emotional and physical strength of the children. Pray for safety and protection. Pray for diligence and hard work in studies. Pray that they would start the new session with joy and zeal.

**29 FRIDAY GOOD FRIDAY.** Pray that the message about Christ's substitutionary death would bring many to repentance and salvation. May God reveal Himself in such a way that many would accept Christ as their saviour and king.

**30 SATURDAY** Pray for calm and focus hearts for you and others as we wait for the Lord's resurrection day. May God's peace be with you and your family as you prepare to celebrate Easter Sunday.

**31 SUNDAY EASTER SUNDAY.** Hallelujah! Christ has risen. Thank God for raising Christ from the dead and giving us hope for eternal life with Him. Thank God accomplishing His salvation plan for humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ. All glory be unto Him!

*"Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"  
Psalm 46:10*

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Sd/- Mr. Vijayesh Lal  
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