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**OVERFLOWING
COMFORT**

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EDITORIAL

Sohil Prasad

Warm greetings to all our readers from the Better Future family. We believe that you are being enriched by the Lord's mercies each day. We were overjoyed by the precious words of encouragement that some of our readers had sent.

Talking of encouragement, we all need it sometimes in our lives. An edifying word uttered at the right moment can uplift a drooping soul. The Lord Himself had instructed Moses to encourage Joshua because he was going to lead Israel into the promised land.

I know a pastor who several years back got into deep trouble although personally he had committed no crime. For about a month anxiety and anguish gripped the family. No one dared to visit him. He longed for a single word of encouragement but even his colleagues turned judgmental and told him that the breach was the fruit of his negligence. At that time, the pastor said there came a man whom you would not even call a believer and told him, "Don't worry, you will come out of this". He felt as if someone had offered him a plank in the raging sea. Sure enough he came out of the fire unharmed but it was the word of encouragement that helped him stay afloat in faith.

Job too needed someone to encourage him but his so called friends painted a wrong picture of God. They became judgemental. The bible says that God was angry with Job's friends. The world is full of hurting and dejected ones waiting for an encouraging word from you.

May the Lord lead us to that weary soul over whom we can speak the words of life.



HEART TO HEART

THE PEACE JESUS OFFERED

Joy M. Thomas

Peace is not necessarily the absence of problems or challenges. We can have peace even while facing difficult circumstances. Most people think that if they could get rid of their problems, they would be happy and able to start enjoying their lives. But that's not what the Bible teaches us about peace. The peace that Jesus offers is different. He said to His disciples: "I am leaving you with a gift- peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give you is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid" (John 14:27, NLT)

The kind of peace Jesus speaks

about is something very realistic and practical. His disciples were given plenty of opportunity to watch Him closely and observe the peace He had when confronted with difficult challenges. He offered them the very same peace which would give them courage and patience to endure the adversities that they would face in life.

Let me bring to your attention an instance where we evidently see Jesus with complete peace of mind and ease at heart. Jesus was sleeping at the back of a boat with His head on a cushion when a fierce storm came up suddenly. High waves that were

breaking into the boat began to fill it with water. All the disciples were terrified at the sight. They woke Him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t You care that we are going to drown?” (Mark 4:35-40)

Jesus got up and rebuked the storm. He said, “Silence! Be still!” Instantly the wind stopped and the Sea of Galilee was calm again.

How was Jesus able to sleep in such a nerve-wracking atmosphere? Until the disciples woke

him, He was enjoying a sound sleep. He was able to do so because He had total peace of mind and ease at heart. And the secret to this peace was the intimate and constant presence of His Father. He disclosed this to His disciples: “And the One who sent Me is with Me- He has not deserted Me. For I always do what pleases Him” (John 8:29 NLT). Thus, He was well aware of His authority over the storm and sea. Although He was in the storm, He didn’t let the storm get the better of Him!

Jesus asked His disciples: “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They couldn’t understand what had just happened,

they were absolutely terrified. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey Him” they whispered!

“The secret of His peace was that He enjoyed the presence of the Father in each moment of His life.”

Although Jesus was literally with them, they couldn’t believe that the one who is in control of everything was right with them; and that the storm and wind could not sink their boat as long as He was with them. They could have challenged the storm since the Lord was in the boat, but they missed that opportunity.

Are we not like the disciples? God wants us to have a peace of mind and ease of heart in the midst of storms. Life is always filled with challenges and struggles; you’ll never get to a point where you don’t have any trouble or setbacks. Just remember that the Lord is in control of everything. Our peace of mind and ease at heart is not because of the absence of troubles, but

because of His awesome presence within us!

Sometimes we lose our peace over things we can't change. You might want to reach your destination quickly, but you can't do anything about the traffic on the way. What you can do is change your attitude and stay calm. You can't force someone like your office colleague or a neighbour to do what's right; instead you can pray to God for that person, God can change them as you change your approach towards them.

“God wants us to have a peace of mind and ease of heart in the midst of storms.”

Once you know that a challenge is over, there will be something else that can steal your peace yet again. You have to change your approach and stop allowing those things to get into your heart and make you upset, instead turn that situation over to God. Remember His words, “And the peace I give you is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.”

When you attain this peace of mind and ease at heart, you're enjoying God's presence within you. Now God can really work in your life. God works where there is an attitude of faith and expectancy. Every day you will have opportunities to lose your peace. But choose to stay at peace. “Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7), Paul advises us. May the Lord help you to stay at peace!

“Our peace of mind and ease at heart is not because of the absence of troubles, but because of His awesome presence within us!”





DEVOTION

OVERFLOWING COMFORT

Saju Mathew

Reading: 2. Cor. 1:3-11

“For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.” 2 Cor. 1:5

Paul says the hardships he suffered in the province of Asia were far beyond his ability to endure, so that he despaired even of life (v.8). Why does God allow tribulations in the lives of His saints?

First, it could be discipline. When flocks of sheep return home, a lamb that strays to feed on the grass of its choice by the wayside might be whacked mildly by the shepherd to discipline it and remind it that having already eaten from the green pastures, it

is time to go home! Disciplining is to repent and retreat!

Holding the hands of his mother, three-year-old Johny was strolling in a public park. Seeing boys and girls playing on amusement rides, Johny wanted to try one, but mother said it was only for big boys. Johny was sad. While his mother was talking to somebody, he sneaked away and joined the big boys. They encouraged him to try the ride which resulted in his falling, face down. Seeing Johny with a wounded nose and blood-oozing mouth, the big boys were frightened and turned away as if they had done nothing. Johny ran back to his mother, crying. Hearing the cry of the son, his mother rushed to him

took him in her arms, washed his face and mouth and gave him some juice to drink. Following this, Johnny didn't want to go anywhere. He stuck to his mother's breast and slept peacefully! Sometimes we are like Johnny... Out of curiosity, we "test" things that God has not designed for us. It is not that you endure hardships only when you make mistakes! A military officer demanding a newly recruited young soldier to run 5 kilometres under the scorching sun is not a punishment; it is a part of his training. Hard training is essential to build up the soldier and make him ready for battle.

Paul says that troubles have a sweet side too. "For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ" (v.5 NLT). When we suffer, there is a comfort reserved for us. That helps us to even welcome sufferings! One day my wife asked two of our younger daughters to bathe by themselves, as she was too busy with mission affairs. The elder one (5yrs) told the younger one (2yrs): "Let's keep on bathing in cold water... and then we will become sick. And, when we become sick, our mother will find time to bathe us and she will not leave us alone!"

I am not advocating disobedience. However, the joy we obtain in being comforted by our Lord is enough to sweep away all the pain we suffer in our afflictions!

Here, Paul explains another reason why God allows afflictions.

"All praises to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us." (vv.4-5- NLT)

Only when we suffer, we receive comfort. Only when we receive comfort, we can meaningfully exhort others to receive comfort from Jesus.

At the time of the Serbian civil war, the victims of atrocities received food, clothing and comfort from a Catholic convent. In tears, many young girls told the friars that they had lost their virginity as the soldiers trampled them to satisfy the lust of their flesh! The nuns would comfort them saying, "It is not your fault daughter, take it easy... God is with you!" Some were comforted, but some would not be. One girl said: "Sister, you can say this very easily. But, do you know what it is to be abused by a thug who is mad with his passions!"

The nuns did not have an answer for the battered girl. However, one day, the military marched into the convent too. They smashed everything in their way. They did not spare even the nuns who were angels of charity. The virginity they kept as more precious than their lives were torn in minutes.

Days went by in silence. None knew what to speak. Whenever they met at the corridors of the convent, they mourned and hugged each other. No singing and no shouting of Halleluiah... Only cries and prayers!

After a few weeks, one of the friars who was brutally raped apprehended the shocking reality that she had conceived! She was shattered at the thought of being humiliated as a pregnant nun! Life was a puzzle before her!

She spent days in anguish! Finally, she wrote a letter to the mother superior: "Mother, I do not understand why my beloved bridegroom allowed this shame in my life... I know I cannot continue as a friar anymore. God has given me a child, even though I did not ask for it. I do not know whose child it is... somebody's! However, I believe that children are a gift from God! I leave the convent and go to the village. With my child, I will share the destiny of our poor sisters there.

If I come across my young sister, who once asked whether I know what it meant to be abused and humiliated, I can say to her; 'Yes daughter, I understand you.' I can also say, 'daughter, not just me... Jesus understands you...' I know Mother, that I am still beloved to my bridegroom!"

Oh! What a faith! She knew that she was still beloved to Jesus!

I remember my "Hepatitis" days. The liver enzymes count was shooting up by the hour. I was dying! However, Jesus was a reality to me on my "deathbed." I enjoyed talking to Him and hearing from Him. I was in the shadow of the Almighty. I told Him that I was prepared to die or to live. He sent me back to life!

Why did I need to experience the pain and agony of the deathbed? When I look back, I thank God for those painful days of anguish... Now I can go to people facing death in sickbed, and say that Jesus can be a reality even when you are in the shadow of the valley of death!

Prayer: Lord, help me to receive comfort from you when I am afflicted, so that I can be an agent of your comfort for those who are afflicted!

Further reading: 2 Cor. 4: 7- 12
Ps. 34: 4-22



MY LIFE - MY WAY OR GOD'S WAY

Sneha Vivian

After the glorious victory over the city of Jericho, Israelites had the city of Ai in front of them to conquer, a much smaller city. So only 3000 men went up. But they were routed by the men of Ai, who killed about 36 of them (Joshua 7: 4,5). A completely different outcome! Joshua was devastated. What was to be an easier task turned out to be a sheer defeat! The nation of Israel was defeated and demoralized. The hearts of the inhabitants of Jericho had melted in fear because they heard how God had brought Israel from Egypt to Jericho (Joshua 2:9-11). When Israel crossed Jordan, the hearts of the Amorites and Canaanite kings melted in fear (Joshua 5:1). Now, however, it is the hearts of Israel that are melting! The conquering Israelites are now scared to death over little Ai (7:5)! What went wrong?

Israel had sinned. Joshua 7:1 says, "But the Israelites were unfaithful

in regard to the devoted things, Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel." When Israel got victory over Jericho, they were not supposed to take any of the devoted things for themselves. Joshua gave an explicit command that the city and all that was in it were to be devoted to the Lord. He commanded them to keep away from the devoted things lest the camp of Israel become liable to destruction (Joshua 6:17-19). But Achan could not resist himself from disobeying the words of Joshua. He confessed his sin saying "When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath" (Joshua 7:21). Sheer disobedience! God could

not be fooled. He hid all the things from the people of Israel but he could not hide it from God. David says, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" (Psalms 139:7).

God told Joshua that He wouldn't be with them unless they dealt with this problem. He wanted his people to be obedient unto him. He said that they would not be able to stand against their enemies under such circumstances (Joshua 7: 12-13).

Achan sinned but God told Joshua that Israel had sinned (Joshua 7: 11). God looked at Israel as one unit. One man disobeyed but the whole nation suffered for it. Paul says that we are the body of Christ and each of us is a part of it (1 Corinthians 12:27). If one part goes wrong, the whole body is affected. Being part of the body of Christ, it is our responsibility to be faithful and obedient unto the Lord.

Are we becoming a stumbling block for others today because of our lifestyle? Are we causing trouble or disharmony among believers? Or are we following the ways of the Lord being a part that flourishes bringing joy and peace in the body of Christ?

Achan and his family were stoned and burned. Then God gave Israel victory over Ai.

If only Achan had waited patiently in obedience, he would have enjoyed from the plunder Israel later took away from Ai (Joshua 8:2,27).

It is truly said - Obedience is costly but disobedience is costlier! Impatience often makes us lose God's blessings. Abraham could not wait and tried to help God fulfil his plan by having a child from Hagar and as a result Ishmael was a born.

Let us not force things in our life to happen our way. God opens millions of flowers without forcing the buds. If we try to force open the buds, they would only get destroyed. Let us learn to wait prayerfully, not losing patience, for God's timing is always perfect.

Moreover, Israel had become self-confident. Instead of seeking God's counsel, they went ahead to take on the city of Ai relying on their own strength. They forgot that it was God who had given them victory in Jericho. They had not fought the battle but just marched around the city following the Lord's instructions. They won Jericho just by obeying God. Surprisingly Joshua didn't bother to ask God this time. He relied on the skills of his army and sent 3000 men. Had Joshua enquired of the Lord earlier, they would not have had to face defeat. Whether the battle is big or small, we need the grace of God to be victorious.

Most of the teens repeat the slogan 'my life my way'. But friends, this life is given by God and He expects us to live it 'His way'!

We need to purify ourselves from everything that contaminates us and live in submission to His will.

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On the Road to Damascus

Francis Frangipane

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24-25).

There is a profound truth about spiritual growth hidden in Jesus’ remarks. He likens our growth to the same pattern seen in a life cycle of a seed. There are two aspects to the seed: a husk and its kernel. The husk is the harder, outer covering that protects the tender, inner kernel. Of course, it is the kernel, not the husk, which contains the power to bear fruit and reproduce.

However, once the seed is planted in soil and watered, the outer husk must break. Its completeness and usefulness “dies.” Without the death of the husk, the seed will never pro-

duce fruit and will abide by itself alone, just as Jesus said.

Likewise, our spiritual development unfolds through a similar process that is sequenced through a time of breaking, dying and finally culminates in an inner rebirth. The Lord does not have to create difficulties to come against us; there are pressures, people and perplexities in abundance, even direct satanic attacks, that He can orchestrate to break the outer man, and awaken and release our inner self.

We fight against the idea, but brokenness and the death of our old self are integral parts of our spiritual journey. Our outer, husk nature must break. It must experience death in order for our inner man to find true spiritual life with Christ. Every genuine spiritual advance comes because, in some way, our

outer man breaks and our inner man is touched and made alive by the breath of God. Beloved, every act of true faith comes because this inner man responds to the promise of God. Genuine worship, that which exists only in spirit and in truth, is the product of God intimately loving the inner man, even at the funeral of the outer.

As it is written, “God {sees} not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7). Even at this moment, our Father, who sees in secret, is looking at the inner man of your heart.

A CHRIST ENCOUNTER

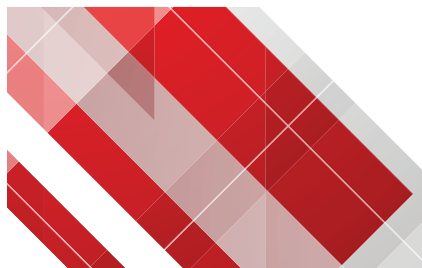
Paul is speaking of these two aspects of our identity when he writes, “though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16). Again, he tells us that he joyfully concurs “with the law of God in the inner man” (Rom 7:22). Finally, he prays that God would grant us “to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16).

If we do not suffer the death of the outer person, its husk nature becomes a mask that hides the corruption and selfish motives of our hearts. Without personal, first hand contact with our spiritual need of the Savior, we become Pharisaic in nature: trusting in ourselves that we are righteous while viewing others with contempt (see Lk 18:9). We may not wear the robes of a Phar-

isee, but we possess the attitude of one. To save us, Christ must confront us.

I’m thinking of Paul. Here was a man who was a “Pharisee of Pharisees,” a man who was self-righteous, a persecutor of the church. Paul hid his true character behind the religious mask of a Pharisee. But when the Lord met him on the road to Damascus, Paul not only saw God’s glory, he saw his personal corruption in Christ’s light. His self-righteous opinion of himself was crushed; his outer man, broken. Likewise, we too are on a journey. We cannot help but come to God as we are. Yet, beloved, there will be a time when we meet Jesus in a new way. It will not be goosebumps and chills; it will be devastating and liberating at the same time. The Lord’s goal will be to remove the falseness of our outer man to awaken love in the inner. He meets us on the road to “De-mask us.”

Yes, dear friend, our opinion of ourselves will be crushed; we will be more passionately humble. Our need of a Savior will no longer be just a doctrine; it will become a desperate fact of our lives, as we meet Christ on the road to De-mask us.





PATIENCE

Elsie Joy

Patience is an indispensable virtue. The one who is patient knows that everything that happens is according to God's plan and that His timetable is often different. So he waits upon God for the hour of God to come. The Bible says, "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecc 3:11).

These days, people lack patience. Everything has to be done quickly, otherwise it is considered unproductive. We are in a hurry from one appointment to the next, not having time to eat or truly listen to our partner or even hold a real conversation with one another. Lack of patience increases tension and breaks relations.

The Bible says: "Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains" (James 5:7) A farmer is a good example

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for developing patience. He waits for the land to yield its valuable crop. The time between sowing and reaping is long. The farmer waits for the fruit to ripen. If he does not wait, he will eat the fruit unripe and wonder why it doesn't taste good.

Spiritual maturity does not happen instantly. It occurs through hard circumstances and overcoming trials and temptations. When a person goes through such situations, if he develops patience he will grow into a person with character. He will be able to carry burdens and make sound decisions based on foresight. No wind will blow him over. He will trust in the Lord to serve Him and to reach his goal. He finds solace in these words: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perse-

verance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4). Patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5: 22). When we surrender ourselves to the Spirit’s control and guidance, He will start working to develop our character. The outcome is: the fruit of the spirit is released and manifested through us. Just as Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, we too will be led by the Spirit to face similar circumstances. The pressure on Jesus was very great but He was patient and diligent to understand the Father’s will in each situation and resisted the devil, and the devil fled from Him. Jesus set Himself as an example for us.

Jesus finished the work of redemption of mankind through patience by giving Himself as an atonement on the cross. We too can finish our race following His example. Thus the Bible asserts: “And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honor besides God’s throne. Think of all the hostility He endured from sinful people, then you won’t become weary and give up”(Hebrews 12:2,3). As this Scripture says, meditating on Jesus and following

His example will certainly help develop patience within us. When lack of patience caused backsliding symptoms in Hebrew Christians, they were encouraged to become stronger in faith- “Think back on those days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever. So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you. PATIENT ENDURANCE IS WHAT YOU NEED NOW, so that you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that He has promised” (Hebrews 10:32-36). Yes, patient endurance is what we need today. Pressure from the worldly system and its lifestyle is heavy on us. We live in a competitive world and the challenges before us are extreme. However, through patience we can overcome the troubles of this world and inherit our reward in eternity. Let us meditate on Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. Amen!



Success And Our Response To Success

Johnson George

Life is not always failures. There is success in life also in varying degrees. This is true in the case of all individuals. The thing that gives a person joy and contentment is in fact success. For one, it may be about getting a promotion. For another, it may be a higher return in his business. A third person may feel more contentment and joy when he finds that both ends meet! It is success in each of these cases, truly.

Just like our response to failures decides what happens to us next, our response to success also decides our future. Our future is not solely determined by our response to failures, but by our response to previous success

as well. Often, it is seen that, failures come right after success in several persons lives. A simple analysis points us to the fact that the particular ‘attitude’ of the person to success brought in that ‘failure’!

I hear the question ‘why did this happen to me?’ not only among non-Christians, but among Christians as well. In fact, the question is more painful for Christians who often turn to God and ask, “why did this happen to me, Lord? Am I not your child? Why didn’t you keep me from this fall?” Several other similar questions are asked by many.

These questions of Christians make me infer that ‘there is

a kind of assumption among Christians that since they are Christians they should be immune from failures and pain and that the Lord should protect them from all these.' Nevertheless, I don't see the Lord protecting Christians from these kinds of things in this world! I am not making this up; this is what I see happening around me.

I have a Scripture passage in my mind. Let us turn to 2 Kings 14: 7-14. Here we see King Amaziah of Judea in the center of the narration. The chapter begins by introducing Amaziah and his period of reign. Here we have the very 'special description' of the Scripture for this king that "Amaziah did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight..." a rare acumen for kings in the Bible. Most of the time it is the opposite, as we know what happens with power and position.

In our passage, 14: 7-14, Amaziah is shown as a successful leader who destroyed the southern enemy to his nation, the Edomites. Then we see Amaziah inviting the northern king Jehoash to come and war with him! We should know that compared to Amaziah's southern kingdom, Judea, the kingdom of Jehoash was

much bigger and more powerful. Jehoash replied that it was not reasonable for him to war with him. Look at the words of Jehoash to Amaziah, "You have indeed defeated Edom, and you are very proud of it. But be content with your victory and stay at home! Why stir up trouble that will only bring disaster on you and the people of Judah" (14: 10)? Then we read, "Amaziah refused to listen..." Then what happened?

King Jehoash came as invited by Amaziah to wage war. "Judah was routed by the army of Israel, and its army scattered and fled for home. King Jehoash of Israel captured Judah's king...and he marched on to Jerusalem, where he demolished 600 feet of Jerusalem's wall,... He carried off all the gold and silver and all the articles from the Temple of the Lord. He also seized the treasures from the royal palace, along with hostages, and then returned to Samaria" (vv. 12-14).

What do we learn from this story?

King of Judah who sat on the throne of King David was routed utterly. He had all the promises of God as a child of the Davidic dynasty, the Temple of

God and its worship, and many other privileges. If we were to focus only on the promises of God, Amaziah should not have been defeated at all. He should have been victorious as he was the one worshipping the Lord with the right doctrine!

But, on the other hand, he was defeated utterly. There was no protection of the Lord upon him though he was a true believer.

This teaches us that ‘there is no unconditional guarantee of our Lord’s protection upon us from failures at all!’ This is true in the case of any one whether he is a pastor of a huge congregation, or a great evangelist who leads thousands to the Lord or any one. Remember, there is no unconditional promise in the whole Word of God!

What went wrong for King Amaziah? His attitude to success was ‘pride’; an attitude our Lord abhors! Then, pride caused him to develop a wrong ‘self image’. He started thinking illogically. His calculations went wrong. Probably someone might have told him that as a ‘Davidic king’ the Lord would give him success wherever he went! Probably a false prophet might have preached all the promises of God to him con-

tinuously and that may have increased his pride! Even after warnings from the other king he was unwilling to turn back.

Attitude to success brought in a terrible defeat and shame upon not only the king but the whole nation. I see today people falling prey to this great enemy of humanity on a daily basis. Success leads several to lose right thinking about themselves.

How are we dealing with our success? Do we get so excited that we become proud? Too overjoyed that we do unreasonable things? There is no meaning in asking the Lord why did this happen to me?, after being carried away by pride. Remember always that there is no ‘unconditional promise with our God.’ No one is immune from failures, pain and shame. God’s principles are unchanging. He is just and righteous and not partial towards anyone. We should not presume that God will support our unholy attitudes because we are His children.

“Our future is not solely determined by our response to failures, but by our response to previous success as well.”



BIBLE STUDY

SPIRITUAL DEATH

Joy M. Thomas

The end of life in this mortal body is commonly called death. But according to the Bible, it is something more. Death is separation. The Bible speaks of three kinds of death- Spiritual death, Physical death and Eternal death. Let us try to understand the concept of spiritual death.

Spiritual death is the separation of man from God. The Bible describes it thus: "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins" (Ephesians 2:1). This is the fallen state of man- he is spiritually dead. Spiritual death initially occurred when Adam and Eve broke their relation with God by disobeying His commandment not to eat from the fruit of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They understood at that very moment that they had become sinners

and naked, unworthy to have a relationship with God in the way they had enjoyed Him before they sinned. As a result of their disobedience, they were filled with fear and found themselves unable to stand before God. Since that time, man has kept falling short of God's glorious standard.

When Adam and Eve were innocent, their spirit was God's dwelling place. They were solidly attached to God, the Life! They could literally enjoy God as a person, speaking and walking with Him. However, the moment they became detached from Him, they lost the presence of God that was within them. Their spirit entered into a state of death, being unable to remain in union with God. What God said to them previously happened- "If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die" (Genesis

2:17).

The Bible says, “Then God said, “Let us make human beings (or ‘man’ - the Hebrew reads “adam”) in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.” So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26, 27 NLT). It is apparent from these verses that God created not only a single man but also the complete human race in Adam. Adam literally means “human beings.” So when Adam and Eve sinned, all of mankind sinned and became separated from God- they died spiritually.

The spirit of each person born into this world is in the state of death. That’s why David said: “For I was born a sinner-yes, from the moment my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). A child is a sinner from the moment it is born in the womb of a mother.

Spiritual death is the root cause of man’s destruction. It leads man to the next state of death. This is why a remedy is most essential.

Jesus narrated a beautiful parable to make us understand what it means to be ‘dead in spirit.’ This story is commonly known as the “parable of the prodigal son” or “parable of the lost son.”(Luke 15: 11-31)

When this prodigal son returned home, notice what his father told his elder son. “We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!”(Luke 15:32). ‘Dead’ and ‘Lost’ - these are the exact conditions of a sinner.

When the younger son was with his loving father, he lacked nothing. It was his own decision to go away from his father’s home. The day he departed from his father’s home, the relation with his father was broken. He wandered everywhere searching for happiness in friendship and worldly pleasures. But soon he lost everything and began to starve. He was desperately in want and so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him! But no one gave him anything.

This is the picture of sin’s consequences or the result of being separated from the Father. This young man was dead and lost according to his father.

When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, “At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger.” He began to realize the consequences of his wrong choice and the need of returning to his father’s home. He humbled himself in true repentance and said: “I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and

I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me as a hired servant.”

The prodigal son returned to his father. He had gone very far from his father in every aspect. He had squandered his father’s money on prostitutes and brought great reproach to him. He knew he was no longer worthy to be a son. He came to his father just as he was, but with a contrite spirit, acknowledging himself as a sinner against God and confessing his sins. This is the picture of true repentance which leads every sinner to the restoration of their relationship with God, the Father. And this is the only way through which every person can come back to life in their spirit.

In this story, Jesus portrays the picture of our Heavenly Father. A father who is full of love and compassion, who patiently and sympathetically waits for his son’s return. He runs to his son, embraces him, and kisses him. This is exactly what the heavenly Father does when a sinner repents and comes back to Him.

On the cross, God revealed His marvelous grace to forgive our sin and restore us to Him. He paid the price of giving His one and only son as an atonement sacrifice for our sins so that no one should perish.

The father accepted his son restoring him as his son, celebrating the joy of getting him back. He said,

“My son was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!”

It was a new beginning for this young man. He understood how greatly loving and gracious his father was! He could not go away from his father. He became a committed and obedient son who truly loved his father. This is the exact picture of a born again Christian! The only remedy for spiritual death is to be born again through true repentance, accepting Jesus the Lord and Savior. Are you a born again Christian?

Once Jesus said to a certain man, “Come, follow me.” The man replied, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.” Jesus’ reply was- “Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead!” (Luke 9:59, 60) Jesus’ reply clearly reveals the truth that those don’t restore and maintain their relationship with God are ‘spiritually dead.’ It is thus imperative for every human being to be born again and start a new beginning restoring their relation with God through Jesus Christ. In a conversation with Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader and a Pharisee, Jesus told him bluntly: “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Spiritually dead people can never go to heaven after their physical death. Only those who are born again or spiritually revived can inherit heaven!

**HIS return is certain but the day
and hour is UNPREDICTABLE.**

**The LORD expects us to be
ready always, remaining sincere
and loyal to HIM in every aspect
of life. This is the ONLY way we
can PREPARE ourselves to
meet our dear Lord Jesus!**

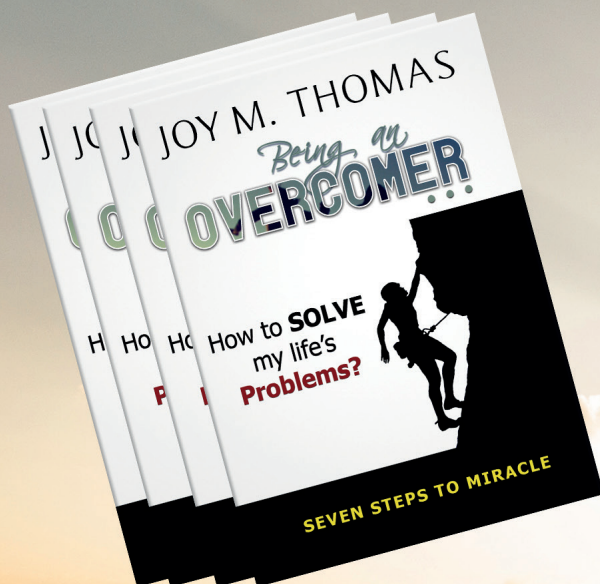
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