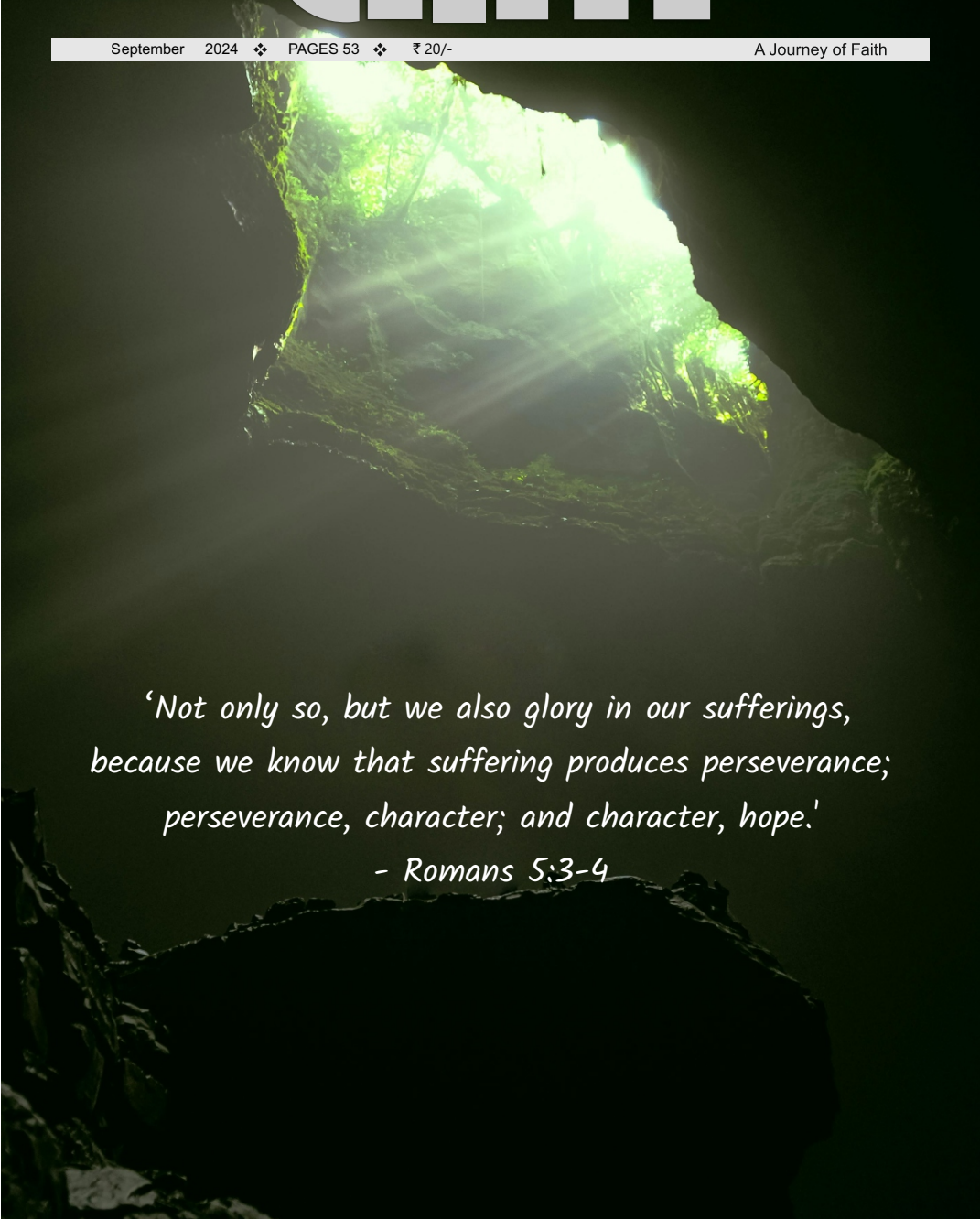


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A Journey of Faith



*'Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings,
because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
perseverance, character; and character, hope.'*

- Romans 5:3-4

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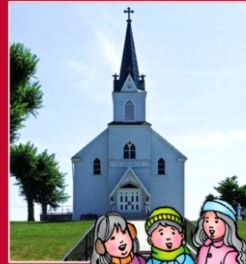


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Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

Hope in Hardship

In recent months, the Church in India has faced a torrent of trials that have tested the faith and resilience of believers. In regions like Chhattisgarh, Christians have been driven from their homes, their lands seized, and, in some cases, they have paid the ultimate price for their refusal to renounce their faith. In Uttar Pradesh and other states, the spectre of false accusations of forced conversions has cast a long shadow over Christian communities, making every conversion a matter of suspicion and hostility. These are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of

persecution that has left many wondering if there is hope in such hardship?

At the same time, the broader fabric of Indian society is also being strained by violence and injustice. The brutal rape and murder in Kolkata, the heinous child abuse case in Badlapur, and the recent assault on an elderly Muslim man by cow vigilantes in Maharashtra are chilling reminders of the violence that continues to plague our nation. These events paint a grim picture of a society wrestling with deep divisions and rampant injustices.

Yet, in the midst of these trials, the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:3-4 encourage us: "*We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*" It is easy to view these words as mere platitudes when faced with the stark reality of persecution and societal violence. But Paul's message is far from superficial. It speaks to the transformative power of suffering when it is met with faith.

The persecution faced by Christians in India today echoes the struggles of the early Church, which also endured severe trials. In those days, believers were not just surviving but thriving in their faith, even as they were oppressed. They understood, as we must, that suffering is not the end of the story. Rather, it is the crucible in which faith is tested and refined, producing perseverance, character, and ultimately, hope.

This hope is not a passive resignation to suffering but an active trust in the God who promises to be with us in the fire. As believers, we are called to respond to persecution and injustice not with fear or despair, but with the confident hope that comes from knowing that our God is sovereign and good. Our Lord Jesus Himself reminded His followers, "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

But how does this hope manifest in our lives? It begins with the recognition that, even in our darkest moments, God is at work, using our suffering to shape us into the image of Christ. This is the hope that sustains the persecuted Christians in Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh—their steadfastness in the face of adversity is a powerful testimony to the world. Their courage calls us to examine our own lives and to ask whether we are living with the same kind of hope.

Moreover, this hope should compel us to act. The challenges facing our nation demand a response from the Church—a response rooted in the Gospel's call to love our neighbours, seek justice, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). We cannot remain silent in the face of injustice, whether it be the persecution of our brothers and sisters in Christ, the violence against women, or the mistreatment of minorities. Our hope in Christ must translate into action, as we stand for truth, justice, and righteousness in a world that desperately needs it.

The trials we face—whether personal, communal, or societal—are not meaningless. They are opportunities for us to grow in our faith, to deepen our trust in God, and to bear witness to the hope that we have in Christ. As we navigate these difficult times, let us hold fast to the truth that our hope is not in this world but in the God who has overcome the world. And in that hope, let us find the strength to persevere, the courage to act, and the faith to endure until the day when God makes all things new.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal



*But as for me,
I watch in hope for the LORD,
I wait for God my Savior;
my God will hear me.
Micah 7:7*



A Future and a Hope

Rev. Dr. David Mende

Introduction

Let me begin this article by sharing a powerful devotional that I read a few months ago:

A 60-year-old hotel in Kansas is being renovated into apartments. A rusty ship that is docked in Philadelphia is being restored and may become a hotel or a museum. Hangar 61, an admired piece of architecture at the old Stapleton Airport in Colorado, is being transformed into a church. Each structure had a specific use that is no longer viable. Yet someone was able to see promise and a new purpose in each one.

If structures can find new life and

purpose, why not people? Think about these men in the Bible whose lives took an unexpected direction. There was Jacob, who wrestled with the angel of the Lord (Gen. 32); Moses, who talked to a burning bush (Ex. 3); Paul, who was temporarily blinded (Acts 9). Their stories were different, but all had a change of purpose when their encounter with God sent them down a new path.

We too may experience circumstances that change the course of our lives. But God reminds us of this: I loved you before you loved Me. I want to give you hope and a future. Give all your worries to Me because I care about you (1 John 4:19; Jer.

29:11; 1 Peter 5:7; John 10:10). As you cling to God's promises, ask Him to reveal new direction and purpose for your life.

Today, you may not feel very hopeful about your present situation. But if you place your life in God's hands, he can give you a future and a hope. That's what Jeremiah 29:11 promises us. Jeremiah is known as the "weeping prophet" because of his sorrow over God's message of judgment. He prophesied to the nation of Judah from the reign of Joash in 627 BC until sometime after the destruction of Judah in 586 BC. In Jeremiah 26:1-29:32, Jeremiah corrects several wrong notions. He corrects the belief that the temple's existence is God's approval of Judah (chapter 26), that Babylon will not be able to conquer Judah (chapter 27), that Babylon will cease being a super-power (chapter 28), and that the exile will end soon (chapter 29). In 29:11, God declares that his plans for the Jewish exiles are for their welfare, not evil and to give them a future and a hope.

We can learn two powerful and

comforting *truths* from this passage:

1. God has plans for our welfare (Jer. 29:11).

The people of Judah would go to exile to Babylon for their sins. But in verse 10, God promises to bring back the exiles to their homeland after 70 years. In Jeremiah 29:10, Yahweh says, "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place." The Lord will not abandon his people forever as promised in Deuteronomy 30:3-5. The Lord has not forgotten them. God is faithful to his promises. He cannot change his nature.

The Bible says that "if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). The Lord repeats the promise of 29:11 in a short form later in this book. In Jeremiah 31:17, Jeremiah writes, "There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country." Jeremiah 29:11 is one of the most amazing promises in the Bible.

The unsaved cannot claim this promise. This precious promise is for God's people.

However, unfortunately, some prosperity preachers use this verse to teach that God wants to materially prosper all his people. Like today's prosperity preachers, some prophets during Jeremiah's time said that Judah will not go into exile (v. 8). Beware of people who only prophesy good things to you. Life is tough. We will have to face some suffering on this earth. Also, we must remember that God disciplines his people when they sin. Sometimes, we don't know what God has planned for us, but He knows all his plans. God declares that his plans for the Jewish exiles are for their welfare, not evil. God has plans for our welfare.

Here, the Hebrew word for "welfare" is *shalom*. The word *shalom* has a rich meaning.

It is not merely the absence of war, conflict, or trouble. It speaks of positive blessings, particularly the blessing of a right relationship with God (e.g., Num. 6:24–26; cf.

Ps. 29:11; Hag. 2:9). *Shalom* means enjoyment of everything good — wholeness, completeness, well-being, soundness, safety, prosperity, health, harmony, and success. It could refer to external peace between two entities such as two individuals or nations or internal peace within an individual. *Shalom* is the way things ought to be. It conveys that "all is well" with a person who has a right relationship with God. God thinks of our *shalom*/welfare.

Psalm 40:5 says, "You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told." The Creator of this universe thinks about us. In Psalm 139:17-18, the psalmist writes, "How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

Here, the psalmist says that we cannot count God's thoughts about us."

As parents, we make plans for our children's future and security. Some parents take medical insurance, make some financial plans, and even take life insurance for the welfare of their children. We plan for their education and future careers. God plans for our welfare like a father. In fact, God plans for our welfare better than our parents. He doesn't want evil or calamity to come upon us. The Jewish exiles probably felt that God was against them. They were experiencing his bitter punishment. They probably thought that the Lord abandoned them. But God reminds them that he has always been for them. He wanted their welfare. God is for us! But we need to make sure that we continue to abide in him. God has plans for our welfare.

2. God wants to give us a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

The phrase "a future and a hope" could be translated as "an end and a hope," which could mean "a hopeful end." God promises the Jewish exiles a future and a hope. They were punished for their sins. But God would restore them in due time. Even when God

disciplines us for our sins, it is for our good. The Bible says that God disciplines the one he loves (Heb. 12:6). Our God is the God of restoration. God wants to give even us a future and a hope.

Recently, I read Timothy Keller's post. It said, "Christianity doesn't just give you consolation for the life you lost. It gives you hope for the life that is to come." If God plans our future and guides us in our journey, we will have a wonderful future and a hope. What a comforting thought to know that God knows the plans he has for us and that he is working in our lives to give us a future and a hope. He is the best person to plan our future. These truths must fill us with hope as we face difficult circumstances.

All this doesn't mean that we will never experience suffering or pain in the future. It doesn't mean that we will never suffer a sickness or face a financial need. But it does mean that God will use those experiences too for our good and his glory (Rom. 8:28). As long as we live on this earth, we will continue to face trials. But because of what Jesus did on the

cross, we have a great future and a hope. One day, heaven will come down to this earth and we will be with the Lord forever. We look forward to that glorious future! May your kingdom fully come to this earth, Lord! God wants to give us a future and a hope.

Conclusion

Here's the main message of this article: **Surrender yourself to the Lord so that he can give you a future and a hope.**

If you have still not given your life to Jesus, there is no future or hope for you. In fact, you have a dreadful future for all eternity. I urge you to repent of your sins and receive Jesus into your life as your Lord and Savior. Receive Jesus and receive a future and a hope.

We don't know what's in store for us in the future. But if you take a blank piece of paper, sign it, and give it to the Lord as an act of surrender, he will write your story. I want to encourage you to completely surrender your life to the Lord today. If you do so, he will plan for your welfare and give you a future and a hope!



Rev. Dr. David Mende

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He is married to Sis. Susan Mende, who is also actively serving the Lord. They are blessed with a daughter, Karis Ruth. Dr. Mende can be reached at +91 9848004094 and davemende@gmail.com.



HOPE

Rev. Hans Raj Jain

Hope is awesome. It is the lifeblood of the world that exists around us. It is the growth hormone for every child, youth, professional of every hue and size. Without hope, our personalities would be dwarfed or destroyed altogether. Hope is the heartbeat of every relationship, especially of the young who are builders looking for a lifelong relationship at school, college, work and in their living environment. A 'Hopeless' life is a dead life!

My neighbour, a well-known gynaecologist, is no different when it comes to the matter of hope. In fact, 'hope' is a must for her in her profession and at home

too, especially in her current context, with her "Bhabhi and Bhaiya". Her Bhabhi has a failing liver! They hope to find a donor's liver soon. It is this hope that has kept her, her Brother and sister-in-law going for almost a year.

Hope is a life-line. Every life survives because of it.

What about love, one may ask?

Love is a such an emotive term used so widely and loosely too. We believe that while hope is the lifeblood for all relationships, love is its therapeutic arm. Faith, on the other hand, is its connecting network system of nerves.

Is this Biblical? Is use of parables, metaphors and a story narrative, biblical?

Let's be presumptuous and imagine that we can directly ask St. Paul about the above questions. The impression I get from my reading of St. Paul from his writings is in the affirmative. Wasn't it St. Paul who said that Love is the greatest between the three candidates that influence us human relationships: faith hope and love? (1 Cor 13:13). But then who is in a contest here?

The issue here isn't about greatness or humility. Nor is it about combative competition to prove their popularity. It is, however, about their mutuality, complementarity, and gelling together. Faith, Hope, and Love are like poster boys. Together, they promote life. Even today!

This is not to say that each of them has no persona of their own. Their individual persona is incredible. Their individual characteristics are steeped in integrity, morality, ethics, truth, thus building a solid foundation of credibility. Here we are in danger

of digression. So sadly, we must choose to focus our thoughts on one of the three, namely, HOPE!

It is also incumbent upon us to admit that we are doing it in the context of the complexity of our human relationships: Marriage, Family and Friendship.

In this context, the very first appearance of HOPE we notice is at Eden. At Eden, Adam and Eve had chosen to doubt and disobey by accepting to accept Satan's beguiling lies against their Father God's (Lk 3:38) instructions. The Father God, having disciplined Adam and Eve, does not leave them judged and rejected. He goes on to find a remedy and healing for the consequences through the first prophecy of a future 'hope'. That hope offered by Eve's son would bring an end, forever, for her children from satanic controlled and driven way of life. These are the exact words spoken by the Father God recorded for us: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen 3:15 cf Is 7: 14).

This is the character of HOPE - it offers restoration and a future. In closing a word of caution. Perhaps an unnecessary nicety? While we consider HOPE and all that it entails or could entail, the lack of focus on the two inseparable twins (faith and love) is not to diminish their importance. Neither do we question their reciprocity and worthiness as being one against another. They are an inseparable trinity and we need them all. Yet, we also need to be cautious about our approach in handling these subjects. One more element of caution is a necessity to add here. We need to guard ourselves against the flip side of HOPE. Despondency.

Despondency is a powerful enemy, who like a blood sucking leech, easily latches on to the individual before they even know it has latched on. Soon, it grows to a proportion from where, to dislodge it becomes extremely difficult. But not impossible. Depression, despair and hopelessness are a more familiar synonym that despondence goes by and is most common a term in use by people.

It would be appropriate to know these individuals (Hope and Despondence) as intimately as possible. Abraham is a wonderful example of both, hope and despondency. We find these at play while Abraham is marching up the hill with his son Isaac. God had asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac whom Abraham loved with all his heart, soul and strength.

Interestingly, in the narrative, we find that it takes the son to point to the absence of an animal for the sacrifice. Abraham's faith statement said, "God will provide." Did God provide? Of course, God did provide BUT not until the entire process of putting Isaac on the wood and the raising of the knife to cut him that God intervened and then provided. There were no indications that a ram was caught in the bush prior to the event. If the ram was caught and kept in the bush beforehand, as some critic would tell us, then know that every creature worth its life, would cry for help. This ram did no such thing until after God had stopped Abraham. Abraham's trust and outworking of his hope left no room for doubt and despondency. Faith, Hope's

cousin, strengthened their belief and trust in God's faithfulness. The outcome was that they returned to their comrades at the foot of the hill and travelled home stronger and more assured than ever in their God! Life, ahead, together with God, was going to be an unimaginable and 'thrilled-filled' journey. Abraham and Issac were going to experience it together, as a father and the son.

That, for every Christian, is the Good News for 2019 - Our God, who is God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, & Jesus is our God of hope, healing, and restoration. He never leaves us nor fails to

time His supply until the time when it proves our relationship of trust, faith and HOPE in Who He is: Our Sovereign Lord and God!

Thank you for joining us on this journey of 'HOPE with God'!!



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I am a professional Theological/gospel literature translator, translating books from English to Hindi at reasonable rates. If anybody needs my services, please get in touch.

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HOPE AND A FUTURE

Rev. Richard Masih

All of us live in hope. We hope that one day we will complete our studies, get a good job, get married to a lovely person, have a family of our own, own a bungalow and a car, and go abroad, and so on. We all want a bright and a better future. Sometimes, our hopes are realized. Other times, they are dashed to pieces. Sometimes, our future seems to be bright. Other times, it seems very dark. We lose all hope of any future. Such experiences are very, very painful and frustrating.

If you are one of those who have lost all their hopes and have no hope of future, I have good news for you. I am not trying to give you

false hope in order to get something from your pocket. No, I am sincere and selfless. I want to pass on to you God's promise given in the Bible, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, and plans to give you hope and a future (1)." Trust this promise of God and you will find it true.

Let me illustrate from my own life. I am Richard Masih. I was born in a Christian home. My father passed away before my birth. There were two sisters born before me. But they too passed away in their infancy. I was dying too. But my mother prayed to God, "You have taken away my husband and my two children.

You are free to take this one also. But if you spare his life, he will serve you all his life." My life was spared in God's goodness, grace and mercy. My mother was a midwife in govt. hospital. She was transferred to different towns and villages. I tagged along with her.

Since I was alone in the family, I was very self-centered, and introvert. I was given to day-dreaming. I lived in my own cocoon. I was weak in studies and had no ambition in life. I was sickly and given to dark thinking. I thought if I died my mother would become a beggar and if she died, I would have to wash dishes in someone else's home. But God never allowed either of the two to happen.

I did not fist fight with fellow boys or cheat in the exam. I did not use abusive language or indulge in antisocial activities. I had my own weaknesses but saw nothing wrong in them. From all outward expressions, I was a good boy, but I did not know God personally. I went to Church but never read my Bible or prayed to God.

Once, a Christian preacher came to my town. He made a team of a few people. They went to different places preaching the good news of Lord Jesus Christ. They said how they were drunkards, gamblers, adulterers, etc. and how Jesus saved them and delivered them. I accompanied them whenever I was free from my studies. One day, the leader of the group asked me to give my testimony. I said, "I am not a sinner like these fellows. They have been sinister sinners. I have never been. Jesus has saved them and forgiven them. He has done nothing for me."

The leader was surprised. Later, he took me to a student camp in Ranikhet, now in Uttaranchal. It was the year 1965. There for the first time I understood that in order to be a sinner I did not have to sin. I was a born sinner. I sinned because I had the nature of a sinner. A dog is a dog not because he barks but he barks because he is a dog. We are sinners not because we sin. But, we sin because we are sinners. From the very childhood, we sin without any teaching and training

on how to sin. One of the writers of the Bible says, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (2). God had observed how every inclination of the thoughts of a man's heart was only evil all the time" (3). Later, he had said, "...every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood" (4). All of us are born in sin with a sinful nature and inclination. It's there even at our birth in the seed form. Later, it grows to its full stature.

In that camp, I heard that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (5). I learned that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life" (6). I came to know that "he who has the Son (Lord Jesus Christ) has life; he who does not have the Son (Lord Jesus Christ) does not have life" (7). I came to know that we all have gone astray from God, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" (8). Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost (9). He did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (10). He said, "I am the bread of life. He

who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (11). "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (12). "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies..." (13). "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (14).

The Bible also says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by whom we must be saved" (15). In that camp, I also read from the Bible, "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" (16). I was told to repent for my sins; confess them to God, ask his forgiveness and forsake them. I was also told to believe in Lord Jesus Christ since he paid the penalty for my sins through his death on the Cross. He rose again from the dead to prove that his sacrificial death had been accepted by God. I did repent for

my sins and believed on Lord Jesus Christ. I experienced God's forgiveness, cleansing and renewal resulting in peace, joy and God's presence.

My life was transformed. I bought a Bible and began to read it and pray to God. He spoke to me through the pages of the Bible. When I was full of anxiety, he supported and comforted me, "When I said, 'my foot is slipping, your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul'" (17). At times, I was discouraged and wondered what is happening in my life. I wondered why God is allowing this or that in my life! I used to get sick often. I failed in the exam because of my negligence. God comforted me through his word, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand" (18). "Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God" (19).

I am sharing all these to show

how God has been with me in all my ups and downs. He can be the same to you in your situation. One day, when I was sad at heart, he said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (20). In that camp I had heard that those who honor God to them God honors (21). I was just a teenager then. I decided that I too will honor God by giving him the first place in my life. I decided to read his word, the Bible, every morning and pray to him. I decided to seek his will in everything and do it. I have not been always faithful to him. But let me tell you, he has never gone back on his word. I studied in a village in Hindi medium, sitting on a mat. I had no one to help me come up in life. I only had my mother and limited resources. But God not only saved me but also called me to serve him in the preaching of his word, the Bible. His word is the word of life. I have gone all over the country preaching the good news of Lord Jesus Christ and teaching the word of God. He has taken me to 17-18 countries of the world as well.

What he has done for me, he can

do for any one whose heart is fully committed to him. You are not hidden from his all-seeing eyes. He is watching over you to help you, provided your heart is fully committed to him. "...the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" (22). There is no partiality or favoritism with him. His will is different for each one but that is the best for anyone.

I was married in 1978. We had no children. We both served the Lord in the preaching of his word. My wife suffered from liver cancer and passed away in 2004. I should have been devastated. But the peace of God is ruling my heart and mind (23). The joy of the LORD is my strength (24). I am never alone. He has hemmed me in from every side (25). He is always with me. He meets and provides my every need (26). "The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing" (27).

Dear friend, "Now, is the day of salvation" (28). Now, you can receive forgiveness of and

cleansing from your sins. Now, you can be saved from the just wrath of God. Now, you can become a child of God. Now, your name can be written in the book of life. Now, you can be made into a new creation. Now, you can have hope and a future. First, repent from your sins, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (29). Confess and forsake your sins. Ask God to forgive you in the name of Jesus and to cleanse you from all your sins. He is faithful. He will do so, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (30).

Second, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household" (31). He gave his life as an atoning sacrifice for you. He rose again on the third day from the dead. He is the living Savior. There is no other name given by which we must be saved (32).

Third, receive Lord Jesus Christ in your heart and life (32). He is

knocking at the door of your heart (33). He wants to come in and live with you forever. Those who receive him to them he gives them the right to become the children of God (34). Receive him as the only Lord and Savior of your life. Love and serve him. Trust and obey him. Worship and witness him. You will have God's presence in your life and work. You will have joy and peace, hope and a future. Pray this prayer, *"I repent from my sins and believe in Lord Jesus Christ. Please forgive me and make me your child. Please give me the joy of your salvation. Thank you, Lord Jesus for dying for me on the cross. You are the risen savior. I put my trust in you alone. From this day on you alone will be the Lord and Savior of my life. Amen (May it be so)"!*



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Bible references: 1. Jer.29:11; 2. Ps.51:5; 3. Rom.3:23; 4. Gen.6:5; 5. Gen.8:21 6. Rom.6:23; 7. 1Jn.5:12; 8. Isa.53:6; 9. Lk.19:10; 10. Mk.10:45; 11. Jn.6:35; 12. Jn.8:12; 13. Jn.11:25; 14. Jn.14:6; 15. Acts 4:12; 16. Jn.3:16; 17. Ps.94:18, 19; 18. Jn.13:7; 19. Is.50:10; 20. Heb.13:5; 21. 1Sam.2:30; 22. 2Chr.16:9; 23. Col.3:15; 24. Neh.8:10; 25. Ps.139:5; 26. Phil.4:19; 27. Ps.34:10; 28. 2Cor.6:2; 29. Acts 2:38; 30. 1Jn.1:9; 31. Acts 16:31; 32. Acts 4:12; 33. Rev.3:30; 34. Jn.1:12.

*"There is surely a future hope for you,
and your hope will not be cut off."
Proverbs 23:18*



Hope of the Ages

Ms. Stuti Farmer

Hope is a word which sounds very powerful but growing up I have realized that it would not make any sense unless I put that hope into something powerful. The moment I wake up from my bed each day, before stepping down I look to God in prayer, hoping that the day goes as I have planned. The fact which literally leaves me awestruck is that, just like me, every other person in every corner of the world when wakes up in the morning has an anticipation for his desires, he too hopes, but I wonder in what?

People around us, put their hopes into bank balances and fortunes, into images sculptured by their own hands, into rituals or traditions of others or

themselves, into sorcery and every sort of misconception. The world is living in a hope which is actually leading them into utter hopelessness.

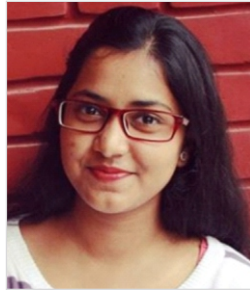
They may have intimidating personalities or breathtaking social media accounts but deep down they have no idea where their life is headed to, whether they live today or die tomorrow. 1 Peter -1: 3 tells us that God has given us a new birth, referring to spiritual birth, when we are adopted into God's family. Confession of our sins and believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ offers us this beautiful hope. Being born again is the most beautiful gift by God to us, it gives

us hope for an eternal life with Him, it offers us a hope beyond the grave.

When on this earth, each day for us may be filled with disappointments and heartaches, be it your school, career, college, workplace, family or relationships. So why not wake up each day, challenging those challenges like a warrior? Proudly facing every difficulty that comes in our way, knowing that God has different plans than those we desire as Jeremiah 29: 11 says He has plans to prosper us and not to harm us.

We're called into this Living hope. We are called to live each morning, breathing in His amazing love and mercy, and to put our hopes in Jesus, who was, is and will be the Hope of all the Ages. The hand of God which laid the foundations of the earth, the

same hand which measures the seas, the same hand which weighs the mountains on scales, the same hand which raises people to life, the same hand which was pierced for our transgressions, the same hand which holds the world is the same hand which holds you and me, because He has loved you and me with an everlasting love. Never stop ceasing to pray under any circumstances because when you're up to nothing, God is always up to something.



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*Be joyful in hope,
patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
Romans 12:12*



MISSIONARY SPIRIT, VISION AND NEW WINE

Rev. Kuruville Chandy

For the Church in India, the "missionary era" came to an end years ago. The Church having come of age, nationals took over the controls within the institutional structures of the Church. The process was further speeded up by the Government's refusal of visas to new missionaries, though such discrimination is against the touted constitutional secularism of India. While the period of white missionaries came to an end, the institutions they founded are still with us. In the past, these institutions were identified by the general public as "mission schools," "mission colleges" and "mission hospitals." Even when the white personnel have long since departed from some institutions, that identification of being mission institutions has

lingered on. That is not only a matter of identity. It is indicative of the expectations of the general population regarding our institutions. For those yearnings of our people, is there a fulfilment? Do our institutions still retain the missionary character?

Missionary Spirit

To answer those questions, we must first determine what it was that made them mission institutions once. The fact that a school or college was founded or manned by a white person was not in itself what made an institution a mission institution. The white presence had nothing to do with it for the obvious reason that not all situations with a white presence are mission institutions. These institutions were characterised by what has been

called a "missionary spirit" and it was this spirit that made them mission institutions.

The missionary spirit was manifested firstly in the missionary's sense of being a servant of Jesus Christ. It was no whim or fancy that he or she served. He/she had a mandate from the Lord: that of discipling nations (Matt. 28 : 19-20). All his/her activity was thus a case of engaging in the mission of Christ. He/she was an avowed servant of Jesus, first and last. This notion of servanthood to the Lord Jesus is largely missing among the present-day personnel of our institutions.

Secondly, the missionary spirit was one of giving. This spirit is essential to all mission. It began with God. He "so loved the world that He gave" (John 3: 16). Christian mission is simply an extension of that movement that originated in God. When Jesus commissioned His disciples, He said to them, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8). So, the missionary gave. He did that through his service institutions teaching the untaught, healing the sick, and preaching the Gospel of Christ to the unenlightened.

With the missionary era closed, a question that the Church in India must face is whether mission institutions of learning and healing can continue as such. If the matter is simply to assess whether the institutional machinery is capable of functioning, the answer is "yes," because it is not essential that there should be a white presence. It is necessary though to possess the spirit that I have been describing as a "missionary spirit." Thus, while mission institutions are physically capable of continuing as such, the fact that they do not may be attributed to a loss of the missionary spirit. Churchmen need to probe the causes of the erosion of this spirit.

Institutionalisation of Vision

Missionaries were visionaries. They dreamed of establishing Christ's Kingdom. In order to give shape and tangibility to their vision, they institutionalised their vision. The service institutions they established gave their vision substance. They needed the institutions for this purpose, but the institutionalisation of vision gives rise to a problem—the institutionalisation itself.

Jesus referred to the problem of institutionalisation when He

talked of new wine and wineskins. He said, "Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Matt. 9:17). The wine of that time was just grape juice that was allowed to ferment. During fermentation there is formation of gases. Since old wineskins would lack elasticity, they would not be able to expand to accommodate the gas formed during fermentation. While old wineskins are unsuitable for storage of new wine, it needs to be noted however, that wine did need wineskins. Similarly, visions need to be channelled through the structures of institutions. However, just as the importance of wineskins is derived from the wine they contained and not found in themselves, institutions derive their importance from the visions that started them.

Another observation that can be made about grape juice is that when there is no more grape sugar left, no more fermentation takes place. It is then old wine. The winemaking of ancient times was not such as to enable the wine to be kept indefinitely, as it

would go bad. Thus, the wine had to be consumed before that happened. That meant that wineskins always outlasted the wine. Since wine itself was consumable, there was a need to constantly go in for new wine and consequently, new wineskins for the new wine. The Church too needs to get a fresh supply of new wine from the Divine Winemaker.

Newness in Christ

God is the maker of new wine. The God of the Bible is the God of newness. He gives His people a new song to sing (Psa. 40:3). He declares the arrival of the new (Isa. 42:9); in fact, He initiates what is new (Isa. 43:19) recreating a completely new heaven and new earth (Isa. 65:17). He renews His people giving them new hearts and endowing them with a new spirit (Eze. 11:19). This newness is found in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 17) who opened a "new and living way" for people to enter into fellowship with God (Heb. 10:20). While we are already new creatures in Christ, we still look for a new heaven and a new earth (2 Pet. 3:13) because our hope is in the God who says, "Behold I make all thing new!" (Rev. 21:5). Jesus is the new wine of the Gospel. It is on His blood that the New Covenant is founded (Matt.

26:28). There is no other new wine than Jesus (cf Gal. 1:6-9). So, when we say that the Church needs a fresh supply of new wine, she should not forget that for her there are not many new wines, but only one. "The Church could present Christ, not an institution or a theology or a programme. The Church could present Jesus, not an antiquated and adulterated Christianity. But, of course, it doesn't. It tries to brew a new wine instead of scrapping the old wineskins" (Howard Snyder, *The Problem Of Wineskins*, Intervarsity Press, Illinois, USA 1975, p. 22).

The trouble with many people is that there is a tendency to cling to the old because of its familiarity, and to try to pour the new into old moulds. "Every age knows the temptation to forget that the Gospel is ever new. We try to contain the new wine of the Gospel in old wineskins—outmoded traditions, obsolete philosophies, creaking institutions, old habits. But with time the old wineskins begin to bind the Gospel. Then they must burst, and the power of the Gospel pour forth once more. Many times, this has happened in the history of the Church. Human nature wants to conserve, but the

divine nature is to renew. It seems almost a law that things initially created to aid the Gospel eventually become obstacles—old wineskins. Then God has to destroy or abandon them so that the Gospel wine can renew men's world once again" (Snyder, *op cit.*, pp.15-16).

The problem then with our institutional wineskins is that the vision gets institutionalised. It becomes old. With time, while ritual observances remain, the significance is lost sight of. There is a law about visions that has been ignored: they cannot be transferred. A person must have his or her own vision. No one can carry on work on another person's vision. That is what has been happening in mission institutions that encapsulate a vision of some long ago visionary. But it cannot be done. There is biblical evidence to prove that vision cannot be transferred. Peter had a vision that enabled him to transcend cultural barriers (Acts 10:11-16). He tried to transfer his vision to Jewish Christians (Acts 11:2-3), but sacred history records that years later the first Church Council met to struggle with Judaising tendencies (Acts 15:5) and Paul had occasion to emphasise that

"in Christ there is no Jew nor Greek, no slave nor free, no male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Ever since, the Church has tried to echo that and say there is no male nor female, no barbarian nor sophisticate, no white nor black, but somewhere along the line the Church forgot that the determining factor is the state of being "in Christ." The modern Church has wanted to appear theologically sophisticated and therefore refuses to admit the existence of a category of persons who are "in Christ" because such an admission also infers that there is another category of persons who are "not in Christ." Only those who do not wish to be sophisticated, would say like Sadhu Sundar Singh that he has known men and women who can be classified as "with and without Christ" (the title of one of the Sadhu's books). Recognising such distinctions is of the essence.

Regaining Vision

It is because vision cannot be transferred that it is lost so often, and brings in a distortion in the character of our institutions. There was once a Pharaoh who knew Joseph to be a wise man who served Egypt well. During his time, the Israelites were free, and

they prospered. But there came a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph and then the Israelites began to experience enslavement, abuse and harassment (Ex. 1:8-11). That still happens whenever the original vision is lost. Once there was a missionary spirit in our institutions and as people lose that spirit that looked to Jesus for inspiration and direction, our institutions become places of bondage where there are power mongers who are bent on hurting people for there are new Pharaohs among us.

In the *King James Version* of the Bible, Proverbs 29:18 reads, "Where there is no vision the people perish." That is an incorrect translation. In place of the word "perish", there should be the words, "break loose" (*New English Bible*) or "cast off restraint" (*Revised Standard Version* and *New International Version*). Such a breaking loose happened at the foot of Mount Sinai. While Moses was up on the Mount, the people made themselves a golden calf, "broke loose" (Ex. 32:7-8) and had an orgy (v.6). Moses had contact with God, but they themselves had contact only with Moses and, with him gone, they were cast

adrift. They had no personal encounter with God to hold them. Without a fresh vision, our mission institutions will break loose. Even though the translation is an incorrect one, the *King James version* is still correct in that the end product of a loss of vision is perishing. Without vision, our mission institutions will cease to be mission institutions.

The question is, where can we go for fresh vision? Amos spoke of a time of famine of hearing God's Word (8: 11-12) because people had been rejecting God's Word (7: 16). God closed down transmission of the revelation because it was rejected. Today's loss of vision is similarly due to the negligence and rejection of the revealed Word of God. There are those who want none of God's revelation like the Israelites who wished to have prophets who would tickle their ears, titillate their senses and say to them that there was no need to change themselves and that they could keep on being the way they were. "They say to the seers, 'See no more visions!' and to the prophets, 'Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path and stop confronting us

with the Holy One of Israel!" (Isa. 30: 10-11). Prophet after prophet was told to change their Word from the Lord or shut up (1 Chron. 18:7-27; Jer. 5:31; 11:21; Amos 2:12; 7:12-13; Micah 2:6). In fact, even after there had been a famine of God's revelation through His prophets for some five hundred years, they still questioned Jesus about what human authorisation He had to say and do what He did (Matt. 21:23) and commanded His apostles to stop preaching in Jesus' name (Acts 4:17; 5:28). Yet we are more fortunate than the Israelites. Though we have suffered a loss of vision, it is not because God has stopped communicating. As Elizabeth Barrett Browning says, "Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush aflame with God, but only those who see take off their shoes. The rest sit around it and pluck blackberries." That is true. Stephen saw heaven opened and Jesus at God's right hand, but others stoned him for his vision. On the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, Saul (later known as Paul) saw Jesus in a flash of light. He fell to the ground while his companions simply stood around. Jesus Himself, toward the end of His time on earth, prayed, "Father

glorify Thy name," and God said, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." Others stood around and said, "It was only thunder" (John 12:27-29).

Our loss of vision is due entirely to the fact that we have our spiritual eyes closed while "the lusts of the flesh and of the roving eye" (1 John 2:16) have diverted us from giving in the missionary way. We now exist only for profit. We close down our village schools and stop doing charity in our mission hospitals because such activity is not financially viable. We have allowed the tempting sounds and dazzling sights of the alluring world of commerce to cloud our vision. As for God, His vision exists. His Word is there. The question is who has eyes to see and ears to hear? "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts

and turn, and I would heal them'" (Matt. 13:13-15).

The vision that caught missionaries still exists. Only it cannot be caught from missionaries for visions are not transferable. There is a need to have one's own vision of Jesus, without which men and women in power have a tendency to become abusive Pharaohs. When we catch the vision for ourselves, the vitality of new life will be restored to our institutions. The heady new wine of our visions might break up our age-old institutions, introducing new forms and methods, but then wineskins are disposable and replaceable. The important thing is to get some new wine from the Divine Winemaker.



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The God of all Grace

(1 Peter 5:10)

Mr. Chacko Thomas

Helpful quotations on Grace:

A. W. Tozer, in his book "The Knowledge of the Holy" writes, "As mercy is God's goodness confronting human misery and guilt, so grace is His goodness directed toward human debt and demerit. ... We must keep in mind that the grace of God is infinite and eternal. And it had no beginning, so it can have no end, and being the attribute of God, it is as boundless as infinitude."

Roy Hession in "Good News for Bad People" writes:

"Under the law with its ten-fold lash, Learning, alas, how true, That the more I tried, the sooner I died, While the law cried, You! You! You!

"Hopelessly still I did the battle

rage, O, wretched man, my cry!
And deliverance I sought, by
some penance bought, While my
heart cried, !!! !!

"Then came a day when my
struggling ceased, And,
trembling in every limb, At the foot
of the tree, where One died for
me, My heart cried, Him! Him!
Him!"

"Emancipated? Then live like it!"
Charles Swindoll, in his book
"Grace Awakening".

Introduction:

"Grace" is more often on our lips, as believers, than any other attribute of God. At mealtimes, "we say grace" for our food, thankful for God's gracious provisions. "Grace through faith"

was one of Apostle Paul's main messages in Romans and Ephesians.

The Apostle Peter knew a thing or two about "God of all grace" when he wrote, "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, ... will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." 1 Peter 5:10.

Apostle John was conscious of God's grace as he opened his Gospel, calling on the world to believe in "God's only begotten Son". John writes: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." John 1:14, 16.

It was a privilege to read up several authors on this attribute of God for this article. Able men of God had expressing it better than I could ever do. I hope that you would not mind me quoting three of them; quoting even more generously than I normally do. It also gives me an outlet to my reading. Some who may not have access to these books may appreciate it, I pray.

The Grace Awakening:

What impact can God's grace have upon us? Charles (Chuck) Swindoll's book "The Grace Awakening" impacted George Verwer in a huge way in the early 1990s. The book became one of the main books he pushed ever since in his meetings, wherever in the world he was preaching. He seldom took a meeting without substantial display of books for people to take home after the meeting. He even supplied plastic bags for people to carry away books.

According to Vera Zabramski, George's PA for 43 years (a one-year commitment, renewed annually till George passed away in April 2023) says, "it made him an easier man to work with. More than ten thousand copies of the book had been distributed through the various OM outlets internationally, including the OM Ships".

George Verwer later wrote a booklet entitled "Grace Awakened Leadership". I can assure you that "he practiced what he preached" while upholding excellence in all areas of leadership ministry. He maintained a high degree of

accountability before God and man.

Swindoll, introducing "The Grace Awakening" writes, "Yes, it is 'God's unmerited favor to lost sinners', but did anyone tell you how grace can change you? Or how it can revolutionise the way you live?"

"Grace can give you freedom. Freedom to be creative, spontaneous. Freedom to think outside the box.

"Grace can make you want to know God, to be close to Him. Grace can cure your fears, improve your outlook, help you look at life through the lens of joy rather than the fog of pessimism.

"Grace can strengthen your relationships, giving you freedom to be yourself – and freedom to let others be themselves – without feeling a need to judge, control, or manipulate one another.

"And yes, Grace is God's incredible gift to each of us that shows His love daily in overflowing measures, giving us reason for hope and joy.

"For the growing number of people who feel that there should

be something more to their walk with God than the sometimes-grim-face of religion, "*The Grace Awakening*" offers a glorious alternative: the truth that sets us free."

Don't you think this is one of the greatest needs in Indian Christianity? Does grace characterise our Christianity?

The Knowledge of the Holy:

An author, whose books George Verwer pushed the most around world is A. W. Tozer. And one of his titles that I had often gone back to is "The Knowledge of the Holy", a book about God's attributes. It was written for people who do not have time to "wade through hundreds of pages of heavy religious matter requiring sustained concentration".

Below are some key points that caught my attention, besides the two I quoted above: "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving.

"Grace takes its rise far back in the heart of God, in the awful and incomprehensible abyss of His holy being but the channel through which it flows out to men

is Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. [Eph. 1:5-7; John 1:17]

"The Old Testament is indeed a book of Law, but not of law only. Before the great flood Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" [Gen. 6:8] and after the law was given God said to Moses, 'Thou hast found grace in my sight.' [Ex. 33:17]. And how could it be otherwise? God will always be Himself, and grace is an attribute of His holy being.

"Had the Old Testament times been times of stern, unbending law alone ... There could have been no Abraham, the friend of God; David, a man after God's own heart; no Samuel, no Isaiah, no Daniel. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews would stand dark and tenantless. God made sainthood possible in the Old Testament days just as it does today.

"Grace indeed came by Jesus Christ, but it did not wait for His birth in the manger or His death on the cross before it became operative. Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

"The first man in human history to be reinstated in the fellowship of God came through faith in Christ. In olden times, men looked

forward to Christ's redeeming work; in later times, they gaze back upon it, but always they came, and they came by grace, through faith.

"Instead of straining to comprehend this as a theological truth, it would be better and simpler to compare God's grace to our need. We can never know the enormity of our sin, neither is it necessary that we should. What we can know is that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," [Ro.5:20].

"To 'abound' in sin: that is the worst and most we could or can do. The word *abound* defines the limit of our finite abilities; and although we feel our iniquities rise over us like a mountain, the mountain, nevertheless, has definable boundaries: it is so large, so high, it weighs only this certain amount and no more. But who shall define the limitless grace of God? Its "much more" plunges our thoughts into infinitude and confounds them there. All thanks be to God for grace abounding.

"We who feel ourselves alienated from the fellowship of God can now raise our discouraged heads and look up. Through the virtues

Christ's atoning death, the cause of our banishment has been removed. We may return as the Prodigal returned and be welcome. As we approach the garden, our home before the Fall, the flaming sword is withdrawn. The keepers of the tree of life stand aside when they see a son of grace approaching." [taken from "The knowledge of the Holy" by A.W. Tozer]

Conclusion

If you have read this far, you deserve a "thank you" from me. Tozer quotes explained to us about God's amazing grace. The Swindoll quotes pointed us the way of applying grace in our social life, church life as well as in our personal lives.

I pray that you are not a grace killer; a legalistic pharisee as I was before grace began to invade my life. Let us err on the side of love and grace than on the side of tradition and culture. Let 1st Corinthian 13, Love be our motive for life.

I still remember George Miley, the Director of Logos, asking me, "What do you know about grace?". He saw that I was a hard man. This was in around 1973,

long before Swindoll's book arrived at Christian book shops. He had himself been very gracious to me since we met back in 1966. I knew what he meant by that question, and it changed the course of my life and leadership.

Does grace have a supreme role in your relationships; as a pastor, a parent, a colleague, as a Christian?" Could Christianity become an emblem of grace in India, rather than just another religion? We know what the Lord Jesus would have us be! He was "God of all grace" made flesh and walked among us. Let us a Christ-like Christian, by His grace.



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A Childlike Hope

Dr. Shantanu Dutta

Hope is a fundamental human emotion that drives us forward, giving us the motivation and inspiration to strive for a better tomorrow. However, what we hope for often changes as we navigate through different stages of our lives. As we grow, mature, and face new challenges, our aspirations and desires evolve, reflecting our shifting priorities, and values. In this blog post, we'll explore how hope transforms as we journey through various life stages, from childhood to adulthood and beyond.

As children, we often can't wait to grow up and become adults. We envision a world of limitless possibilities, where we can do as we please without the constraints

of bedtime, homework, or parental supervision. We hope for the freedom to explore, play, and discover new things, unencumbered by the responsibilities that come with adulthood. Our imaginations run wild with fantasies of adventure, excitement, and making our mark on the world. We dream of becoming astronauts, superheroes, or famous artists, with the conviction that anything is possible.

As we enter adolescence, our hopes begin to shift. We explore our identities, seeking to understand who we are, where we fit in, and what we stand for. We hope to find our tribe and belong to like-minded individuals

who share our passions and values. We experiment with different personas, trying on various identities like clothes to find the perfect fit. Our hopes are fueled by the desire for acceptance, validation, and a sense of purpose as we navigate the complexities of social relationships and self-discovery.

As we settle into adulthood, our hopes begin to mature. We've experienced the realities of responsibility, with all its attendant challenges and rewards. We hope for security, stability, and a sense of fulfillment, knowing that these are the foundations upon which a happy, healthy life is built. We strive to create meaningful relationships, to build strong families, and to contribute to our communities. Our hopes are tempered by the knowledge that life is unpredictable, and that setbacks and disappointments are inevitable. Yet, we continue to hope, fueled by the desire to make a positive impact, to leave a lasting legacy, and to find contentment in our lives.

As we enter the later stages of

life, our hopes take on a more introspective, reflective quality. We look back on our accomplishments, relationships, and experiences and hope our lives have made a difference. We strive to leave a lasting legacy, to be remembered fondly by those we've touched, and to have contributed to the greater good. Our hopes are filled with gratitude as we appreciate the blessings we've received and the opportunities we've had. We hope to continue growing, learning, and evolving, even as our physical bodies decline.

As Christians, we have the same human understanding and emotions about hope. One of the most famous scriptures touching on the word "hope" is now faith, which is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval" (Hebrews 11:1-2, NASB)

In this verse, we see that faith and hope are intricately linked. Faith is about believing in something and being assured that what we hope for will come to pass. It's about having a conviction, a

deep-seated confidence that transcends the realm of the visible. The Bible tells us that this kind of faith enabled the saints of old to gain approval from God.

So, what is the nature of this hope spoken of in Hebrews 11:1-2? Firstly, it's a hope that is rooted in the unseen. The verse explicitly states that faith is the conviction of things not seen. This means that our hope is not based on what we can see or touch but on what we believe to be accurate, even if it's invisible to our physical eyes. This kind of hope requires trust in a God who is sovereign and good, even when our circumstances seem bleak.

Secondly, this hope is not a wishy-washy, uncertain feeling. No, it's a confident expectation grounded in God's promises. The Bible is full of promises that speak to our hopes and dreams and assure us of God's love, care, and provision. When we anchor our hope in these promises, we can be sure that what we hope for will pass, even if we don't see it yet.

The Bible contains examples of individuals who exemplified this

kind of hope. Abraham, for instance, hoped against hope that he would become the father of many nations, even when his body was as good as dead (Romans 4:18-22). He trusted in God's promise, and his hope was rewarded. Similarly, the Israelites, who were enslaved in Egypt for centuries, held onto the hope that God would one day deliver them, and He did (Exodus 3:7-8).

In the New Testament, we see the apostle Paul, who faced numerous trials and tribulations yet continued to hope in their midst. He wrote to the Romans, "We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). Paul's hope was not based on his circumstances but on the character of God, which he knew to be faithful and true.

So, what impact does this kind of hope have on our lives? Firstly, it gives us perseverance. When we are confident that what we hope for, will come to pass, we are

more likely to persevere through difficult times. We know our struggles are not in vain but are leading us to a greater purpose.

Secondly, hope gives us joy. When we anchor our hope in the promises of God, we can experience deep-seated joy, even amid trials. This joy is not based on our circumstances but on the assurance that God is with us and is working all things out for our good.

The promise of eternal life with God is at the heart of the Christian hope. Jesus' death and resurrection have made it possible for us to have a personal relationship with God and to live with Him forever. In 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, Paul declares, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." This assurance of eternal life gives us the courage to face death and life's challenges with confidence and hope.

Moreover, the Christian hope is

not just a personal hope but a communal one. As believers, we are part of a more prominent family, the body of Christ, which transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter writes, "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to answer everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." Our shared hope in Christ unites us and encourages us to live out our faith in love and service to others.

In a world of uncertainty and darkness, the Christian hope shines like a beacon of light. It is a hope rooted in the Bible, centered on the person of Jesus Christ, and lived in a community with others. As believers, we can face life's challenges with confidence and hope, knowing that God is with us and our eternal destiny is secure.

As I write this, millions of Christians around the world are facing persecution, violence, and even death for their faith. The Body of Christ is suffering. Yet, amidst such hardship and pain, a profound sense of hope animates

these believers' hearts. Christian hope is a fundamental aspect of our faith, and precisely, this hope sustains us in times of trial and tribulation. But what does this hope mean to those who are facing the very real threat of persecution, imprisonment, and even martyrdom? How can they hold onto hope in the face of such overwhelming adversity? When faced with persecution, it is easy to lose sight of hope. The pain, the fear, and the uncertainty can be overwhelming. However, Christian hope is not a distant promise of a better future; it is a present reality that sustains us while we suffer.

In 2 Corinthians 4:17, Paul writes, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." This is not to minimize many Christians' suffering but to put it into perspective. Our hope is not that we will be exempt from suffering but that our suffering will

be transformed into something of eternal value.

The Christian hope is a profound and unshakeable reality that sustains us in the face of persecution. It is a hope that transcends our circumstances, sustains us in suffering, inspires courage and witness, and unites the Body of Christ. When faced with the very real threat of persecution, imprisonment, and even martyrdom, this hope is the anchor that holds us firm.



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Come to me, all who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

The God of Hope

(Romans 15: 13)

Mr. Chacko Thomas

A few quotations to help us:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” [Rom_15:13]

“My Lord knows the way through the wilderness, All I have to do is follow; Strength for today is mine all the way, and all I need for tomorrow is mine.” [A children’s chorus.]

“... What hope does atheism offer to today’s young people? [Ayaam Hirsi Ali, a former Muslim, turned an atheist who recently turned to Christ, challenging Richard Dawkins, the most famous atheist in the world. Taken from a debate on YouTube.]

Do I matter to God?

“On the train to Helsinki, Finland, a young man came and sat next to Mr. Augustine Salins [1913 - 1985, an Indian Evangelist, formerly with Ambassadors for Christ]. Having seen Augustine’s photo in the newspapers, he had come to speak about his backslidden life. He had accepted Jesus as his Saviour at the age of 12. Later, he had a definite call to serve God full time, at the age 18. He had not however, been willing to obey.

“He explained to Augustine, how he had rebelled and over the years, he felt God had ‘given him up’ to follow his own ways, as in Romans 1:24-31. ... ‘Can one

man on a speck of a plant in a speck of a solar system really mean anything to the Creator of the Universe? Surely, it is more plausible to believe that life was meaningless.’

“Augustine prayed for wisdom from above to speak to him. ‘Do I matter to God? Does he care for me?’ the young man pleaded.

“Augustine finally replied: ‘For thirty-three years, God experienced in the flesh what it is to be like one of us. In the stories Jesus told, the lives he touched and healed, he answered for all time that perturbing question. Jesus said that angels rejoice when a single sinner repents.

“It is Jesus who gave God a face and that face is streaked with tears because he understands each one of us and we are precious to Him. Peter, James, and John followed Jesus and watched him respond to a centurion who was grieving, an epileptic boy, a widow’s dead son, and an old blind man. They learnt how God felt about suffering and sorrow. When his friend Lazarus

died, ‘Jesus wept’.

“Jesus took the form of a servant and came down to earth. He showed that the hand of God is a hand engraved with our individual names. He also showed that the hand of God is engraved with wounds, the scars, the cost for God loving us so much.

“The father’s outstretched arms are always ready to welcome and embrace the repentant prodigal.” [Taken from the Biography of Mr. & Mrs. (Dr) Augustine Salins, by Dr Monica Salins Benjamin, published by IEM.] Yes, “Father’s outstretched arms” are our hope.

Hopeful in Pilgrims Progress:

John Bunyan (1628-1688), his famous work, “The Pilgrim’s Progress”, portrays a character called “Hopeful”. Named after another of the three theological virtues – hope. He becomes Christian’s new companion after Faithful is martyred.

David French, in his “Life Lessons from Pilgrim Progress” comments, “after Faithful is martyred, the Christian

undergoes a period of imprisonment before he is released and allowed to leave the Vanity Fair. He is accompanied on his journey to Celestial City by Hopeful. Hopeful assures Christian

“The Christian life is not always easy, and for some it is very difficult from the very outset. Yet, what gives us courage and strength to persevere is the hope that we have in Christ. Hope that springs out of having our sins forgiven and entering into everlasting life – hope of an eternity with Christ and the blessed saints throughout the ages. It is a better hope than that of the world.”

What is hope?

Human hope: “A desire of some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable. ...” Webster’s dictionary.

Biblical hope: “Confidence in a future event; the highest degree of well-founded expectation of good; as a hope founded on

God’s gracious promises”

Webster’s dictionary.

The word “hope” is found more than 130 times in the Bible. Below are about fifteen places where the word appears. It is organised under five titles, making it easier to appreciate it. These are verses that we may want to make part of our praise and worship life.

The credit for this particular grouping goes to my friend and colleague, Roderick Harbottle. Rod Joined OM the same year as I did, but with a difference, besides being British, he joined OM in the UK on the day he graduated from Oxford with a degree in Law. He never turned back, serving the Lord full time, making a difference for Jesus in the Muslim world, especially in the Turkic world.

“What is our hope?”

Rom 5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Eph 1:18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Col 1:5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

Tit 1:2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began. Tit 2:13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

“What is the basis of our hope?”

Col 1:5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

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

Tit 3:4-7 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, (5) he saved

us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, (6) whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, (7) so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

“Hope like an anchor.”

Hebrews 6:13-20 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, (14) saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." (15) And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. (16) For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for

confirmation. (17) So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, (18) so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (19) We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, (20) where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

“The results of having hope.

Romans 5:4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

2Co_3:12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, Hebrews

6:19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,

Rom_5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

“The God of hope:

Rom_15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

India Needs Christian Hope:

In fact, the whole world needs it. Billions of people in our world have a terrible state of existence, physically and spiritually. It is sad reality, and we as Christians should be concerned.

Someone has explained life as living in a multi-story building with no exits or stairways to go up. You are stuck on the floor you are born into. This is called hopelessness. It is all around us, much of it caused my human inhumanity. What hope does the poor, the

oppressed, the disaster struck have?

Yet, there is hope. God has a mighty plan. The Lord Jesus Christ offers hope to all who trust Him. He is able, to lift us up from a mirey clay and set our feet on solid ground. The Bible is a book of hope, leading us to a “living hope”, “blessed hope”, “God of hope”. Christianity in general and Evangelical Faith in particular pulsate with hope.

You and I are God’s arms today, to be stretched out, in God’s power to bring hope to the hopelessness all around us. May the Lord grant it.



Mr. Chacko Thomas

is Author of "Beyond the Natural". (OM 1966-2022: served mostly in OM India, on three OM Ships and OM International and OM Special Projects. Privileged to serve the Lord Jesus in 107 countries.) He can be contacted on Chacko.thomas@om.org

*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground
outside your Father's care. And even the very
hairs of your head are all numbered.
So don't be afraid; you are worth more than
many sparrows.
Matthew 10:29-31*



Christian
Medical
Association of
India

www.CMAI.org

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Intercessory
Prayer
Points



September 2024

1 SUNDAY Thank God for all the good things He has done for us during the month of August and enabling us to enter a new month.

2 MONDAY Pray for **Community Development Society, Maharashtra**. Pray that this ministry would bring both spiritual and physical development to the people around them.

3 TUESDAY Pray for **Himachal Pradesh**. Pray that God would raise many Christian workers to reach all the remote places in this state. Pray for receptive hearts and willingness to turn to God.

4 WEDNESDAY Pray for **Chhattisgarh** today. Pray that the Word of God would reach every nook and corner of this state. Pray for God's protection and provision especially for those who are working in the tribal belts. Pray that the 70th EFI Annual Convention to be held in the state would become a blessing to the entire state.

5 THURSDAY Pray for **Rural Care Ministries, Andhra Pradesh**. Pray that they may co-work effectively in serving Christ and His Church.

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

7 SATURDAY Pray for **International Association for Biblical Education, Chhattisgarh**. Pray that God may use IABE as His instrument and reveal Himself to many people through His living Word.

8 SUNDAY Pray that your children (or children you know) would desire intimate relationship with Christ and would not settle for anything lesser than that.

9 MONDAY Pray for the 70th EFI Annual Convention to be held in

Jagdalpur, Chattisgarh from September 17-19. Pray for the resource persons and the participants that the Holy Spirit would minister to them and bless this meeting.

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

11 WEDNESDAY Pray for **Celtic Cross Ministry Diocese of India Trust, Tamil Nadu**. Pray that the Lord would bless them and use them effectively in the extension of His kingdom.

12 THURSDAY Pray for **Karnataka**. Pray that the Word of God would change people's hearts and minds, so that God's kingdom would increase in and through the state.

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

14 SATURDAY Pray for **Haryana**. Pray for peace and prosperity for this state. Pray also that God would draw the hearts and minds of the people to Himself.

15 SUNDAY Pray for hunger and thirst for God's Word to increase. Pray that every believer would be equipped with the knowledge and power of the Scriptures.

16 MONDAY Pray for the EFI Executive Committee meeting today. Pray that God would give wisdom and discernment as they discuss and pray together for the ministry of EFI.

17 TUESDAY Pray for the 70th EFI Annual Convention starting today. Pray that God's peace would surround the venue and the people. May God be glorified through this event as believers praise and worship Him.

18 WEDNESDAY Pray for **Mizoram**. Pray for the people of Mizoram to be alert spiritually and be firm in their faith. Pray that God would use them powerfully in spreading His Gospel.

19 THURSDAY Pray for **Goa**. Pray that Jesus and His Words would impact the lives of the people in a new way. Pray that more and more people would encounter Jesus in a personal way and establish relationship with Him.

20 FRIDAY Pray for **Olivet Assembly of India, Karnataka**. Pray for God's enablement for all

the leaders in this ministry. May God's will be fulfilled in and through them.

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

22 SUNDAY Pray for the persecuted that they would have the courage and strength to stand through the storm. Pray that their suffering would bear much fruit and magnify God.

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

24 TUESDAY Pray for the state of **Arunachal Pradesh**. Pray that the Lord would use this state mightily for spreading the Gospel to the neighbouring states.

25 WEDNESDAY Pray for **Milap Community Episcopal Church, Chhattisgarh**. Pray that God would use this Church as a channel of His blessing and people's lives may be changed as

they encounter God personally.

26 THURSDAY Pray for the state of **Andhra Pradesh** today. Pray that every believer would live out their faith boldly and courageously. Pray that their Christlike transformed lives would impact others and speak volumes about Christ.

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

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

29 SUNDAY Pray for spiritual awakening for people in your Church. Pray that God would use you to touch people's lives with Christ's love and concern.

30 MONDAY Thank God for His enduring love despite our unfaithfulness. Thank Him for being with you throughout the month despite many challenges.



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For bookings, contact

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17th - 19th September, 2024



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'Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.'

- Romans 5:3-4

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