

Better Future

Vol. 1 Issue. 2

February 2018

▶ ▶ *Heart to // Pg No. 5*
Heart



Better Future

A Guide to Eternity

Book I // Issue II // February 2018

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**Printed and Published by K.V Raju on behalf of
the Righteous Path Publication Trust and printed
at Penta Offset Press, Kanjikuzhy, Kottayam - 686004
and Published at Mackal Building, Amayannoor P.O,
Kottayam, India - 686019**

Annual Subscription: Rs. 250/-

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EDITORIAL

Sohil Prasad

It may seem odd to talk about the new year now, but there remains a thought in my mind which I think I should share. As a new year approaches the social media begins to be abuzz with speculations about what the new year might hold out for us. Nos-tradamus becomes one of the popular searches. We all love to know what our future would be like. I too looked for what popular and esteemed men and women of God had to say about 2018. I was amazed by the love of God as I heard the great promises and prospects which this year has to offer to us.

But amidst all the excitement, my heart seemed to whirl around a single question. “What do you want me to do O Lord?” If I manage to somehow access this wisdom at the feet of our Master and commit myself to accomplishing just that, then this year would be the most satisfying year of my life.

We tend to focus on what the Lord would do rather on what the Lord would want us to do. May all of us be granted the grace to spend much time waiting on the Lord in His presence. The Bible reminds us, “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”



HEART TO HEART

CHANGE YOUR DESTINY

Joy M. Thomas

Cambridge dictionary defines destiny as “the things that will happen in the future.” A person shapes his destiny by deciding to choose a particular course of action at a particular moment. If his choice of actions is aligned with God’s ways, then he will partake of a godly destiny. Someone truly said, “It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.”

I would like to draw your attention to two Bible characters who were Isaac’s sons - Esau and Jacob! We can learn a lot from them. Jacob reveals to us the secret as to how we can build our destiny, cooperating with God to fulfil His best plan for our life.

Esau and Jacob were children of the same parents who were godly and chosen by God to be a blessing. But you can notice that these brothers were different from each other in their character. Their destiny was different because their choices were different. Esau’s ambition was to become a skilful hunter. He was an outdoor enthusiast, and trained himself to become what he wanted to be. He became a skilful hunter and even Isaac, his father, enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home. This made Esau proud of himself!

Jacob was different. He had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. He followed the

faith of Abraham, just as his father Isaac did, and lived in tents, confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God (Hebrew 11:9,10).

“A person shapes his destiny by deciding to choose a particular course of action at a particular moment”

Your nature, whether good or bad, will greatly determine your destiny. This is very much apparent in Esau and Jacob's life. Their outlook on life determined what they would be. Jacob tried to understand the purpose of his life. So he developed a close relationship with God. He understood the value of the 'birthright' that Esau had.

On the other hand, Esau, who in spite of being the first born despised his birthright. That was the biggest blunder of his life. He swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother Jacob, just to have some red stew that Jacob had prepared. This was Esau's comment on his birthright- "What good is my birthright to me now?" (Genesis 25:32).

Are you a born again child of

God? You have your rights as a child of the living God. Do not despise them. Live a life worthy of your calling as a child of the most holy God. It will determine your destiny on earth as well as in eternity.

Esau lived an independent life. He even got married to two Hittite women in a hurry without his parents' consent and blessing. His wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 26:37,35). Esau's life also might have become nothing short of a misery.

Your wrong choice in marriage will make your life a hell. Develop self-control when you mingle with the opposite sex. Pray earnestly for God's wisdom to choose your life partner in tune with God's will concerning you. Your parents' consent and blessings will work as a safeguard for your marriage. Set godliness above all your priorities.

“Your nature whether good or bad will greatly determine your destiny”

Do you desire the blessings of your birthright? Or do you want the temporal blessings that are available immediately? The red

stew/a bowl of porridge that will satisfy your bodily need or God's blessing and approval on your life that will satisfy your spirit? This is the dilemma faced by many young people today.

“Set godliness above all your priorities”

What would you choose? Jacob received his parent's blessing and consent to take a wife from his uncle Laban's daughters (Genesis 28:1,2). On his way to Padan-Aram he had an encounter with God in a vision. God made a covenant with him and blessed him (Genesis 28:13-20). God promised him the blessings of Abraham which he sought for all those years. He started shaping his destiny in the way God wanted. And he received God's blessing.

Friend, we must desire to have an encounter with God and enter into a covenant relationship with Him. This will change our destiny! This is exactly how God wants us to be!

God changed Jacob's name to Israel- Prince of God! That's what Jacob had to become because his choice was God and His best plan for his life. He wanted to

inherit Abraham's blessing and he succeeded.

Esau also received another name, 'Edom' which means 'Red.' It was because he sold his birthright for some 'red stew' (Genesis 25:30). That foolishness resulted in his utter failure.

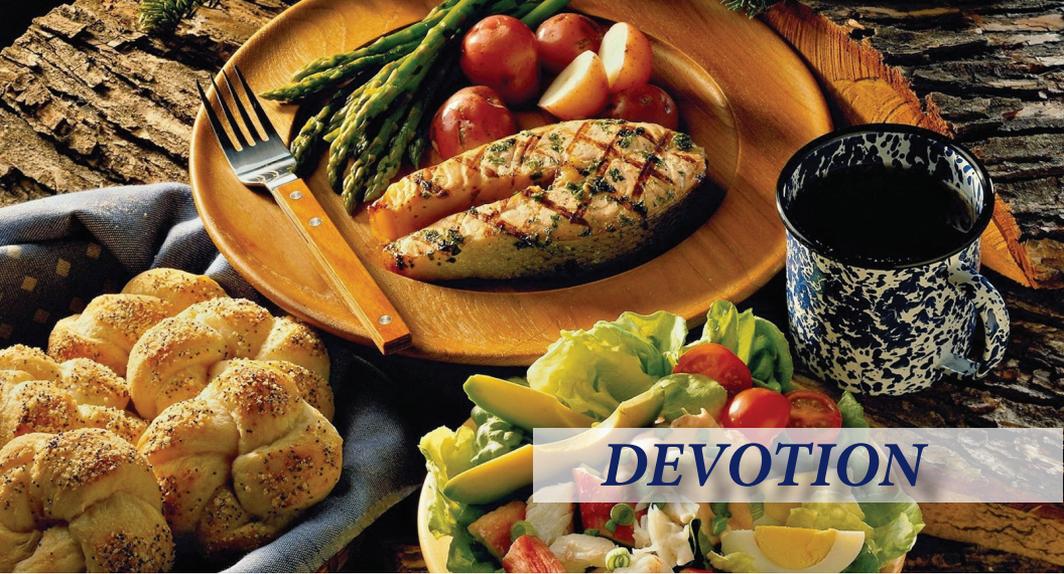
What kind of name would you like to achieve? A name from God which will be honoured down through the centuries and eternity or a name bearing shame?

May right choices lead you to a blessed destiny.

“We will not attain a state of perfection in this life, but we can and should press forward with faith in Christ along the strait and narrow path and make steady progress toward our eternal destiny”

David A. Bednar





DEVOTION

The Stone of Heavenly Origin

Saju Mathew

Reading: Daniel 2:25-45
“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people.”
(Dan. 2: 44)

Daniel interprets the dream God gave King Nebuchadnezzar. The golden head of the image is Babylon, silver breast and arms show Medes and Persians, the brass belly and thighs denote Alexander’s Greece and the iron legs, Rome. After Rome, the divided kingdoms of Europe - the feet with half clay and half iron - come in to the scene! Then, comes a stone cut out by no human hands...

That is the kingdom of God. The ‘golden kingdom’ in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision - his own dynasty- is replaced by Medo-Persian ‘silver regime’ and silver by bronze... No kingdom in human history can claim pure divine origin. Each kingdom emerges as a continuance of the previous one. However, when it comes to the Kingdom of Christ, it is not a part of any visual image that is a symbol of worldly kingdoms of the seen and known history. It is as a stone from an unseen origin, cut out “by no human hands.” It is of divine origin. It takes nothing from the existing. Kingdom of God is not a reformed state of the old... It is all new! It has nothing to do with the

existing or past kingdoms of the world. Sometimes we ask; “Why should we deny the world as a whole? The world also has some goodness, right?” They ask the question because they have not seen the kingdom of God. Even the best of this world is worthless in the kingdom of Jesus.

When you become a Christian, you are not entering into a better version of this present world, but entirely crossing over the border of this worldly system. The kingdom of God has nothing of this world. You cannot enter into God’s kingdom by shaping or even improving upon the old. You need to be “born again” (John 3:3). “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17)

“Kingdom of Christ, it is not a part of any visual image that is a symbol of worldly kingdoms of the seen and known history. It is as a stone from an unseen origin, cut out “by no human hands.” It is of divine origin. It takes nothing from the existing.”

The kingdom of God not only denies any kind of partnership with the worldly rule and state of affairs, but also destroys the worldly system. The divine stone is not ‘soft’ towards the image of the worldly dynasties. The mighty stone smote the huge image and smashed the pride of all human regimes. Above all, the divine stone crushed not just the feet of iron and clay, but everything that was there- the bronze belly, the silver arms and the golden head... all of them were broken into pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors (v. 35). When the kingdom of God enters you, it takes away everything worldly in you. Not just your present state but everything you had and you were is overthrown. Even our history is washed away! Our old sins, sinful nature, our inclination towards the desires of the flesh... everything vanishes!

“And the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found” (v.35). The ‘now’ and the ‘then’ of history and their glory become just smoke and fumes. The wind represents the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist introduces Jesus as one who is coming with a winnowing fork to clear the threshing floor to gather His wheat. “And the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire”

(Matt 3:12).

The wind of the Holy Spirit will carry away all the Babylonian chaff in me. Even the memory - the 'trace' - of worldliness is alien to me. However, when the winnowing fork of the Holy Spirit carries away the dust of worldliness in me, I should not open my mouth, eyes or ears towards it so nothing of it can stick to my organs. If any 'trace' of it is found in me, in my home, in my church..., it is "Babylonian!" What a pity when we, the born again, are stained with the dust of the worldly system! When my home is hooked to worldly vanities, it is a Babylonian home. The church that values the worldly system of administration and the earthly pattern of operation is a Babylonian church!

"When the kingdom of God enters you, it takes away everything worldly in you."

The divine stone that smites the image of the world dynasties becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth (v.35). In addition, once the kingdom of God is established, it stands forever. It is "a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people."

(Dan. 2: 44)

The growth of the Kingdom of God is swift and steady. However, before it can grow in the world, it should grow in me, in my home and in my church. How will it grow? It will grow by filling. As it is filled it becomes 'full'. Full means that it encompasses everything so that nothing else is present in that vicinity. That is the particularity of the kingdom of God... It cannot coexist with anything.

If Christ should fill me, I should not keep anything else in me. If you put stones in a tumbler and try filling it with water, you fail as the presence of the stones is an impediment to the infilling. So, let us empty ourselves in order that the Kingdom may grow and fill in us.

"Touch my hands, my mouth and my soul, Fill my life Lord in every part, Let the power of the Holy Ghost; let it fall on me, Anointing fall on me...."

- Ron Kenoly

Prayer: Lord, I understand that Christian living needs a divine origin. Yes Lord, I thank You for the New Birth You have given. Help me perceive You as my only source. Cleanse my mouth, eyes, ears and all the members of my body with the wind of Your Holy Spirit! Let me be filled by You, and with You. Amen!

Further readings: Daniel 2: 7-27;
Revelation 21: 1-4



BEAUTIFUL THING UNTO THE LORD

Sneha Vivian

Just a few days before the Passover, Mary of Bethany remembered how Jesus had raised her brother Lazarus from the dead and all the things Jesus had spoken and done in her life and her family. She wanted to express her gratitude to the Lord.

She decided to give her best to the Lord. She didn't do anything for her self-satisfaction or to please people. She was driven by her love for the Lord. She did not worry about the customs of the society she lived in. She poured out her heart by putting the best perfume she had on Jesus' feet thereby displaying her sincere love and selfless devotion. This perfume had cost her a year's wages. Seeing her act, some people criticized her but the Lord commended her by saying that she did what she could (Mk 14:8). He knew her heart and valued her. He appreciated her for her humility and love, which truly defines the character of a Christian

believer.

Humbly sitting at the Lord's feet and quietly listening to His words had helped Mary to grow into a woman with spiritual insight. She lived her life in the fellowship of Christ. She understood that this was a part which could not be taken away from her by anybody. Are we eager to listen from the Lord, to have fellowship with Him and act accordingly? We really need to be like Mary who chose to sit at Jesus' feet giving Him the first place over all other things. Sitting at the Lord's feet, studying and meditating the word of God, we would understand the will of God in our lives and get the necessary directions for our day-to-day life activities. The Lord Jesus Himself used to spend time alone with God the Father in the midst of His busy schedule. None of us are as busy as the Lord. He used to be engaged with people whole day, from morning till evening, but

still He would get up early in the morning and go to a solitary place to pray (Mk 1:35). Daniel used to pray thrice a day, being in a very responsible position in the kingdom (Daniel 6:10) and God honored Him. God wants His children to spend quality time with Him and be obedient to the Word. It won't happen accidentally with us, because there are too many things, both good and bad, to crowd it out. Leaving the things that easily distract us, let us train ourselves to spend time each day worshipping the Lord and focusing on things which shall not be taken away. It's not something we choose once for all and then get settled. No, we have to keep choosing it over and over again, day in and day out, by saying No to other things so that we can say Yes to this one necessary thing. What things distract us or keep us away from this?

Are they urgent demands, family, friends, office, worries of life, television, internet etc?

What are our priorities? Do we have our priorities in order? Joseph decided to honor God even in a foreign land. Daniel resolved in his heart that he would not defile himself with the royal food and wine. When we have God at the forefront of our lives, it is much easier to put everything else in place for He gives us the love and devotion we need for our families and the abilities for our

ministries.

The fragrance of Mary's perfume has spread all over the world till date (Mk 14:9)!!! Let it be so from our personal lives and from our fellowship. What others thought as a waste was a beautiful thing to the Lord. Jesus considered Mary's act as a preparation for His burial. Let us give to the Lord the best that we can - our time, talents, money etc. by serving Him and the perishing souls around us.

For Mary, the service to her Lord was costly. She could have stored it for some other purpose but she chose to give it to the Lord. Being a woman, she had to overcome the barriers of society but yet she didn't stay back. She went ahead to serve her Lord. She also had to face criticism. But her love for the Lord motivated her to go to the greatest extent she could. Like Mary, let us be faithful and serve the Lord in whatever measure we can. The time and effort that we put in for the Lord's work may seem to be a waste to the people around. Different people will have different opinions. It is not people but the Lord whom we are called to serve and please. When we concentrate on Jesus first, we would find inner peace and strength to face whatever comes our way in serving Him. May God help us to love Him, serve Him and give the most beautiful thing unto Him.



DECISIONS

T.C Varghese

Life is made up of decisions. Some are simple and unimportant; others are complex and extremely important. Several are made unconsciously; a few are made after careful thought. When we put off taking decisions, they are then made for us. Nonetheless, they are ‘our’ decisions because we decided to put them off in the first place. The course and quality of our lives are determined by our ‘decisions’ rather than our ‘circumstances.’

Christian living involves making right decisions. One can note the maturity of a Christian by the decisions he makes. Holiness is about making right

decisions; carnality is about making wrong decisions. Our Christian living rises or falls in maturity and holiness based on the decisions we take. When Satan tempts us, we decide to say either “Yes” or “No”. When we have an opportunity to witness, we either take advantage of it or not.

Every situation in a believer’s life is an opportunity to glorify God. God has been giving men options that determine their lives. The first man to choose was Adam. He made the wrong choice and started a chain of wrong choices that has ruined humanity ever since. Some of the choices made by people are

mentioned in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15 and 1 Kings 18:21). Abraham chose God's way and several others rejected God's way thereby ruining their lives. The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is quite noteworthy here. They were firm and resolute in their decision not to bow down before the image built and erected by the decree of the king. Their decision was honoured by the Most High. The furnace which was heated seven times hotter than usual became an air-conditioned furnace! Furthermore, they could experience the presence of the Son of God in the midst of the fiery fire! What an example of making the right choice! Coming to the New Testament, we have a great lesson taught by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 7:13-14. "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, the way is broad and that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it". What a challenging exhortation! In Matthew 7:13-14, the Lord Jesus Christ gives the call to decide about becoming a citizen

of God's kingdom and inheriting eternal life or remaining a citizen of this fallen world and receiving damnation. The way to life is on God's terms alone and all other ways, regardless, lead to eternal destruction. Here, the Lord focuses on the inevitable decision that every person must make. He highlights the crossroads in a person's life where he must decide on the gate he will enter and the way he will go. Since this is the most critical decision we make about Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, a decision which determines our eternal destiny, we must be very careful in our choice. Interestingly, Jesus Christ is calling us to such a great choice. Our Lord Jesus Christ challenged His disciples "Do you want to go away?" Praise be to God, Peter was wise enough to reply, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:66-69). This is a choice between one and many. There aren't many roads to heaven, only one. Man cannot come to God by any of the ways that he himself devises but only by the way that God has laid out.

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Challenges Of Students - A Christian Perspective

Vivian Varghese

The price of development can be seen in the uncertainty, confusion, competition and associated costs faced by students today. Ironically, even as IQ levels are touching new highs, common sense is not so common any more. The increase reported in the case of depression among youth is alarming. In this scenario of ever growing chaos, is there any hope? As Christians how do we approach these situations and carve out a path for ourselves? The bad news is that there is no ready reference roadmap available. The good news is that He says, "I am the way." Let us look into a few specific challenges stu-

dents face today and then view them in the light of God's Word.

MORALITY

Moral values seem to be diminishing faster than Bengal tigers. There is a huge resistance against any attempt to define right and wrong. We are moving towards an absence of absolutes. The current state of affairs of media is reflective of this phenomenon. However the deeper problem is the lack of role models primarily in church and family. Churches are failing in their duty to establish the moral authority of the Word of God. Families behave one way on Sunday and to another way over the week. When real issues come face to face, families

fail to stand by the Word of God and tend to give into pressures of society. But then, here comes yet another simple way of God to deal with the issue of morality.

a. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

b. Be holy, for I am holy (1Pet.1:16).

c. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness (1 Thes 4:7).

d. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom.12:2).

SOCIETY

Moral laws are imperative because of a moral law giver. The seriousness of the matter is reflected in the fact that God had to send Jesus to die the cruel death on the cross. Grace is not the leeway to escape moral laws. Jesus Christ did not therefore abolish the law but rather fulfilled it by providing the ultimate sacrifice. It is impossible to please God without holiness. If we are to define our society today, one word would be mediocrity. We choose the middle path. We are ready to compromise and we

silently accept all forms of things. Gay marriages are one good example. Most of us believe it is wrong, yet it won't be a surprise that none of us would have expressed our disagreement in public. Another major characteristic is godlessness. There is no fear of God. The present generation proudly proclaims their disbelief in the existence of God. To add to the injury we as Christians have failed to impact our societies. We have conducted ourselves in isolation and restricted ourselves just to be recognized as peaceful neighbours. As always God has simple solutions.

a. You are the light of the world (Matt.5:13).

b. You are the salt of the earth (Matt.5:14).

c. You are an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

It is the difference that Christ creates in us that will draw people to Him. Students have a great impact on society, much greater than what is apparent. And hence the media, including movies, are so focused on the young generation to influence these developing minds. As Christian students, there is a great need to exhibit the difference that Christ brings. Ever wondered why it is so very difficult to witness to our immediate neighbours than to proclaim it before thousand

strangers. If society is not considering us fools, it's a symptom that we have not lived out the gospel (1Cor.1:18).

INDIVIDUALITY

The greatest impact of today's student life challenges has been on the person's individuality. There is a striving in every student to leap over the performance barriers set by society. Students are viewed in light of their grades, quality of coaching classes, number of hours put in, so on and so forth. There are peer group influences behind the exhibition of certain forms of behaviour, display of class, display of negligence to society, negligence to parental views, being up-to-date with the ways of the world. And there is church and fellowship which demand a quite contrasting behavioural approach. The lifestyle demands of church is a failure in peer group's eye and the lifestyle demands of peer groups is a failure in church's eyes. Eventually trying to match the expectations of both worlds, an individual reaches a state of no man's land. The resulting attributes are a sense of loss of self-worth, failure, isolation and sometimes even pride.

Here again come simple solutions from God:

a. But as many as received Him,

to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His Name (John 1:12).

b. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

c. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36).

d. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me (Rev.3:20).

The very first thing that God offers us is identity. We transform from being nobody to beloved children of God. Then the most remarkable thing that Christ offers us is freedom. Freedom, not as in the right to do what we want, but the liberty to do what is right. Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Gal. 5:1. With this, Jesus restores the individuality of the person. It is with this individuality we are able to worship Him. And the greatest attribute which mends this individuality is that Christ lives in us and we are crucified in Him. A mystery to understand by intellect but plain truth to accept by faith!

And hence when Jesus said, seek first the Kingdom of God and His

righteousness, He gave the perspective we must imbibe into our character. Rest all things will be added. The liberty which Christ brings is astonishing, the liberty which comes through a personal relationship with Jesus. Truth has the ability to set free and Jesus proclaims I am the truth. As Christian students, these challenges present us the opportunity to minister to our fellow beings. The responsibility is huge, yet the companion in our journey is none other than the Son of God. It is no wonder that the freedom we students so dearly fight for is actually found in none other than Jesus Christ.

DECISIONS

(Continued from Page No. 14)

The contrast Jesus makes is not between religion and irreligion or between the high religions and the lower ones. Nor is it a contrast between being immoral and upright. Rather, it is a contrast between divine righteousness and human unrighteousness; between divine revelation and human religion; between divine truth and human falsehood; between trusting in God and trusting in self. It is a contrast between God's grace and man's works.

Turning to the Old Testament once again, I would like to challenge you to consider the life

of Moses. Moses cared nothing about his Egyptian heritage or privileges. He knew that they were both pagan and worldly, and he gave himself to a much greater call. He knew for sure that the world had very little to offer compared to the riches and satisfaction in Christ. Therefore Moses gladly joined with God's chosen people, although they were slaves, rather than taking advantage of the prestige and privileges of Egypt and becoming unfaithful to God. From a worldly standpoint, he was sacrificing everything for nothing. But from a spiritual standpoint, he was sacrificing nothing for everything. Undoubtedly, Moses suffered a lot. Sufferings and reproaches belong to all who suffer for Christ's sake. Moses rejected the treasures of Egypt and took his stand for God. Moses was the kind of man he was because he chose to focus on God. Faith rejects the world's pressures whatever they may be. When an individual believes in Jesus Christ, he accepts God's provision for salvation. Faith accepts Christ's righteousness, which is God's way. Faith takes God at His word. There is only one life and let us, therefore, be sure that we take right decisions irrespective of the price we may have to pay. Amen!

BIBLE STUDY



TWIN TRUTHS

Rincy Cherian

Like two sides of the same coin or two wings of the same bird, biblical truth has two equal angles or dimensions to it. We must build our lives on what may be described as “twin truths” in order that we may grow up in all things into Christ without being “tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4:14-16 NIV).

1. The Kindness and Sternness of God

God is tender and tough, merciful and just, loving and holy, compassionate and righteous

(Rom. 11:22). The scriptures teach about eternal life and eternal condemnation (Jn. 3:16, 18). Jesus promised homes in Heaven and warned of fire in Hell (Jn. 14:2; Mt. 5:22). In His ministry to people, He showered compassion and issued caution. To the man lying at the pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years, Jesus ministered healing and then admonished him: “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (Jn. 5:14). To the woman caught in adultery, Jesus offered forgiveness and then commanded holiness, “Go now and leave your life of sin” (Jn. 8:11).

God is both our Father and our Judge (1 Pet. 1:17), our closest Friend and a consuming Fire

(Jn. 15:15; Heb. 13:29). We must learn to come before Him with 'great boldness' as well as with 'tremendous awe', with 'full confidence' as well as with 'holy reverence'. Like the apostle John, we must be able to happily lean on Jesus' bosom as well as humbly fall down at His feet! (Jn 13:23; Rev. 1:17)

2. God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility

God always takes the initiative- He 'sent' His Son into the world so that we may not perish in our sins but receive eternal life (Jn. 3:16); He 'chose' us and 'appointed' us to go and bear fruit (Jn. 15:16). Jesus constantly issued the invitation to people to "Come to Me" or "Follow Me" (Mt. 4:18-22; 11:28) and said, "No man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (Jn. 6:44).

But the other side of this truth is that man has a responsibility to respond to God's initiative. We can either accept the call of God and choose to follow Him or refuse to submit to the Holy Spirit's conviction and reject the Lord (Deut. 30:19; Jn. 5:40; Acts 24:25). As we look at the history of Israel, we find that God regularly sent many prophets to instruct the people in His ways but they often

resisted and sometimes even killed those men of God (Neh. 9:30; Mt. 23:37).

We need to be very clear as to what the work of God is and what we need to do. There are some matters that clearly belong to the Lord alone- "The battle belongs to the Lord" (2 Chron. 20:15), "Exaltation comes from the Lord" (Ps. 75:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:6), "Vengeance belongs to the Lord" (Rom. 12:19), "Judgment is the exclusive right of the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:5).

But there are some other areas where we must cooperate. We have to 'work out' the salvation that God is 'working in' us (Phil. 2:12-13). God has 'declared' us to be saints (Rom. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:9); but daily we need to 'walk' in holiness (1 Thess. 4:7; Heb. 12:14). The Lord will 'fight' the Enemy; we need to 'face' the Enemy (2 Chron. 20:17). The Lord will 'keep us' from falling but we need to 'keep ourselves' in the love of God (Jude 21, 24).

3. Holy Scriptures and Holy Spirit

We must be filled with the Spirit and the Scriptures (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16). The Sword of the 'Spirit' is the 'Word' of God (Eph. 6:17). The Lord 'anoints us with His Spirit' so that we may 'proclaim His Word' (Lk. 4:18-19;

Acts 4:31).

“Man has a responsibility to respond to God’s initiative.”

Both solid teaching and supernatural experiences are important. Both Bible study and prayer are crucial to wholesome development. Renewal of the mind and revival of the heart must go together.

We must manifest the fruit and minister in the gifts of the Spirit just like Jesus who had both character and charismata in His life. There must be a ‘declaration’ of the Word of God and a ‘demonstration’ of the Power of God. We must ‘defend’ and ‘confirm’ the Gospel (Phil. 1:7). ‘Wisdom’ and ‘wonders’ are equally vital ingredients in ministry (Acts 6:8, 10).

4. Prosperity and Adversity

Exciting mountain-top events and difficult wilderness experiences, favourable circumstances and unfavourable situations, abundance and lack are all guaranteed to come (Ps. 23:2-4; Phil. 4:12-13; Jam. 1:2-4). We must learn to ‘enjoy’ times of favour as well as ‘endure’ seasons of hard-

ship (1 Tim. 6:17; Heb. 12:5-11). We should neither become proud when we are blessed nor discouraged when facing trials- we must keep our head in all situations (Deut.8:10-18; 2 Tim. 4:5). God has the right to ‘give’ and ‘take away’ (Job 1:21-22). Jesus was born in poverty but was buried in a rich man’s tomb! Hebrews chapter 11 strikes a healthy balance regarding the life of faith (vs13-16, 32-38). By faith, people ‘received’ as well as ‘offered’. By faith, they ‘prospered’ as well as ‘suffered’.

“Renewal of the mind and revival of the heart must go together.”

There were ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ people- both in Israel of the Old Testament and in the Early Church. The rich were not condemned for being wealthy; instead, they were given clear instructions regarding what to do with their material abundance (Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 8:13-15; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Similarly, there were poor saints in Jerusalem and Macedonia (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:2), and the apostles themselves were poor and without material comforts (1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 6:10).

What believers should recognise is that both prosperity and adversity have a purpose. When we have abundance, the purpose is to ‘make us a blessing’ and ‘increase our giving’ (2 Cor. 8:13-14; 9:11; 1 Tim. 6:18). And when we face adversity, God is trying to ‘mould our character’ and ‘perfect our faith’ (Rom. 5:3-4; Jam.1:2-4).

“We need to be very clear as to what the work of God is and what we need to do.”

5. Present and Future

The Kingdom of God has a ‘present’ and ‘future’ dimension. It has been ‘inaugurated’ but it still needs to be ‘consummated’! While the work of the Cross is complete and perfect, its blessings are experienced over different periods of time, the culmination of which will be at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. For instance, salvation has various phases. We ‘have been’ saved from the penalty of sin, ‘are being’ saved from the power of sin, and ‘will be’ saved from the presence of sin (Jn. 5:24; Tit. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rom. 13:11). Similarly, although we can experience healing today, the blessing of a perfectly healthy

body free from all limitations and defects will be received only at the Second Coming (1 Cor. 15:52-54; Phil. 3:20-21; Rev. 21:3-4). This is why even people who are healed or raised from the dead still experience death later. Again, while we can experience total freedom from the ‘curse of the Law’ (Gal. 3:13-14), the effects of the curse which originated on the day of the Fall still awaits its full-fledged removal (Gen. 3:16-19; Rev. 22:3). The ‘old order’ is yet to pass away (Rev. 21:4). Death is still to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26).

Till Christ returns, we who “have the first-fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly” for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23).

“We must learn to come before Him with ‘great boldness’ as well as with ‘tremendous awe’, with ‘full confidence’ as well as with ‘holy reverence.’”

**“You will ultimately *LOSE*
what you gain in this world
BUT what you *GAIN* in
heaven will certainly be your
PERMANENT treasure.”**

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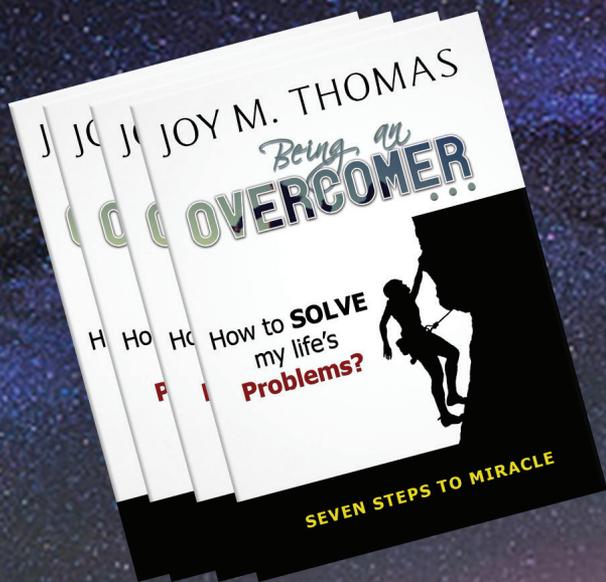
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